

Rosa Katz: Oral History Transcript

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Name: Rachel (Rosa) Goldberg Katz (1924–2012)

Birth Place: Lodz, Poland

Arrived in Wisconsin: 1953, Oshkosh

Project Name: Oral Histories: Wisconsin Survivors of the Holocaust



Rosa Katz

Biography: Rachel (Rosa) Goldberg Katz was born in Lodz, Poland, on May 6, 1924, to a well-to-do family with liberal Jewish beliefs. In 1935, her sister and brother-in-law immigrated to Palestine while the rest of the family remained in Poland. When the Germans occupied Lodz in 1939, 15-year-old Rosa was among the thousands of Jews crowded into the city's ghetto.

Three years later, in July 1942, her mother was deported from the ghetto and never heard from again. In August 1944, the Lodz Ghetto was liquidated. Its starving residents, including Rosa, her father, brother, and sister-in-law, Hela, were all shipped to Auschwitz. There she was separated from her father and brother. She never saw them again.



German officials mistakenly sent Rosa and hundreds of other Jewish women (instead of French prisoners) to work at the Krupp munitions factory in Berlin. For eight months, Rosa assembled delicate timepieces for German bombs. In March 1945, she was transferred to the death camp in Ravensbrück, Germany. The Swedish Red Cross liberated the camp within a month of her arrival. Its inhabitants were transported to Sweden where Rosa recuperated for several years. She married Bernard Katz there (also a survivor). In April 1948, they came to the U.S.

Initially settling in North Carolina, the Katz family moved to Oshkosh, Wisconsin, in 1953. They raised four children while Rosa earned a degree in nursing. She worked as a nurse at Mercy Medical Center in Oshkosh until her retirement in 1994.

Audio Summary: Below are the highlights of each tape. It is not a complete list of all topics discussed.

Tape 1, Side 1

- Family, childhood in Lodz, Poland
- Family members who emigrated to Palestine

Tape 1, Side 2

- Religious and secular schooling
- Jewish cultural activities in Lodz
- Anti-Semitism prior to the war
- Her family's fear as war approached

Tape 2, Side 1

- Start of World War II
- The German invasion of Lodz
- Creation of the ghetto
- Description of Lodz Ghetto, 1940–1944

Tape 2, Side 2

- Over-crowding, starvation, disease in Lodz Ghetto
- Sadistic cruelty by the Nazis
- Rosa's family is torn apart
- Adolescent reactions to these horrors

Tape 3, Side 1

- Living conditions and labor in the Lodz Ghetto
- Government administration in the ghetto
- Futile acts of resistance
- A typical day in the ghetto

Tape 3, Side 2

- Rosa's deportation from Lodz Ghetto, August 1944
- Arrival at Auschwitz and destruction of her family
- Conditions at Auschwitz
- Shipped to Berlin for forced labor

Tape 4, Side 1

- Arrival in Berlin and symbolic acts of resistance
- Forced labor in Krupp munitions plant
- Allied bombing of the city
- Jewish prisoners cheer the bombers

Tape 4, Side 2

- Forced march to Oranienburg
- Transfer to the death camp at Ravensbruck
- Liberation by Swedish Red Cross
- Arrival in Sweden, April 1945

Tape 5, Side 1

- Rosa's attempts to find surviving family members
- Rosa's husband and his family background
- Their marriage and immigration to the U.S. in 1948
- Living in North Carolina before settling in Oshkosh

Tape 5, Side 2

- Rosa moves to Oshkosh, Wisconsin, 1953
- Anti-Semitism and kindness experienced there
- Oshkosh Jewish community during the 1950s
- Working as a nurse and raising children

Tape 6, Side 1

- Friends and family life in Oshkosh
- Attitudes of Americans toward the Holocaust
- Religious life, social life and a typical day

Tape 6, Side 2

- Anti-Semitism in the U.S.
- Reflections on U.S. culture and politics
- Travelling to Israel
- Rosa's philosophy on life

About the Interview Process:

The interview was conducted by archivist Sara Leuchter during two sessions at the Katz home on October 28 and 29, 1980. The first lasted two hours and the second nearly four and one-half.

Rosa's recollections are particularly interesting because she survived for almost five years in the Lodz Ghetto. Her experiences of the near-miraculous deportation from Auschwitz and her work on time bombs at the Krupp munitions plant in Berlin offer a unique addition to the experiences of the survivors interviewed for this project.

Rosa comes across as a very kind and loving woman. Her strength and will to survive are evident throughout the interview. The description of her arrival at Auschwitz is powerful and heartbreaking, and testifies to the strength of those who survived to bear witness.

Teachers should note that Rosa describes many instances of horrific cruelty, which may not be suitable for younger students.

Transcript Details:

Interview Dates

- Oct 28, 1980; Oct 29, 1980

Interview Location

- Katz home, Oshkosh, Wisconsin

Interviewer

- Archivist Sara Leuchter

Original Sound Recording Format

- 6 qty. 60-minute audio cassette tapes

Length of Interviews

- 2 interviews, total approximately 6.5 hours

Transcript Length

- 128 pages

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Pictures:



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Transcript

The following transcript is from the collections of the Wisconsin Historical Society Archives. It is an unedited, firsthand account of the Nazi persecution of the Jews before and during World War II. Portions of this interview may not be suitable for younger or more sensitive audiences. It is unlawful to republish this text without written permission from the Wisconsin Historical Society, except for nonprofit educational use.

Teachers should note that Rosa describes many instances of horrific cruelty, which may not be suitable for younger students.

Key

SL Sara Leuchter, Wisconsin Historical Society archivist

RK Rosa Katz, Holocaust survivor

TAPE 1, SIDE 1

SL: All right tape is on so I thought if you want to mention you'd like to dedicate the tape, go ahead.

RK: Yes, I would like to dedicate this. I am doing this... actually it is very hard for me to go through all the, horrible times, but I feel it's, I have an obligation in loving memory for my family and my parents. And that's about it, you know.

SL: Okay, great.

RK: And also I would like my children to hear those tapes. I'm gonna have copies because I feel that maybe they are afraid to ask. They never ask too many questions about our past, and I feel that they should know. And I actually asked for copies so I could have for each of them.

SL: All right, well, we can start with the interview then.

RK: Okay.

SL: I want you to tell me a little bit about your family background.

RK: Okay.

SL: Your place of birth, your date of birth.

RK: Okay, I was born in Lodz, this is the second largest city in Poland after Warsaw. Warsaw was the first Lodz is the second. I was born May 6, 1924. I was the youngest of four children.

SL: What was your maiden name?

RK: Goldberg, Rachel Goldberg, they use to call me Ruschka Goldberg.

SL: What about the names of your parents, and if you can remember when they were born and where they were born.

RK: Well, my mom was born; both parents were born in Brzeziny, a small town maybe about an hour, about 20 kilometers from Lodz. I think. I don't remember the dates, but I remember the year. My father was born 1886 and my mother was born 1884. She was two years older than my father.

SL: What were your parents' names?

RK: My father's name was Abraham Aaron and my mother's name was Sara.

SL: And what was her maiden name?

RK: Neiman.

SL: Do you remember your grandparents' names too?

RK: Oh yes, yes. My father's mother, her name was Leah. I don't remember my grandfather from my father's side because he died before I was born. His name was Zalman. And my grandmother was born in Russia. I don't remember, I don't know which place in Russia. And my grandfather, I think he was born also in Brzeziny.

SL: And what about on the other side.

RK: Yes, my mother's parents. Grandmother's name was Feige and my grandfather's name was Schmuel Neiman.

SL: Now you mention that one grandmother was born in Russia that you knew.

RK: Right.

SL: Do you know how long the family had been in the Lodz area? Were they there for a long period of time?

RK: My father's family?

SL: Either side.

RK: Oh, yes. Actually, I've never asked, you know, how many generations. But I think many generations. I don't know from where they originated. Neiman and Goldberg sounds more like a German name. Maybe they came from, originated, from Germany.

SL: Do you have any special recollections of your grandparents?

RK: Oh yes.

SL: Why don't you tell me just about some of the memories that you have them.

RK: Well, you know my grandparents on my mother's side. They had thirteen children so there a lot of grandchildren, a lot of uncles. Every little gathering was almost like a wedding, you know. It was a very close-knit family. Oh sure, they had problems, you know, but, sometimes, maybe disagreement. But let just an outsider say something against any of them! (laughs) Nobody allowed it, you know. It was a very close-knit family. I had a lot, a lot of cousins, second, you know. I just found out recently that I have some who survived that live in Los Angeles that are first cousins. And I always thought they were first cousins because we were all so close. And they all came to Lodz from this little town. And they always stayed in our house because my mother was the oldest one. Somehow the rest of the family always wanted to protect my grandparents. So, actually, my mother was actually the parent of all the brothers and sisters, really. Any problem, they came to her, you know. Actually, my father use to call her the peacemaker, you know. And my grandfather, my grandparents on my father's side, I don't remember him. He has quite a past behind him too, you know.

SL: How so?

RK: Well, I don't remember which war. This must have been one of those wars with Russia and Germany. And they were fighting on the Polish territory in the little town they were living. Back and forth: the Russians took over, the Germans took over. It was always going on something like that. I don't know which year this was. Must have been maybe the Japanese, the Russian/German war maybe, you know. Way way back when he was about a youngster, seven years old. The Russians took over the *shtetl* the little town. They decided they were gonna... they kidnapped all the male children, the

Jewish children, and took them all to Siberia. It was my grandfather too. On the way, a lot of them died from the cold, the hunger, you know. Apparently my grandfather survived. And a lot of them had to be forced... the Russians forced them to convert, but some of them didn't. This was before the Revolution actually. And my grandfather grew up in Russia. I don't know where, I don't remember where, what part of Russia. That's where he met my grandmother. Then he was very talented, musically talented. And so he was in the Russian army and he organized the Russian... the band, the military band. Then, about twenty years after that, there was another war again, you know, and the Russian army took over Brzeziny again, the little town, that my grandparents came from and also my parents. And grandfather marched in with the Russian army back to his hometown. And he marched in with his band, and a... But he remembered, he didn't convert. And there was stories told that he met some more Jewish people in the woods in Russia. Because one time, (grandmother used to tell us kids those stories) he was walking in the woods, and somehow he had a feeling it was some kind of holiday, you know, and he wanted to pray. Then he was walking in the woods and wanted to be alone. Some kind of memories came back to him, you know, from his childhood, and he was walking in the woods and from a distance he heard somebody singing *Kol Nidre*, but the melody was very familiar to him. Gut he couldn't place [the melody], and, finally, the closer he came, the closer he came, he saw two men saying prayers. Those [two men] were also soldiers in the Russian army, the same people which were kidnapped and brought into Russia. And, finally, they got to know each other. And they were meeting there secretly, every Friday night and *Shabbat*, to say prayers. Still, their religion stayed with them, from their background. Just amazing stories. My sister tells me, my sister, in Israel, lives outside Tel Aviv, Ramat Gan, tells me there is a whole story written up in the Jerusalem library about my grandfather. In Israel, they have organization, you know. *landsmanshaft*, different *shtetls*, and somebody had wrote up that story about my grandfather.

SL: And so he returned to...

RK: He returned to Brzeziny, to Poland, and my grandmother must have followed him. And, somehow, then, the Russians had to withdraw and my grandfather didn't join the army. He stayed behind. He deserted the Russian army and he stayed behind in Poland. I don't know if they were married already or they got married, I just can't remember exactly how this was. Anyway, my father was an only child. He was already older, and then, when my grandfather died, my grandmother lived with us naturally, you know.

SL: How old were you when she died?

RK: I must have been about 6 or 7 years old.

SL: So you have some memories of her telling you those stories.

RK: Oh yes, oh yes, definitely. She told marvelous stories, and she used to sing beautifully in the Russian [language]. You know she did, because he [inaudible] such a marvelous person, and very beautiful memories of her.

SL: What was your father's occupation?

RK: My father was an engineer/mechanic with special machines. He built them, he made... he built parts. He had several people employed... [on] a special buttonhole machines.

SL: Large sewing machines for sewing button holes?

RK: For sewing button holes on coats and jackets and so on. Yeah.

SL: Now was that supported in Brzeziny, or did he do that in Lodz?

RK: He did it in Lodz, too. When he moved to Lodz, he continued that way. I think after the First World War he lost everything. My parents' house was burned down, you know, because of the War, so they moved to Lodz and then started all over again.

SL: He moved to Lodz after the First World War?

RK: After the First World War.

SL: Was your mother employed at all?

RK: No. No.

SL: Was that typical of the situation in that area, that the woman stayed at home?

RK: The woman stayed at home, yes, although some woman helped in the business. I think my mother did help some with the bookwork, like managing the money and stuff like that.

SL: Can you give me a little bit of description of the way your parents looked? How you remember them looking?

RK: Oh, they were beautiful people. My father was a very intelligent man. There was not a subject... well, I idolized my father, you know. I was the youngest one at home. He was a very intellectual man. He loved music. He, actually, he was an ordained Rabbi, but he was ahead of his time. He couldn't live as an Orthodox, the way Orthodox Jews lived in Poland, you know, with the beards and the *payot*, you know, he just couldn't do that. He was ahead of himself, really. He believed that you don't have to be a fanatic to be a good Jew. On the Sabbath, he didn't work, but he says on the Sabbath you are supposed to rest and enjoy. Why not enjoy with a concert or theater or a movie? Those were his ideas. For my mother, as it was for a woman, it was kind of hard. It was a little harder to accept all of that change. She used to... my father had that long beard, you know, the same way as most orthodox Jews looked in Europe and Poland, especially. But he changed. All of a sudden, you know, his beard [changed]. Mother used to say, "You look kind of funny." Every time he came back home, his beard was smaller and smaller and smaller. It was like before I was born. This what I remember, that she used to tease him about it. And all of a sudden, he dared! He must have been a rare, brave man because kids never dared to do anything which they know parents wouldn't approve of. They wouldn't dare, not like today, kids do whatever they want to do, you know, regardless of what their parents think. One day he just came with his beard shaved off and different clothes, not the long *kapote* they used to call it. He was wearing European-style clothing. You know, modern clothing, I should say actually. And his beard could be shaved off. And then my mother was wearing a *sheitel*— this means a wig. Most Orthodox women used to wear in Lodz in Poland. I shouldn't say Lodz. Poland, period. Yeah. Eventually she took off her wig, but it was harder for my mother. I suppose, as a mother, she

was afraid. She was afraid she's sinning, you know, she's doing something wrong, and it will affect her children. God will punish her children for the things she is doing, you know. I have read a lot about those feelings women in those days had about changing so drastically, but she did, to please my father. She did change, but she still kept a kosher house. Education was just an absolute must for the children. Very devoted mother loving, she was, quiet but very gentle: very gentle, very loving. And my father, there wasn't a subject in the world you couldn't discuss with him, you know. He was well read and interested in everything, you know.

SL: Now you mention that you were the youngest in the household.

RK: Right.

SL: Could you tell me the names of your brothers and sisters, and if you could possibly remember what year they were born, that would help us.

RK: Yes, I could actually figure out according to my age. Okay, my oldest sister was Miriam. She was real pretty, blond hair, blue eyes. We all had curly hair. She was very popular [and] very, very pretty. And I think she must have been born... my youngest sister, the one who lives in Israel, she was born in 1914 and she is seven years... then she must be born in 1907. She married a second cousin, actually, Shaya, who, that's funny — Shaya was actually a cousin to my mother. This makes a second cousin to my sister. He went to Russia during the Revolution, or right after the Revolution, and he thought it's going to be better, better life there for the working class. He was idealistic, very idealistic. He had a beautiful voice, a beautiful singing [voice]. But he and his sister and a couple other people went. But he came back. He didn't like it. He came back. As a matter of fact, his sister stayed, and she just came back to Israel I would say about 20 years ago. I don't know if she is still alive or not. My sister didn't say. Recently I had a letter [from my sister] and she didn't say anything about it. She must be still okay. Anyway, Miriam married Shaya Ojzer. They had two beautiful children. Zeneck, named after both grandparents: Zeneck Zellman, Zeneck and Lola, Lola after Leah. They were just absolutely gorgeous. Then, my youngest sister, Nechama: she lives in Israel, she and her husband.

Well, she was born 1914, also in Brzeziny. She was very pretty, you know. She has dark hair and brown eyes and she was engaged and her fiancé wanted to leave Poland, and this was in '35. Somehow, he must have had some kind of premonition. He was trying to talk my parents into that, but my parents were established, and they had all their family. You know, all family, friends and business established. Very, very respected in the neighborhood and with the neighbors. And they lost everything in the First World War, you know. And they weren't youngsters then, they were in their, in the early 50's. They felt they cannot leave. If it's gonna be a war... my father, the politician, you figured it out, he and his friends, I remember, they had maps all thrown on the floor there were already rumors. Its kind of politics, you know, when Hitler came to power and all that. Oh, the war couldn't last. If it is going to be a war, America and England is gonna to come in and they are gonna smash Germany to pieces and within three months, Hitler will be on his knees. So, why leave your home, you know, for something, you know, a strange country not knowing the language? Although my father knew Hebrew. He was an ordained Rabbi but he never practiced: he couldn't live that way, to be a Rabbi in Poland. This means to be a fanatic, you know, Orthodox. Then, my sister was engaged to Herschel Himmelstein. He was a very intelligent man. He played the mandolin; he played the violin. We use to have, you know... my oldest brother-in-law and my grandmother use to sing, and he use to play. And it was beautiful evenings at home, you know. The family use to get together. He decided he has to go. He has to go. He didn't care if it's Israel or America he had to leave Poland. And they couldn't go to America. He had family, but he couldn't find them here. He had some uncles and aunts in this country, but he didn't know where they lived. They lost the [inaudible] and the contact. Anyway, he wanted naturally to be married. [He wanted] my sister to marry him and then they should go. My parents said, " Why don't you go first and settle down and establish yourself, and then Nechama will join you." This was decided, so he got, I don't know how, he got in touch with some organization that was suppose to get affidavits. Every year they used to get certain amounts of affidavits for the people who were in the *kibbutz* in Poland. They were waiting for years to get those

affidavits, but naturally there were some people to make a buck. They were selling them privately for money. So, I don't know how Tsvi-- Herschel changed his name to Tsvi when he went to Israel, so I call him Tsvi-- bought an affidavit. My parents helped him out. It cost. I don't know how much money he paid for it. Anyway, he went to Israel. There were about 360 people on that boat, and they found out there weren't many affidavits. They just took the money. It was just a illegal boat, they were smuggling them to Israel. And the British government found [out] about them and they didn't let them in. So they were wandering. They didn't want to go back to Poland. They were wandering on the ocean for three months, and no port wanted to let them in. They were already-- the crew on that ship stole everything they had, everybody went there with. Tsvi had his trousseau, actually, everything new, you know, all the clothes and he had money, jewelry. Whatever anybody had, the crew just stole from those people. There was no food anymore, they had to drink the ocean water. And there was an epidemic on the boat. It was just a horrible thing, and no port wanted to let them in. Finally, the League of Nations at the time got hold of the story... I don't know which government somehow kind of intervened, and the League of Nations decided they got to come back to Poland. And so they came back to Poland, but not to Lodz. They were right on the border at the port. Where did they stay? I don't remember. Was it [sounds like: Gdansk] or Gdynia Somewhere there. And the Polish government got hold of those people, the swindlers, actually, they were swindlers, and made them — made the organization—they were leaders of the Zionistic organization, and they made them — another batch of affidavits came in, and the government actually made them give those affidavits to those people, the men, but under one condition. The men were suppose to just marry, legally marry — not really, so they can take a woman out of the *kibbutz*. So a couple can go on one affidavit. That's the way it was. And Tsvi was afraid to get involved with another woman — sometimes some of those girls didn't want a divorce later on. Anyway, I don't know how this happened. There was a lot of doings, I imagine, there was a lot of meetings, my dad knew a lot of people, my uncles were involved with that somehow. Naturally, with money you can... money talks. Somehow they paid somebody off, I don't know exactly.

I was a little kid, so I don't know exactly what's happened. Anyway, somehow they managed to get my sister on the same affidavit with my — and they were married in Israel. Some friends of my dad's were living there and they saw to it.

SL: So they got to Israel in the mid-30's?

RK: Yeah, it must have been in '35, 1935.

SL: And do they have any children?

RK: Yes, they had, as a matter of fact, they had three children. Just one is alive. One child was born prematurely, it died. And then they have a son who is Uri, he is married and has two children. As a matter of fact, any day they should have a third one now. And then my sister had a daughter, little Sarah, named after my mother. She was born with a so-called blue baby, open heart. Yeah, and she took it to this was in 1950. The government sent her to Denmark to have a special hospital there, specialist, at the time nobody did this type of surgery. She took the child, Sarah, to Denmark to have that open-heart surgery. The surgery was successful, but the patient died, so she went back with the casket to Israel. And Tsvi died, Tsvi died five years ago. When I was on my way to Israel, so I came actually to a funeral, and I hadn't seen him in 40 some years. And he was so excited for me to come because, I was the baby, you know, in the family. And then when he was courting my sister, actually he courted her through me, you know. [laughs] Bringing gifts to me, you know, so he was very, very excited and very happy that finally I come because we [were] planning before to go to Israel, but my husband had a heart attack and we had to postpone it. Finally I went by myself, much later. I shouldn't have waited that long.

SL: Did you have any other brothers and sisters?

RK: Yes, then I had a brother. Well, he must have been born; he is five years older than I, Moishe. We called him Moinyek. Five years older, then, he probably was born in 1919, yeah.

SL: And then there was you?

RK: Then that's me, Yeah.

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SL: Okay, I am going to have to turn the tape over.

RK: Okay.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1

TAPE 1, SIDE 2

SL: You were just talking to me about your brother, who is a few years older than you.

RK: Five years older.

SL: And you mentioned the fact that you had quite a few cousins in the surrounding area. Did you see them often? You mention that it was a close family, but how often did you see them?

RK: Oh my cousins, oh yes, all the time, all the time. Always, especially holidays, even during the week, they used to come all the time. Especially on the Sabbath. Actually, it was just a tradition to come visit grandpa and the grandparents. There was always somebody there, you know. And, actually, I was very much involved with one of my cousins. They belong to a Zionist organization, and they always use to ask me to come along with them. And I did this quite often, every opportunity I had. I really enjoyed that. Gordonia was the name of the organization.

SL: I'll ask you about that a little bit later. I do have it down as one of my questions.

RK: Okay.

SL: Did you have any family in the United States before the war?

RK: Oh yes, yes, I had a uncle, my mother's younger brother, Uncle Sol. He lives in New York, Brooklyn. Every so often, he calls me, yeah.

SL: Was there contact with him before the war, letters going back and forth?

RK: No, not really. At first, he kept writing to grandmother. And then it stopped, you know. But after the war, right after the war, I don't know how he found out. Naturally everybody was looking for survivors. Who is alive in the family? And somehow he got my name, and I got letters from him after the war, in Sweden.

SL: So was he the only family who was in the United States?

RK: Yeah, yeah. Unless there is some more, you know. There was some family from my father's side I don't know them.

SL: Could you describe to me what your home looked like and the neighborhood that you lived in?

RK: Well, it was definitely a Jewish neighborhood. We lived in an apartment house. There were, oh, I don't know, maybe 50 families. It was like a courthouse around. And it was enclosed. And then there was a courtyard in the middle, of the apartment house, that's where the kids played [in the courtyard] and the neighbors would sit out chairs outside, you know, something like that. It wasn't much.

SL: What did your own apartment look like?

RK: Well, we had a huge kitchen, just huge. Then a kind of a living room/dining room. Leather upholstered chairs in the dining room and a huge grandfather clock, and then bedrooms, you know. My father had his shop adjoining.

SL: Oh, he did.

RK: Yeah.

SL: So, did you have a first floor apartment?

RK: Yeah.

SL: To me, it sounds as if in comparison to the description of other apartments that I've heard, that you had a bigger one than most people.

RK: Yes.

SL: Were you fairly well-to-do?

RK: Yes, yes, we were. I wouldn't say we were rich, but in comparison with others yes, we were comfortable. Very much so. Father always, my parents always helped others out the families, you know, [sounds like yenday] yeah.

SL: Did you move to any other cities before the war?

RK: No. I was born in Lodz and grew up [in Lodz], actually.

SL: So, your parents moved before you were born?

RK: Yeah. I mean they moved after the First World War to Lodz, and that's where they stayed. I think they changed apartments. This I don't remember. The apartment where I was born... we lived in it until, til everything went.

SL: Now you said that the neighborhood was a Jewish neighborhood.

RK: Yeah, and a business neighborhood. There were a lot of stores, Jewish stores, you know. It's a business section, I should say.

SL: How did people react to your father and his more liberal ways?

RK: Ah, this was interesting, you know. There were, you know, Jewish people. When they had, I am sure you know about that, when they have a kind of disagreements, they didn't go to court, you know. They went to a Rabbi to settle the differences. And naturally, living in a business section, there were a lot of business people stores, storeowners, and all kinds of business. Naturally, there were partners that had disagreements. And they came to my father to settle the disagreements. And I remember as a little kid listening to all that. My father had a lot of, a lot of respect from the neighbors. Although, the Orthodox Jews... there was a group of people, liberal people like my father, but Orthodox Jews used to call my father the [sounds like: *shmutzig*]. You know what a *shmutzing* is? Convert. He probably knew more about Judaism and the translation of the Torah than most of those Orthodox Jews. They [know] how to read it, but I don't know if they knew the translation, which my father did.

SL: Well, let me ask you a little bit about your religious life before the war. You mention that you kept a kosher home.

RK: My mother kept a kosher home.

SL: What about the traditions. Did you do those?

RK: Oh yes, oh the *seder*, the *Pesach*, and the *Sukkot*. We built a *sukkah*) adjoining to our window, you know. This was the place where we lived. It was funny, you know, almost like segregation, you know. More liberal had a separate synagogue Orthodox. [laughs] Each family had their own, actually, but my parents, and a couple other families in the same building, they had their own *sukkah*, and it was a lot of fun. I remember every woman, like my mom too, baked a special dish, or cooked a special bottle, and we all ate together and then some *Simcha Torah* was celebrated. The *sukkah* still standing in the *sukkah* with the barrel of beer and, you know, and the specialties again, with [inaudible] and *tzimmes*

and all kind of Jewish delicatessen, you know. And the children were always around. The children were always around, [laughs] joining in dancing and singing and joking and telling stories. My father was a terrific storyteller.

SL: Did you go to synagogue regularly?

RK: I went, I went... well I wasn't actually; it was more like a school, you know, in the evenings, separate from the grade school.

SL: Like a Hebrew schools do?

RK: Something like [that]. We didn't learn Hebrew, but we learned Yiddish, to read and write.

SL: Did you speak Yiddish in the home?

RK: Oh yes. My grandmother wouldn't answer if we talked to her in Polish. [laughs] We had to talk to her in Yiddish.

SL: But, say on the major holidays, would you go with your family to synagogue?

RK: Yes, yes, we did. As a matter of fact, you know, there weren't synagogues like we have here, that are little *shtibl*, you know, little small congregations you know, each. Probably on one block there must have been several of them, you know.

SL: Were there any members of your family that were non-religious, who tried to not to practice their Judaism?

RK: That's just the way of life, you know. We didn't run to the temple every day. My father use to lay *tefillin* you know, but I don't lately, I shouldn't say lately. Gosh, I am back forty years. Towards the end, he didn't observe the *tefillin* anymore. He would go Friday night to services, we will have a traditional Sabbath dinner and mother didn't cook on the Sabbath, you know. A Friday night dinner and then Sabbath. Very traditional. I wouldn't say, I wouldn't say in an Orthodox way, but traditional. My dad says, "You know, I can go to a movie on the Sabbath and I can go to a concert or whatever, but I would never work on the Sabbath." You know we had the *seder* we had the way it should be, and chanting at the table, and *zmires*, you know, songs.

SL: Okay, I wanted to ask you something about your education before the war.

RK: Okay.

SL: You were fairly young when the war started, so how much schooling did you have?

RK: Yes, well public schooling, I had 8th grade, then the war broke out and I couldn't continue anymore. But, in the ghetto, in the Lodz ghetto, I had private tutoring.

SL: If the war would not have broken out, would you have gone to school for a long time?

RK: Yes, I probably would. I don't know if I would have gone the same length of time as my parents planned for their son. Usually the son was—had to support a family, so to speak, and they had to have a better education, but I would have gone. High schools were private; they use to call it *gymnasium*. This wasn't like we have here in this country, public. It was private, you had to pay tuition.

SL: And was that after 9th grade?

RK: This was after 9th grade. I probably would have gone to that, and my brother would have continued probably. My parents were talking about sending him to Vienna. I just can't believe it (laughter), that sound was.

SL: Talking about the — continuing with the education. Did you go to a Polish school with Jewish and Gentiles?

RK: No. No, this was segregated. We had only Jewish children. This was a public school, but segregated.

SL: Why did they do that?

RK: Because they didn't want— they didn't want Jewish children-- I suppose the Gentiles, the Polish Gentiles didn't want Jews to go with their kids. We were segregated. As a matter of fact, I never knew a Gentile, except our janitor who took care of the maintenance, when in our building. It's the only Gentile I knew, really.

SL: Really?

RK: Yeah.

SL: What was the curriculum? What did you study there in the school? And, was it similar to what the Gentiles were learning?

RK: Yeah, except, I suppose they had religious instructions. Most people in Poland, Gentile people, were Catholics. We had Jewish Bible stories. The religion we were taught—Jewish Bible stories, you know. But the curriculum was the same. We had geography, we had language, we had— I don't know, just about the same thing.

SL: Were the courses taught in Polish?

RK: In Polish, yeah.

SL: So that was a government regulation?

RK: A government regulation, yes. That was also supported by the Jewish community, see.

SL: What types of cultural activities did you engage in? You mentioned the Gordonia.

RK: Gordonia. It was a Zionistic organization.

SL: What was that like? What did you do there.

RK: Oh, that was a lot of fun. We had, we had plays, like for *Hanukkah*, for instance. We were the Maccabees, you know. We had plays of the whole story of the Maccabees story. And we talked about Israel; we talked about famous people, like Chaim Weizmann and Ben-Gurion. Speaking of Ben-Gurion he is a cousin of my dad's. He was a cousin of my father's. They went to the *yeshiva* together. We talked, I suppose, about everything, dancing and singing, just socializing and to be with other children. A lot of *horahs*.

SL: Was it popular? Were there a lot of members?

RK: Oh, yes. A lot of Jewish children.

SL: What other activities would you do with your friends? Say on a weekend? Spare time?

RK: On a weekend, well, we would go to movies.

SL: Do you remember any movies that you saw?

RK: Oh, yes. They were all American movies, except it was written in, you know, you had to read the captions in Polish. We went to movies; many times I went with my parents to a Jewish theaters. Oh, I loved that. I used to love it, and I used to imitate all those Jewish actors, you know, their songs and stuff. You know, as a little kid, we use to go with Dad a lot, what else? Family, always family, you know.

SL: Did your family, your parents, belong to any clubs, any organizations, political or social?

RK: I think my father did. It was a little bit more like a union. Trying to organized in his profession, you know, but he took part in it. They wanted him to take over and he, I don't know why, but he, after a while he gave it up. He was more interested, you know, he was more intellectual type, he would rather read stories. He was a self-made man.

SL: You mention though that you knew very few Gentiles. The men who worked for your father, were they all Jewish?

RK: They were all Jewish, yes.

SL: Did you ever experience any anti-Semitism before the war growing up?

RK: Oh yes, yes.

SL: How did that manifest?

RK: I remember there were so many incidents. Like, for instance, on the way to school, to my school, it was quite a distance. I could never—there was this electric trains, you know.

SL: Trolley trains?

RK: Trolley trains, I couldn't think of the name. I couldn't ride on it because I use to get like car sick, you know. I had a monthly ticket, my parents bought it for me, but I preferred to walk because I was afraid I would get sick, so I walked. It was quite a distance, I left earlier. It was kind of difficult in the winter time. Naturally, my parents did have a car, very few people had cars. I remember in walking, I had to pass by a Gentile school. If I wasn't fast enough to cross the street, if I would just walk by, they would tear my papers up, tore my books away, and stuff like this.

SL: They knew that you were Jewish?

RK: Oh, yes, I don't know how, but somehow, well it must— the dark hair, you know, brown eyes, you know. I don't know how, but somehow they knew it, and I spoke Polish like they did, but still they knew. Because I didn't go to their school, that's probably—

SL: Any other incidents?

RK: Yeah, there is a national celebration, 3rd of May, May 3, May 3rd, when they signed the constitution in Poland. They use to have demonstrations, you know. Singing religious songs, Easter time for instance, they use to have religious demonstrations, you know, parades carrying the Madonna, you know, and all that and flags and singing religious songs, and with that they never missed to shout, "Death to the Jews, Jews to Palestine," stuff like that. And it always kind of bothered me just terribly, you know. Then one time I will never forget, it was May 3rd, when there were all kind of demonstrations. This was a national holiday and there were parades. All the schools took part in it, and Jewish children too, with the flags, you name it, the whole bit. We were always the last ones in the parade, never mixed, you know, always the last ones. Then one time the Jewish people were attacked all the time. One time, I remember, I never forget it. A whole bunch of Gentiles came into our courtyard and they were pushing some people and there were a couple of young men who kind of stood up to them and it was just terrible, not a policeman in sight. Blood was just gushing all over, so many people were hurt. This was before the War.

SL: Did you identify yourself as a Pole or as Jew or as a Polish Jew? How did you see yourself when you were young.

RK: I often questioned that. Like even now if somebody asked me who are you, where are you from, you know. Naturally, because how can I hide my accent? I never say I am Polish or Jewish. They don't want you, as a Jew, Jewish, this is my religion. I was born in Poland. My answer is I never say I am Polish, I always say I was born in Poland. I don't want to, right now a lot of people ask, you know, as I say working as, I have a lot of contacts with Gentile people, mostly Gentile people and no problems at all. I suppose they don't know I am Jewish. I don't know what kind of reaction. If they ask me I gladly

tell them what I am. It never came up, just, where are you from. So my answer is always I was born in Poland. I never say I am Polish.

SL: Would you have said that even then, living in Poland, if someone would have asked you, would you say "I am Polish" or "I am a Jew"?

RK: That's a good question. I would probably say, "I am a Jew," because we weren't accepted as first class citizens, as anybody else. Actually, we had the same rights, we were I don't know how many generations in Poland. Here, in this country, first generation, second generation, they are Americans. I keep saying, someone ask me where I am from, "I am from Oshkosh, [laughs] I am American, I am an American citizen." I feel I am an American. But in Poland, they never let us be that way, we were second grade citizens. It was like, naturally, the Jewish men went into the army, but they were treated just terrible. They were made fun of. They were like given the worst jobs. Or there was never a Jewish policeman. There were a lot of doctors, but they never studied in Poland. Parents, people who could afford to send their children to, probably to Austria or France or England, mostly a lot of them went to England to study. In Krakow, there was a huge university, but it was just terrible for the Jewish students who went there. Every other day somebody had a concussion from being beaten up, you know. This was before Hitler.

SL: What kind of news did you receive about the conditions in Germany as they got worse?

RK: Oh, there was always discussions in our house, you know. My parents and their friends, very disturbing news, especially, I don't remember which year this was, when they sent older German Jews, actually, they were German citizens, but they were born in Poland. They sent them all back to the Polish border. This was very disturbing. Those people lived there, I don't know how many, probably second and third generation. Some of them didn't even know their parents or grandparents way back, came from Poland. They were sent back with their possessions confiscated, your know, their property confiscated. They could just take whatever they could carry with them, you know. And I remember a lot of them, the Jewish community, worked just so hard, you know, to resettle them, to

give them a place where to live. A lot of them had to be sent all over, you know, they couldn't stay on the border. So a lot of them— I remember so vividly, my dad was so upset, he was so disturbed, so troubled about it. There were a lot of people, German people, fine, you know, well educated, but no place to go, you know. But the Jewish community was just great. Somehow, managed somehow to resettle them, try to find them place to stay to live, you know. At first it was just hectic because, where do you find all of a sudden so many apartments, you know. They wanted to stay together, where do you find so many people? You know. Some of those families were separated, and they were trying to get them together, they went different places, somehow. You know, in situations like this always people get separated somehow. I don't know how, but it happens. It was very disturbing, very disturbing.

SL: Well, the discussions that you would have in the house about what was happening in Germany, would they discuss the potential for danger for Jews?

RK: Oh yes, definitely. My dad, when the war broke out — are we that far, should I go ahead?

SL: Oh yeah, please do.

RK: My father read *Mein Kampf* he didn't want the kids to read it but he did read it. That's probably why he took it very hard, he was very disturbed. When the war broke out, somehow Germany was just marching into Poland taking over one city after another without firing a shot. All the airplanes, you know. The Polish army couldn't, everything was sabotaged. The airplanes couldn't even take off the ground because it just fell apart, you know. So they just practically took over Poland without even firing a shot except, when the army was pulling back towards Warsaw. That's where they were fighting, for a little while anyway. And all the young people, my brother and his friends included, were running off with the army towards Warsaw, and this almost killed my parents. It was about two or three weeks we didn't hear a word about my brother. His friends came back, the people he went with. But they didn't know what's happened to him, and they kept bringing back hundreds of bodies, you know.

The German airplanes were shooting them on the highways, shooting then on the people, on the soldiers and army, you know. It was just absolutely terrible. This was the first phase of the War. I remember my mother and I went to the hospitals checking on lists. My father just fell apart. And then he felt terribly guilty, kept blaming himself, and what's going to happen to his children. If something will happen to his children, it's going to be his fault, he should have listened to my sister and her husband, Tsvi, he should have gone to Israel, should have left Poland. Now his grandchildren will suffer, his children. He had a nervous breakdown, he took it so hard. He was a "Rock of Gibraltar" to so many people, and all of a sudden, he just fell apart, you know. Actually, we didn't tell dad, but he got sick, very sick. Mother and I, actually we went to the cemetery to look for my brother, that's how terrible. Apparently, my brother was smart enough, because when they were bombing the highways, he ran off the highway and hid in a farm somewhere. When he came back, he was okay.

SL: So you knew that there was trouble brewing for the Jews, but it wasn't, it never threatened you enough to leave Lodz.

RK: Well, it was too late, and we were really disturbed. Well, those big politicians, the neighborhood politicians, my mother used to call them— they decided. "Three months it is going to be over and we can stand three months. Three months is not so bad. The Americans are not gonna allow for Germany to take over everything. They are gonna come in and gonna help us and this will be over."

SL: We are going to have to stop the tape again.

RK: Okay.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2

TAPE 2, SIDE 1

SL: All right, so we've gotten up to the point where, just before the War started and I was asking you about the news that you were receiving. Just for a little bit of clarification. So then you were able to hear that things were going bad in Germany, but it never dawned on you that it was going to affect you.

RK: No, no. I don't know why, you know, I suppose things happen, so many horrible, terrible things. Who would imagine anything like this? Nobody in a normal mind could imagine that Hitler had planned for us, you know.

SL: Was there any indication before the war started that Poland was going to be involved in a War?

RK: Well, they were talking about the Corridor, you know, Germany wanted the Corridor, you know, by the Baltic, you know. They claimed this belonged to them. It use to belong to them, I think, before the First World War and Poland got it, after the War was settled, you know. And that started with that, but look, he wanted the Sudeten from Czechoslovakia, and why he took everything. This was, I think this was to put his boots on the territory and they— it was just nothing, you know, he just took one town after another without even firing a shot. It was unbelievable. It was a shock.

SL: What do you remember about 1 September in 1939?

RK: Oh, it was terrible. It was very very bad, we were digging ditches, you know. I suppose, you know, the government must have known about it, and all the school kids— the schools were closed. And each block, each neighborhood had somebody; there was somebody like a cop. He was assigned to organize self-defense and in case of a bombing, what you to do and what not to do, and organize young people to dig ditches in case we have to hide, you know. Is we gonna be bombed or something like that. But it was such a chaos. It worked everything beautifully when we were just practicing, but when the real thing came, it was just a chaos. The worst part, the Captain, the leader, who is suppose to the strong one, he was the worst from everybody else. I always say, you know, you never know how people will react in an emergency. People you think they weak and wouldn't know what to do, they are the ones who really are the strong ones. And people were trying to get groceries, you know. And all of

a sudden, stores were closing, people realizing that if they hide the groceries, they can get more money and there were no supplies to Jewish stores right away. And we wouldn't dare to go to a Gentile neighborhood. It was terrible. My brother did go, one time; we were just absolutely frantic until we him back. He was blond and blue eyes. See my oldest sister and my brother were blond and blue eyes, and they didn't look Jewish, and my sister, Nechama in Israel, and I, we were both the dark ones. My brother went off; we had to wear bands right away. Yellow bands with the Star of David. Later on, we had to have the Star of David on our clothes. Right in the beginning we had to wear bands on our arms. He took the band off and he went. He had quite a bit of money with him, and he went to a Gentile neighborhood and he came home, several times he did that, and he come home with a lot of groceries. But later on, they were looking for those people. Somehow they realized that a lot of people were doing that, so the ones who were caught, you never saw them again, so we were very, very worried about it. Although he insisted, many times he just left and didn't tell my parents so they wouldn't worry. But [he] felt he has to get some groceries into the house, because we didn't know what was going to happen.

SL: You wanted to, you mentioned to me as I was turning the tape that what happened to your older sister right at the beginning of the war. Why don't you tell me what happened?

RK: Well, my oldest sister, after she was married, she had her first child. Her husband moved away to Poznan. But it's, well it's by the German border, it is a beautiful city. I was with her during vacation time, several times, it's just beautiful there, a beautiful place, but there are a lot of German people live there. This also, at one time, I think before the First World War, belonged to German. But after it was a Polish city, and my sister lived there. My brother-in-law had a tailor business, you know. He did quite well. Two beautiful little kids, Lola and Zenick. And then, he was, he had a lot of connections; business connections with Gentile people who were also part German. They called them, what did they call them? *Volksdeutsche*, yeah, *Volksdeutsche*, *Volksdeutsche*. Anyway, their feelings probably were mixed. They had to join the Party, and at the same time, they had a very close relationship with my

sister and her husband, and when the war broke out, naturally Poznan was taken right away because it was right on the German border, and apparently one of their friends belonged, joined the Nazi Party right away, and he must have heard that they were gonna confiscate the Jewish properties and send the Jewish people away someplace. So he came and he warned them. So my sister— my brother-in-law insisted that my sister take the children and the few belongings she could carry and go back to Lodz. To go home and he will try to move the furniture back to Lodz. It was foolish, move the furniture back to Lodz. {laughs} I think he managed to do that, I don't know how. Did he? Yes, I think he did. So my sister went through—oh, she went through agony. Her both children are blond also. Especially the little girl, she had real light blond hair. She was on a train with all German soldiers, officers. And you know, she was just terrified that one of her children might say something, that they Jewish, or something. You know, you never know what a child might say. But, apparently, they didn't and all of the officers were helping with the children, with the luggage, and giving the kids, the children, chocolate bars, you know. Because they looked Gentile. They didn't look Jewish. Finally, my sister came home, that's what also disturbed my dad, just how he looked at these two beautiful adoring grandchildren and he blamed himself. He knew, he didn't tell us anything about the book he read about *Mein Kampf*, and all of a sudden it just dawned on him that's the plan. He knew what's gonna happen and he looked at these children, his daughter, his son, only son, and you know what this means to a Jewish family to have just one son. The one who is gonna say the *Kaddish*? And he was, absolute— my brother was one of those kids who was brilliant. He was a genius. Always talking what he does and what he can do and he learned. Then my sister comes with the babies, and he just adored them, you know. And he looked at us, all of us, and then he blamed himself. Apparently, he knew what's gonna happen, what comes next. And he was just terrified and he blamed himself, because of him, his children, his grandchildren will have to suffer.

SL: The Germans occupied Lodz fairly quickly after the start of the war.

RK: Yes, right away. Yeah, within days, within days.

SL: And at that point did you try to think about or talk about fleeing Lodz to try to get to the Soviet side?

RK: How are you gonna do that? A lot of people did. My father was sick and I felt like an obligation, you know, I was very young. But I felt it was up to me to take care of them, you know. It never, never occurred to me to leave my parents, and neither did my brother. We felt all of a sudden, we were the parents, you know. Father was very ill, and mother, you know, we were afraid she's falling apart too, you know, it was the fear. What fear can do, it's unbelievable. Especially fear for your children, and the guilt feeling. So, my brother mentioned something. His friend did go to Russia. A lot of young people did, but he looked at that, and just, he only wanted really to take care of us. He just couldn't do it.

SL: What did the Germans do then as soon as they occupied Lodz? What happened then?

RK: Oh, oh there were so many things they did. Still it wasn't as terrible as later on, it happened. It was bad enough, at the time it was oh, terrible. What they did, they used to pick people from the streets, young men, from the streets, to do, all kinda walk to them to their camps, the soldiers' camps, to scrub, to clean, and kick around. Naturally, they knew whom to pick because we all had to wear the yellow band.

SL: That was immediate?

RK: Right away. And somehow, the Gentiles—the Polish people hated the Germans, but as far as the Jews were concerned, they were with them 100 percent. I remember once standing— I went to my friend's house, and it was quite a distance from where we lived, and she told me that several bakeries on their street could get bread. It was already cold, it was November, I think. The winters are just similar in Poland as we have here in Wisconsin. I told Mom that I am gonna stay with my friend overnight. I didn't tell her that I am gonna stay in the line for bread. All nightlong. There were a lot of people next to me we're standing in line. Finally, daybreak came and it is almost time for the bakery to open and we start—we would be able to buy bread. They let us stay all night long, the people next to us, they knew we were Jewish, I don't know how, but somehow they knew. The only— very, very few Polish, Polacks, could speak German, but the first word they learned to say was "*Juden*". They let us stay all

night long, freezing there, and I was just by the window. Naturally, there was a soldier watching the line and all that. They started shouting, "*Juden, Juden, Juden,*" and I was pulled out of the line and I didn't get the bread. Stuff like that, you know. And we were very— like people, Gentile people who worked for the Jewish people sometimes, you know they would just bring soldiers and show them. They lived with them, they came from, from the country, they were farm girls, you know, they were part of the family. They were treated just like a member of the family. They were maids, but the live-in maids, and they were treated beautifully, just like members of the family, but when the War broke out they got acquainted with the soldiers, naturally, they were running with the soldiers, and they knew exactly where we hid the jewelry, where the records are, and they brought the soldiers in and pointed out where everything is, and they took it. Stuff, all the time, beatings. Like they would catch, a Jew with a beard on the street. I saw it myself one time, I got hysterical, completely hysterical. The soldiers—they must have been drunk. I just cannot imagine anybody to do a thing like this. They took a match and they lighted his beard. And they were shooting at his feet so he would dance and his beard was burning. And nobody could help him. And they were laughing their heads off. This happened all, all the time, till we had to leave our homes, you know, it just so happened, they gave us a section for the ghetto; they were already planning for the ghetto. And we got— we heard there was gonna be a ghetto, and we had cousins living in the section where the ghetto [was] suppose to have been, so my brother and I, we were, somehow, almost smuggling really each time, some clothing or possessions, you know. Whatever we could carry into the ghetto.

SL: From you house?

RK: From our house.

SL: To your cousins?

RK: To our cousins' place. By the time, we had to move, you know, what can you? What can you take? We had no wagons, no movers. What can you take? You get so excited you just grab a toothbrush and leave the house with a toothbrush.

SL: Well, how soon after the Germans entered the town did, were you forced into the ghetto?

RK: This was September '39, isn't that right? I think we had to go into the ghetto, it was already winter time. It must have been November. I am not sure, I cannot remember the exact dates, but it was already cold.

SL: So, before you went into the ghetto, but after the Germans came in, there was a period of this chaos and the looting of the homes.

RK: The looting, and beatings. So many things, you know. It was just unbelievable, like the janitor, you know, who was in our house. He was treated beautifully, you know, he was paid good, at Christmastime every family gave him gifts and money and still he pointed his finger. This is what hurted the most. We were Polish citizens but even before the War we weren't... Why should I consider myself Polish? I don't consider myself Polish. I happened to be born in Poland. That's about it. I consider myself American, but never Polish. How could I, how can I?

SL: How did the— how did you receive the news then that the ghetto was going to be established?

RK: Oh, there were announcements. Posters. There were announcement posters that so and so by this time, this and this street would have to move, you know, they couldn't move everybody at the same time. They blocked off certain sections and that's the way they moved the people in.

SL: Did they build any walls or anything so that you knew what was going on?

RK: Yes, actually, yes, a big fence. They're building a fence. And for a while when we were in the ghetto, it wasn't, some people could still go in and out, like, for instance, a family of my brother-in-law's, Tsvi, the one who went to Israel— they were, his parents, yeah, I am sure of that. His parents were Russian born and at the time, this was 1940, already, I think, they made a pact with— the Germans made a pact with the Russians. So, they had the papers, somehow, people born in Russia could leave in and

out the ghetto. They were allowed to leave the ghetto and come back. As a matter of fact, one time they left the ghetto and never came back, they went someplace else. So, where did they go? They found themselves another ghetto. And the same thing, you know, when my sister, when we had to move in, the ghetto was still open a little while, and my brother-in-law decided. We moved all into my cousin's apartment, it was a small place. Can you imagine? Three families that had two kids, and we were four and my sister and her husband and two little kids, four, eight, twelve people in a tiny little apartment. It was just terrible. My brother-in-law decided he's gonna save his family, so every morning he was selling everything, you know, the rings, and jewelry. People, we were so confused, you didn't know what to do, what to buy, what to sell, you know, it was, anyhow, somehow, he managed somehow, I don't know, with some other people to get in touch with somebody who had a wagon, a farmer, a peasant, and he rented that wagon from him and he piled those babies on that wagon, and all the blankets he could find, covered the children up, and the few possessions they could manage to take with them, and he decided he was gonna take the children to Warsaw, because Warsaw, at the time, they believed it's gonna be an open city. He said he is not gonna live in a ghetto. See, Litzmannstadt, the ghetto in Lodz was the first one, before the Warsaw ghetto was established. At the time when they established it, the ghetto in Lodz, Warsaw was supposed to be a free city. So my brother-in-law, and my sister, and the two babies went to Warsaw. In an open wagon, can you imagine that, in the wintertime? We had just one card, there was no mail, I don't know how this card got to us, really. That they arrived in Warsaw and that was the last time we heard from them.

SL: And you never heard from them again?

RK: Never heard ever again. They must have been in the Warsaw ghetto.

SL: You said that you moved into the ghetto it was in wintertime already. Did the Germans come and force you from your house or did they come in the middle of the night and take you into the ghetto, or you just knew you had to leave?

RK: They gave us, they gave us, I think, several hours to move.

SL: What did you take with you from the house?

RK: I don't even remember. Probably clothes, you know. Actually, we slept, because there were so many neighborhoods, they just came in and they just chased the people out during the night. So, I remember several, several nights we slept in several, I don't know, I had several dresses on, you know. Just in case they come during the night, so we have some change of clothing with us. We slept in our coats and our shoes, you know and the bags right next to the bed, in case they come in the middle of the night, we just grab the bags and have the clothing which we had on. I remember I had about three, four, five, I don't even remember—I could hardly move. Clothes on me, you know. Everybody else did that.

SL: Did you bury any possessions in the yard, or hide anything, give anything to neighbors to keep for you?

RK: As a matter of fact, there was some neighbors who left Lodz, they asked us to keep it for them. I don't know what's happened to them. I know, grandmother, you know, she brought quite a few piece of jewelry from Russia, they were just beautiful and she gave it to my mother. I don't know what happened to that. Oh, my mother use to make beautiful, she was so talented, she use to make lace, lace bedspreads, lace tablecloths, all the China, Silver, I don't know what's happened to that.

SL: So, when you left your house then to go into the ghetto, was that the last time you saw your house?

RK: Yeah.

SL: The way that you had left it?

RK: Yeah.

SL: And so you lost all your possessions, except the clothing that you took with you?

RK: Everything, everything, just the clothing we took with us. A few blankets, you know.

SL: How far away was the ghetto established from your house?

RK: It wasn't too far. I would say, maybe about five, six blocks, maybe a little more. It wasn't too bad, too far.

SL: And how big an area was the ghetto itself? How many blocks?

RK: They took a whole section, the poorer section, actually. The housing was terrible, you know. Kinda old, the oldest section. It was the Baluty, we called it, which was well, how would I compare it with. It was just like Harlem, you know. But, something a neighborhood like that. A rundown neighborhood.

SL: Was it real large? A couple blocks? Five blocks by twenty blocks?

RK: Something like that, yeah.

SL: Was it a Jewish neighborhood?

RK: Yes, yeah, part of it. The majority was Jewish; there were a lot of Gentile people, actually. Actually, they built a bridge to go over because, because they had the street below the Gentiles used, the Germans used. One part of the ghetto— if you lived on one side of the ghetto, and then they built a bridge over the fence to go on the other side, still it was the ghetto too, cause they wanted to have that street below.

SL: Oh, I understand. So there was a street that they used but that wasn't inside the ghetto, so they built the bridge.

RK: They used, exactly. Yeah, fences on both sides and we had to go across on the bridge if we had to go on the other side.

SL: What kind of guards were there posted there in the beginning?

RK: Just terrible, they were just shooting at us at the end, you know. Most of them were drunk. With guns and machine guns.

SL: Did they have dogs?

RK: Dogs, yeah.

SL: So you were prohibited from leaving the ghetto once you went in?

RK: Oh, yeah. this was it, yeah. People tried, and they were killed, people tried.

SL: Your brother was not able to get out at all then?

RK: No, no, no.

SL: Could you describe to me the— what the apartment looked like that you lived in then with all those people.

RK: Oh just terrible. It was a two-room apartment, kitchen and a huge living room/bedroom, you know. We put cots out. I remember I slept on a big table, we slept on the floor— it was just terrible. It was just, no bathroom, bathroom outside. And then the winters were so cold, the pipes froze. No heating, no nothing. The water— we had to bring water in from the outside, water in pails, froze overnight. In the morning, you had to wash up, you had to chop it into pieces, you know. And the food was rationed. It was, this actually killed a lot of people, because we had to ration food and it was just about enough for one meal, really. A decent meal, one big breakfast, and this should have lasted us a whole week. And some people, they were so hungry, when they got the rations, they just ate it all up in one time, and didn't have anything for a week later, till they got the new rations in, and this killed a lot of people.

SL: I'm gonna turn the tape over.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 1

TAPE 2, SIDE 2

SL: I guess we can continue with the questioning about the ghettoization. You just described to me the apartment that you were living in. Now, I am not exactly sure with your situation how things changed, you know. If you lived in that apartment the whole time or were you constantly moving around?

RK: Yes, yes, no we stayed in that apartment.

SL: For the entire period?

RK: For the entire period, but—

SL: So who was else was living in your area.

RK: It changed because, first of all, my sister and her husband and the children left for Warsaw. So there were four people less. And we are still in 1940, the beginning.

SL: Sure.

RK: Yeah, okay. It was hard, it was hard. Then the factories— they started opening the factories— you know. tailor shops. My father was very, very depressed. My mother— they were losing weight and looked like skeletons— and it was, the food wasn't enough to live on, and not enough to die with, just torture, you know. Everybody was always hungry. People collapse from hunger. Then some kitchen soups opened up, you know. Somebody spilt some soup on the street, people would stop and look at the soup— oh my-look at the soup is, you know, wasted. Next to that spill could be somebody lying dying. They didn't feel sorry for the poor wretched person who is dying there, but they were sorry for the soup. But [what] hunger can do to a human being is unbelievable. And they kept coming in, they sending in people from, we were so overcrowded. Just terrible, no hospitals, no medical supplies, no doctors. Maybe there were doctors but nobody knows who's a doctor, where the doctors are, you know. And the guards, every so often they kept shipping in people from Czechoslovakia, people from Germany. A lot of people came in, it was amazing, we couldn't believe our eyes. Some people— apparently Hitler was starting death camps- lot of people in German. Some of the people came into the ghetto, were sent into the ghetto, apparently some ancestor far, far way back must have been a

Jews, a Jew and they were considered also Jews, and they were sent into our ghetto. Some of them actually came in Nazi uniforms, they were members of the Nazi party. They never even knew that somebody, some great-great-grandparents or somebody way back was a Jew. They never probably- they never knew about it, till Hitler found it out for them. It was ironic they came in with Nazi uniforms.

SL: How were they treated?

RK: Not very nice, I'm sure, [laughs] I'm sure. Then they start, this was, all of a sudden, they changed the ghetto to a labor camp. They started opening, organizing tailor shops to make uniforms for the army, and I think shoes and all kinds of factories all of a sudden. There were factories in that place, they just put it to use. They organized it for different things they needed for the army. And this somehow saved us, probably. My father especially, because he was an engineer with special machineries, and, they had maybe just three or four men in the whole ghetto who could do this type of work and they needed him. So my dad had a permission to go from place to place, which he also managed somehow to get me a job, you know, if you worked you were safe, because they kept coming in taking streets and just deporting people. I don't know what they did with them, other labor camps, or maybe concentration camps, you know. We didn't know anything about concentration camps. They would come into a block and just, in the middle of the night, and shouting and shooting off machine guns, with horrible voices of "[sounds like: *Rauss*] *Juden, Rauss Rauss, schweine*" You know, swearing and people just walked out of their houses from their beds, really in their nightgowns and were piled on the buses, you know. They took babies away from the mother's arms and just put them on the buses and nobody ever saw them again. And also they had lists of people who weren't capable, children, all of a sudden they made lists of children whose parents disappeared, and then there were children without parents, right away people organized. Somebody's got to take care of the children. So, they opened homes, just like orphanages and then they opened places for people, you know, for people who were sick, like hospitals. And all of a sudden the doctors came out from hiding, you know. And they were helping. We had to help each other because we didn't get any help from nobody, especially from the Polish

people and the Gentiles. You would think they would help their own people, but, as I said before, they didn't consider us as Polish citizens, even though we were there for, I don't know, how many generations.

SL: When did this initial period of getting things organized start?

RK: I would say '41, '42.

SL: So there was a long period of time when this was chaotic.

RK: Chaotic, everything chaotic. Even the time to organize still couldn't work, because people, they were starving, they were hungry, and everybody wanted to work, and some soup kitchens opened up, and everybody would—if I get that job, there I will have something more to eat. Everybody wanted to get those jobs, and it was just very chaotic, people were just absolutely hysterical. A lot of people just lost their minds and they were separated from families, and the guard came in, and one day they wanted to pick the old people, the next day they picked the red heads, or little kids, or older kids, or teenagers, you know, just at random, you know. People were separated and never seen, and they couldn't find each other, they were sent away, we didn't know where. And it was just- it is very difficult to describe what was going on, it was a madhouse, you know. Just a madhouse.

SL: Did you manage to go into the ghetto with a certain amount of money or possessions that you could sell for rations?

RK: Yes, yes we did have some money. First of all, when the War broke out, when you know, in Poland, we had a system, you know, if you borrow money, you know, we had written, they call [sounds like: vexells], you know, on time, you write out, like a form, you know, you borrowed somebody so and so much money, and it's gonna, supposed to be paid back at such and such date.

SL: Like an I. O. U. ?

RK: Like an IOU My dad, when the War broke out, he had a drawer full of those paper IOUs. What can you do with that? You couldn't collect it anymore.

SL: The people had written to him, or that he had borrowed? The people owed him.

RK: Yeah, the people owed him, so he couldn't do anything, you could use it for toilet paper, that's about it. We had some money. Naturally, the money was in the bank, you know, and all of a sudden everything was closed, how could you get it out? This was out. We had some jewelry. I know mother had a friend, cause we sold it, some rings, and odds and ends. Then my Dad, they needed people to work and they needed my father desperately, so my father got a job.

SL: Was it a paying job?

RK: I don't remember. Yes, it was a paying job, I think, and some extra rations. Then, it was, there were all kind of rumors. The ones who were not gonna be work, the ones who were not gonna work or don't have jobs, they will be sent away. Which was true, and that what they did. So, my father managed somehow, I don't know how, because they needed him desperately because, as I said, he was an engineer and they didn't have too many people to keep the machines going. So they needed him desperately. So, I was working, he got a job for my mother.

SL: Doing what?

RK: In a tailor shop. I think my mom, did, she sew on buttons on, just anything, just to work. Otherwise they would have taken her away.

SL: Now, what kind of job were you doing?

RK: Same thing, in a tailor shop.

SL: Is that what you did the whole time, or did you go from job to job?

RK: No, I think I did this and something else. What did I do? Oh yeah, we made like overshoes out of straw. This was at the time when they were fighting already, the Russians, and they needed like snowshoes to go to Russia. So, we had to make shoes out of straw, you know. Braiding it and then sewing it together, it was a whole business going on. Everything we did in the ghetto, it was for the army. Uniforms and shoes, and I don't know what else.

SL: Were you getting paid?

RK: I don't remember. Isn't this funny? I just can't remember if we got paid or not. We got— I think we did, we got special coupons for food, the ones who worked.

SL: But the main reason that you were working then was just to stay busy?

RK: So we won't be separated, stay busy so we won't be separated, so we won't be send away. But as far as being paid, I don't think we did, I don't remember. I think we got some extra rations. Extra, a piece of bread or something. And because the people who couldn't work, they were sent away. This was going on continuously.

SL: Lodz was in an unusual situation in that it was a really a city within the ghetto that functioned with all its own shops and it eventually had some hospitals that opened up and there were factories.

RK: I wouldn't call it hospitals, I would call it clinics, you know.

SL: So there was

RK: We tried to organize between ourselves. And at one time people were just absolutely emaciated you know- completely skeletons- you know, people, my dad he was a big man. He was so skinny, so thin, and everybody else, everybody else. They looked like walking skeletons on the streets. And there was nothing to eat.

SL: What kind of food did you have?

RK: Nothing. Bread, old stale bread. Some dried vegetable, soups. It was just terrible. Nothing, practically. I cannot even describe what we had. It was just unbelievable that we could exist on so little.

SL: Would you have to go and stand in line for it?

RK: Stand in line for it, yeah. Stand in line. At one time they sent in some horse meat. Naturally, most of the Jews were Orthodox, you know. This wasn't kosher. Mother insisted that father, my brother and I, we should eat it. She wanted us, she prepared it, but she wouldn't touch it. And she was starved, half starved. She cooked it, and prepared it, she wanted to save her family. She insisted that the children eat it and my dad, but she wouldn't. Finally, he made her eat, because we were afraid for her. "If you don't eat, we won't eat," and this kind of made her eat. And I remember that was the, Rabbi, the main

Rabbi in the ghetto called the people together, a lot of people didn't want to touch the meat, and they were starved. And he told them- he had a sermon. I remember it was in the middle of- in fact like a square, almost with a bank, just like little park. And he asked the people to come there, you know, messages goes from mouth to mouth, you know. Somehow we learned it so fast, you know, mouth to mouth, you know, information. And whoever could walk, whoever could get out of bed to come there, they did. And he told them, "If you want to live to eat kosher again, you better eat that horse meat." He gave them the blessing. And I think a lot of people did eat after that.

SL: Did you get it on any regular kind of basis or was it a one-time thing?

RK: Once, twice or maybe three times, but that's about it. That's about it. And people were just dropping like flies, just like flies. You could get soups in the factories; they had soups for the workers, watered down- frozen potatoes. It actually made people sick from it. I really don't know how we survived four-and-a-half years in the ghetto. It's a mystery. Not many did, actually. People just dropped like flies. They went to bed and never got up. They just died, by families, all families went to bed and all of a sudden you don't see them, you went there to check on them and they were all dead in bed.

SL: What about the problem with diseases?

RK: Terrible. There was a lot of TB sickness, there was, actually, my youngest uncle, my mother's youngest brother, he was the same age as my oldest sister, he died. He got TB and within a week he was dead. Mostly people died of out of hunger.

SL: It got to a point where there were thousands of people that were dying every month.

RK: Just every month, every day! Everyday and all of a sudden the ghetto wasn't overcrowded any more.

SL: What was it like to walk on the streets and see the corpses and the starving

RK: You, somehow you get so in a daze, you know, yes, in a daze, like you would be hypnotized, like zombies, you know. You had no feelings, no fear, no feelings. Talking about it, it sounds so unreal, you know, like, I don't know how to describe; really, there is no words to describe that. Like a science fiction movie or something, but, unfortunately, it is not fiction, it was the real thing. And then in '42,

they kept coming getting people out of bed and taking children away and so on. '42, we had to get out again, in our block, on our street where we lived, our section, and they were picking people at random, and those trucks, you know. People could hardly walk, they couldn't even lift their feet up to climb on a big huge truck, you know, pile them in like cattle. At that time, this was in, I think it was in July in '42, my brother and I and my parents we went out and they picked my mom and my father. And whoever screamed or made a noise they took them too. And all of a sudden I realized, they stood there with those big huge rubber things, hitting the people to climb on those trucks, and I saw my mom being pushed, my father being hit, he's trying to help my mother to get up, you know, and I started to scream, and my brother and another neighbor pushed me down so they wouldn't notice me, and my brother just put his hand on my mouth, so if they would have heard me they would have taken me too, you know. It was just, finally, I don't know how my parents got on that truck, and all of a sudden, I see my mother and father just waving to us from the truck. This was the last time I saw my mother, [crying] but my father came back, because somebody told us, "You better go to the manager, from that factory and tell them that they took your father." So my brother and I we were just running and we went and they got him back. And somehow, my mother would have come back too. They got them out, they got my dad out, they found my father. There was people, hundreds of them, you know, just piled in, in tiny rooms, and trying to put them on the wagons and ship them someplace. Oh, then we heard shooting, they probably took them to the woods and shot them, God knows what they did. Somehow, the Germans found my dad and brought him home, and they were trying to find mother, but somehow they were separated, Somehow they were, I don't know how, with all that tumult and all that confusion and screaming and crying, they were separated, and father came back, but not my mom. This was the last time I saw her. [crying] And this was '42, this was '42, and from then on, it was everyday, everyday they took people away. We didn't know where they were shipping them. We didn't know anything about it, we just know that people just disappeared. My cousins we lived with, they took their children at the same time when they took my mom and father. And this was just Hell. I

had, after my mom was gone, my brother met a girl and he married her, so he moved out too, so there was just the four of us in that apartment.

SL: You never had anyone move in with you then?

RK: No, somehow they went, there was nobody left, you know, very few people left. It was so overcrowded, people couldn't, we couldn't breathe. All of a sudden, people just dropping away, you know, like flies. This was till '44, we walked to work, and somehow I managed to ration, you know. Everyday, my father had a piece of bread, because I realized if I don't do that I won't be able to keep him. We still had hope, you know, we never lost our faith, our hope. We questioned, I questioned a lot, how come God allows all that, you know, and I was very bitter. Actually, who wouldn't, but I felt I had to take over, I wasn't the daughter, I was parent to my father. I felt I got to keep him alive, and I did, until '44. Till '44, this was what was in, August I think. '44 August, that's when the war was going bad for the Germans already, and the Russians were coming closer, so they liquidated the ghetto. [crying] So, I think it was August '44, but they were shipping faster. We knew they were liquidating. My brother and his wife, they decided, very, those two were intellectuals- very kinda of- how should I say? They gonna fight back, you know. They gonna fight back, they gonna hide, they are not going to be, we realized something is happening, something is going on with the people. Where do they ship all those people? What are they doing with all those people? We knew something, they are doing something with them, but we didn't know anything about concentration camps or Auschwitz, at least I didn't, you know. Anyway, finally, you know, the factories were still going, my father was still going to work, I was too, my brother was, my sister-in-law was, and finally they just, one time they liquidated the part where we were living. We were suppose to go someplace else because there was nobody left, but we were there. They were gone- disappeared. So we moved in with my uncle. [crying] There were several families, together again, deciding what to do. In the meantime, one of my aunts had a baby, and the uncle who died. They took one child away and she got pregnant again in the ghetto and she had another baby. This was just terrible to see those little babies, the way they were dragged away from their mother's

arms. It was just obscene, you know, like they took babies away, there were dogs, wild dogs, they took babies away from the mothers, and then just threw it in the air, little babies, threw it in the air and they were shooting at them, and when the babies dropped down onto the ground, the dogs teared them apart. Stuff like that. Finally, my sister-in-law and my brother were decided they're gonna hide, because the Russians are, you know, you could actually hear shootings, maybe it wasn't the Russians shooting, you know, maybe they were shooting people. Who knows what they were doing. And they decided they gonna stick it out, they gonna hide in the ghetto, they're not gonna be, we saw those wagons, those kettle wagons, where they piled the people in, they're not gonna be shipped like this. So it was just my father and I. For a long, for a week we didn't hear from my brother and his wife, we didn't know and her mother, my daughter, my sister-in-law's mother was with them too. We didn't know what's happened. All of a sudden, they decided that they just couldn't hide, there was not enough food, and they were suffocating, you know. I don't know where they were hiding, some attic, I don't know. So they decided, we got together again and what do we do. So we decided we were just gonna go. We couldn't stay. And my uncle's decided the same thing, they gonna go. But we decided, since we don't have a place where to stay anymore, couldn't move in with them because they were crowded anyway, so we just took a little, whatever it was left, and we walked to those wagons and we were shipped to Auschwitz.

SL: So you went with?

RK: My father.

SL: With your father, your sister-in-law, your brother

RK: My sister-in-law, my brother and my sister-in-law's mother.

SL: And when you got to Auschwitz that was the last time you saw any of them?

RK: I saw, this was the last time I saw my father, my brother, we were separated right away. But I was with my sister-in-law.

SL: Did she survive?

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RK: Yeah.

SL: Oh, she did.

RK: She lives in Canada.

SL: Are you in contact with her now?

RK: Not really, we were, we were in Sweden. She doesn't speak-

SL: Is she remarried?

RK: She remarried, she has twin boys, and it too painful for her, she'd rather not. But life has to go on.

SL: I'm gonna have to end the tape here.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 2

TAPE 3, SIDE 1

SL: So when we were talking, we spoke about some of the things that were happening in the ghetto and I did want to ask you a few more things about what was happening there. You talked about where you were living and the type of rations that you were receiving. Now you mentioned earlier that you had some private tutoring in the ghetto. Do you want to tell me a little bit about that.

RK: Yes, since education was completely interrupted as soon as the war broke out. I think this was in September, just before school should have started normally and after vacation time. But that was such, well Poland was invaded and, somehow the schools were never opened. And then when the Germans occupied, I think school must have opened for the Gentile children, but, we weren't- the Jewish children were not included. We were not allowed to attend any schools, although I was done with public schools. Most, a lot of people never went any father, you see. I am talking about the high school *gymnasium*, which is, as I said before, was private, and you had to pay tuition for it. But since this was also a Jewish run *gymnasium*, was where I should have, and where my parents planned to send me too. Naturally, it was such, it was disorder, and everybody were running away and some were there, some were back and some were not. It was just; everything was just in such a disarray that schools never opened. Actually, we couldn't have run, the schools couldn't have been open, because then we had to go into the ghetto, and this was it. So my parents felt that I should continue privately. In the beginning, till about '42, I was studying continuously. It's almost, in a way it was almost like an escape, you know. I escaped to the books, really, in order not to face what's going on. And the same thing for my father and mother, my parents, and my brother also. We were just- my father was continuously looking and going and asking people for reference books and stuff like this, and then he found somebody. He was a professor at the university. He came in, was sent into Lodz, or he escaped wherever he used to live, and, there were a group of other kids, other friends got together and somehow we formed, almost like a little school, really, we had lessons.

SL: Where was the ghetto, where were you?

RK: In our apartment, you know, or we went to somebody else's apartment, you know. Wherever it was quiet, where there were no babies to interrupt us, or something.

SL: Was your father paying to have a tutor?

RK: I never knew what were the arrangements, this I couldn't tell you. He must have, you know, he must have paid that man, you know.

SL: Now, it was my understanding that there were some organized schools in the ghetto.

RK: Yes, there were, I think it was run by rabbis, like *yeshivas*. You know, studying the Bible and stuff like that. Mostly for boys.

SL: So you studied privately until '42 and was that when you got a job, is that when you started working in the, making buttons?

RK: Oh, it was even before. You know, I had to, for the fear that we might be separated or deported, or taken away. Whoever wasn't productive- was a fear that, like sick- they were took away. I told you we had some, we had some type of clinic or hospital, and all of a sudden, they came in, there were a lot of people, elderly, which were bedridden or sick, they were taken away right away.

SL: Do people stop going to the clinic for fear they would be taken?

RK: For fear, of course. Actually, what good would that clinic be? There was no medication or nothing, you know. Even if somebody could have been helped with drugs or surgery, there was nothing, you know, to help them with.

SL: Now I also understand that they were, Lodz was in a very special situation and had a lot of things within it that many other ghettos didn't have. For example, its organization and it had newspapers that were printed. Did you see these newspapers?

RK: I think, you know, it's funny I don't recall that. Apparently, it was, we had our own police, and there was one Jewish one, what would you say it in German, he was so called the manager of the ghetto which...

SL: The Rumkowski, that you were talking about?

- RK: Yes, yes, he was just a puppet, you know. He was, he said, he did what he was told to do and say. And sometimes, some of the police- so called police- they probably got special rations and, they looked better than the rest of us, you know. Just probably the same situation, like the *kapos* in the concentration camps. Some of them were I think they were throwing around there, how should I put it? They were pushing sometimes people around, you know.
- SL: Speaking of the Jewish police then, what was your reaction to them? Were they scary enough that you listened to them? Would they threaten you enough?
- RK: Well, actually I never had any opportunity to be involved with anything, you know, like that, that the police had to take care of for me or my family, you know. We, I supposed there were always somebody who committed some kind of crime against somebody, stealing, you know. We are just people like anybody else.
- SL: What kind of uniforms did they wear?
- RK: Let me think- isn't that funny? I never thought of it in such a long time. I don't think they had uniforms, I think they had special bands on their arms. I don't remember, I really don't.
- SL: Did they carry any weapons of any type?
- RK: Sticks, I think, or those billy goat—
- SL: Billy clubs?
- RK: Billy clubs, yeah. No, no guns, the Germans would not allow, no I am sure they weren't carrying guns. But they were pushing, sometimes, people around, you know.
- SL: Did you ever witness any acts of brutality that they committed against anyone on the street?
- RK: No. I cannot say I did, but, you know, from hearsay, you know, I don't know if it's true or not. Sometimes people little exaggerate a little bit, you know.
- SL: I do want to ask you about the *Judenrat* but I was going to wait for a little while. I might as well ask you right now. You mentioned Rumkowski, and he was the so-called dictator of the ghetto. What did you think about him?

RK: People have a very strong feelings, I think. Now, I'm old and if I think about it, he couldn't do anything, really, he was threatened every day of his life, you know, he told the people what he was told to say. His family was in the, I suppose the man went along with a lot of things he couldn't say no because he feared for his family. You know, like anybody else would have done probably.

SL: When you were there in the ghetto though, was there a talk about Rumkowski; was there a feeling one way or another about him?

RK: Oh sure, people were bitter, people were scared, they were hungry, they had to have somebody to blame and he was the leader, they thought he should do this, but people- now I think about it- what could he have done? He could have said no and be killed. Probably he would have. They would have gotten somebody else. But when there is a question of surviving, people will do strange things, just to survive, or help their family to survive.

SL: How big a factor was the *Judenrat*) in the lifestyle of the ghetto?

RK: Well, I suppose that it posted all kind of announcements, and, but I don't think that there was such a big crack there at all. At the time, at the time, you know, probably, people took it seriously, but now, if you stop and think, they didn't have any power to do anything, they were just instruments, and this probably, it was also a plan of the Germans, a Nazi plan to turn one Jew against the other. It was such a horrible situation, so much hunger, so much illness, and people just weren't thinking rationally. Really, if you are hungry, all your philosophies, all your ideas, everything, it's not important. Nothing is important. You only think, you are hungry, you want something to eat. All your ideas, you know, you can be a great politician, you can have great ideas, and be very idealistic and all that, but when your belly's full, everything sounds real good. But when a person is starved to death and sees your little child crying, "Mama give me something, give me a piece of bread," and you don't have it, what does everything else mean? Nothing. Your material things, not a darn thing. You cannot eat the furniture, or even your diamonds. So I think, what the Germans did, they were actually turning Jew against Jew, for people to think that's it not their doing, Jewish Police, it's the *Judenrat* is doing it. It's very clever, isn't

- it? Oh sure, at the time, probably, I must have been mad at them too, like everybody else, but if you stop and think, that they weren't even powerful, they were just instruments. This was a part of the plans, of the Nazi plan, to, you know, we should hate each other. To turn us into animals.
- SL: Did, you know, was there any sign that the *Judenrat* was doing things in the ghetto? You mentioned they posted signs, but what types of signs were they and were they....
- RK: They were like announcements, you know, like announcements, curfew time and shouldn't do this, shouldn't do that, you know, this type of things. Frankly, I don't know, I was too young really to know if they did something more than that, you know. I was so involved, you know, trying to help my father because I idolized him and I felt this was my responsibility.
- SL: Did you have to go to the *Judenrat* to any kind of special group for work permits?
- RK: I don't think so. Maybe I did, I don't remember. No, maybe my father has something to do with that because...The *Judenrat* probably, yes, I remember something that the *Judenrat* did, you know, like the ration things, you know, you are supposed to pick it up at certain place, a certain time, you know, stuff like that, tickets, you know, ration tickets. There were a lot of hard feelings about the *Judenrat* I know people felt bad. This was probably a reaction what they wanted, the Germans really wanted that. I think in many instances they were accused of things, which it wasn't even in their power to do any- What could they do? I'm, it's so many years, you know. Now I can think more rationally, you know. I'm not hungry anymore and I can analyze it in a different way than people at the time. At the time, you know something is terribly wrong. You know you were terrified for your life, for your children. You were hungry, most of all you were hungry, and if a person is hungry you don't think rationally. So, naturally, you had to blame somebody, and that, this was their plan, that's what they wanted, to turn the people, to turn the people, people against people.
- SL: What about the growth of the political parties that were inside the ghetto?

RK: I don't think there was any, maybe in the beginning, they were the Communists, they were kind of active. All those beautiful speeches, you know, and this and that. You mean like underground? I wasn't aware of any of that. Like the [sounds like: Rosagetti], you talking about?

SL: I was speaking about some of the Jewish political groups that became stronger and then organized their own little societies.

RK: Maybe in the beginning, they tried to do that, but I don't think it was towards the end. Maybe right in the beginning there were meetings and stuff like that. Trying, I suppose wishful thinking, you know, trying to hope for something which never came about really.

SL: Was there any indication of resistance in the ghetto?

RK: No, no, sure, in the beginning, just before the ghetto was closed, there were several incidents like that. Probably some soldiers were beaten up because [they were] trying to rob somebody, you know, they were, they took out whole blocks of people too and just killed them. Even if there were, I am sure a lot of people wanted to fight back, but what the Germans did- they were, and with all the horrors-, they were smart. They put such a fear into people, you know, like in this country, when somebody commits a crime he's responsible for his own action. In those days, in the ghetto, if somebody committed a crime against a German- I wouldn't say a crime- tried to defend himself, and fought back, he wasn't kept responsible just himself- not only his family, but the whole block, blocks of people paid their lives for it, so how could anybody take a responsibility like that?

SL: I understood that there was an underground, or an illegal radio broadcast that was set up. Did you ever hear that?

RK: Yes, yes, yes, we, I remember my dad use to come home and tell us what he heard, you know. He never told us where. Apparently, you know, it was, from England, usually a broadcast from England. So, in this kind of, every once in a while it went from mouth to mouth what was heard, you know, so and so, and this and this happened, and it gave us a little hope. And then somebody went on the radio probably and had a great speech, "Not to lose faith, and then we gonna help you." It gave us

- something to go on, you know, with our lives. And then it, a week, two, three weeks went by and nothing happened, and we were down again, you know.
- SL: Were you able to keep track at all of the progress of the war? Did you know United States had entered the war?
- RK: No.
- SL: What did you know about what was going on?
- RK: Very little. Every once in a while there was just a glimmer, you know, just a glimmer, and then all of a sudden, the underground radio, it was found out, you know, and then we didn't hear anything. People were afraid to go there again, you know, they couldn't put the other people's lives in jeopardy. And with what do you fight? First of all, you were starved to death, you could hardly walk, and the Polacks, they didn't help us. As a matter of fact, every time we went by the fence, you know, and there was a car going by with them, they were sticking their tongues out at us, like we were animals in a cage, you know. So with what do you fight? You didn't have the strength to fight.
- SL: What about religious life in the ghetto, was there any semblance of Jewishness?
- RK: Well, I suppose, you know, maybe the Orthodox prayed, I don't know. I wasn't involved with that. Our lives, you know, I suppose a lot of people felt very bitter about it. If there is a God, why is he allowing all that? People were very bitter about it. As a matter of fact, I remember myself saying, "If I ever live, survive all that, and if I ever get married, if I have children..." I don't know how I will feel about it, but I changed, naturally. I've never felt strong as being a Jew as I did then, and I still do.
- SL: Were you able to keep any of the traditions at all, did you celebrate any holidays or did you just let them go by?
- RK: There was no way, no way. There was nothing, you know, with what would you celebrate, *Pesach*? Where would you get *matzo*? You know. There was no way of doing it. Everything was- people were sick, people were sick, there was no energy to do anything, you know. We knew we were Jews, that's for sure, that's for sure. We suffered enough. That's the only way we knew we were Jews.

- SL: Did you participate in any of the labor strikes that happened in the ghetto in the earlier years? There were several factory strikes.
- RK: No, I don't think I did.
- SL: Do you remember hearing anything about that?
- RK: No, I don't recall that. Was it real, you had information about that?
- SL: Yeah.
- RK: Really?
- SL: Yeah, apparently, the only method of resistance that was available to the workers was the fact that they just refused to go back to work and Rumkowski had to give into some of their demands.
- RK: Maybe, it was something, but I was not involved with that. There again, you know, I was too young.
- SL: Do you recall there was an area in the ghetto called *Marysin*, *Marysin* where they had co-ops that were established? The *Judenrat* was responsible for developing a few cooperatives there. It had been at one point a Gentile area.
- RK: You mean like a *kibbutz*?
- SL: I am not exactly sure; I believe it was just like a name of one of the neighborhoods within Lodz and the ghetto...
- RK: What, what, how do you pronounce that?
- SL: Here, this is the way it is spelled.
- RK: *Marysin*, oh yeah. Now I am not aware of that.
- SL: Again, I found this out from some research that I did on the ghetto. I thought you might know what it was.
- RK: No, I don't know. I am sorry I don't recall. Maybe I knew about it, I just don't recall that.
- SL: Was there any active smuggling that was going on that you knew about?
- RK: In the beginning it was. In the beginning I know it was.
- SL: What types of materials were being smuggled?

RK: Food, mostly food. Yeah.

SL: Did you ever participate in that?

RK: No, no.

SL: Was your brother able to do any of that? You mentioned that he looked fairly Aryan.

RK: Well, he did it before we went into the ghetto, and maybe when the ghetto was still open, you were allowed to go in and out, for a short time only. He did a couple of times, he just sneaked out and went into a Christian neighborhood and he could buy groceries. He did that, but when it was closed, no.

SL: What—

RK: I have to cough

SL: That's fine. Could you describe to me what a typical day would be like in the ghetto, once you were working?

RK: Oh, it was so dull, so dull. Usually, naturally in the morning you wake up, you go to work, hardly dragging yourself, helping my father get together. Actually, to put him together, to make him go to work. In the factory, it was the same thing, you know, you got to, you couldn't take breaks, you know, you just got to continue, you know, there was a quota of how much they were suppose to get out, you know how many uniforms, how many pieces of, it was almost like piecework, you know. We had to, we had to, there was a quota we had to get out so and so much per day or week, and sometimes we were behind, and then the foremen, they had foremens there, who supervised, you know, they specialized, the fact, you know, different floors, different divisions, and we just had to rush with it, like any other, I suppose. It was run like any other factory, you know, you had to produce. And people were so fearful if they are not going to be able to produce, then out they go, and they disappear. Nobody knew where. So everybody, actually with their last strings, worked like dogs.

SL: Did you work until your quota was met every day or did you have a certain time that you went?

RK: We had a certain time. I think it was 7 in the morning until 5, 6 o'clock in the, I think it was 6 o'clock in the evening. It's been so long ago, I never thought about it, you know, until you mentioned it. I think that was what was the time.

SL: And then what would you do when you went home in the evening?

RK: Went home in the evening, you know. No electricity, sometimes the electricity was off. In the wintertime it was just freezing, sometimes we had candles and I would read. I would do my homework or my father would quiz me, you know. And we were talking. I remember Dad always telling me, he thought I had a good voice to sing, and he says "Oh, I am so sorry, you should have been studying voice, you should have gone to musical school", you know, and then he says, "I promise you, we live through that, first thing if I be able, if I am still around, you gonna get your music lessons." You know, almost living in daydreaming, you know. Actually, this actually kept us going, hoping, little hope that someday we gonna be free, someday we won't have to live that way.

SL: Along that line, with your daydreams, what did you think, how did you picture yourself living if you were free? What did you see yourself doing?

RK: Well, I remember my parents always telling us- my brother and me. That there were so many incidents people were separated, you know, and people were talking how in the world are we gonna find, you know, after this is all over, how we gonna find each other? So I remember my parents almost pounding into us, our only way to get together again- if we are separated- is to get in touch with my sister in Israel. Through her, we will get together. And before the war, naturally I wrote letters to my sister, but I never wrote addresses, this was my Dad, you know, he would finish the letter, I just wrote a few lines, "Hi and how are you? I'm fine, how are you?" You know the usual thing. And I never, I don't know, this is almost a mystery to me, how in the world did I get that, you know. I never knew the address because my father usually took care of the cards, you know, sending mail, letters and so on, writing the addresses. I remember, when I, even during the war, where I was in Lodz, also when I was in Germany, walking in Berlin at Krupps, if there still a desk there, someplace- I had carved out, one

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of my instruments I had to work with, the address of my sister so I won't forget it. Isn't that something?

And for the life of me, I don't understand how in the world did I knew the address, because I never paid- you know the young girl who cares about an address, you know.

SL: I'm going to have to interrupt you and turn the tape over.

RK: Okay.

END OF TAPE 3, SIDE 1

TAPE 3, SIDE 2

SL: We covered pretty much what was happening in the ghetto, and as we said before, you were in a situation where, even though there were a lot of things going on, you were mainly concerned with your own family, and your way of making it through.

RK: Mostly, I believe most people did.

SL: And that's very interesting in itself, that you don't have to be taking advantage of whatever was there, but just trying to—

RK: To survive. I think most people had the same struggle. I wasn't unique in any way. Most people, their concern was—is this on? To survive and hoping maybe, we still, all the tragedies, the children missing, you know, and parents missing, and starving, and illness, and dying, you name it, we had it that horrible place, but there was still [a] little hope. There was still jokes told.

SL: Can you remember any jokes at all, what the gist of them was?

RK: No, but I remember my father, he had such a terrific sense of humor. The German people, you know, I told you they were sent then to the ghetto, they were selling everything, and my father had some money left. Anyway, he felt sorry for them, so whatever they had, some people, he got acquainted with some of them because he admired them for their intellectual, you know, for their education. They were very intelligent people, he made a few friends with them. Anyway, a friend of a friend of a friend, you know, that's the way it goes, had something to sell and they needed, and were starving, maybe there was some drug smuggled in, you know, maybe the people bought that, I don't know exactly. You know, I was a very innocent little girl, you know, really, I didn't know what was really going on. If there was something going on, you know. So one day my dad came home, he had a little attaché where he kept his papers, you know, and he opens up and it was a suitcase full of eyeglasses! I said, "Why, what is this?" "Well, I felt sorry for those people, they needed some money for something, you know, and he wanted to sell eyeglasses." Somebody collected eyeglasses from all the other people, they were selling. Probably it was the last thing they had to sell. They needed money, so he bought it, you

know. I said, "What are you going to do with those glasses?" "Well, I'll think of something." You know, he fitted everybody with glasses at work. It was the funniest thing. Some of them, there was one little guy in particular, I remember, he was a very small man and his face was very narrow and he fitted him with glasses which he could see through, you know, he needed glasses, but where would you buy glasses? This was my father's idea, that maybe somebody could use those glasses and he will help them out with that. So [he] fitted that little old- little man with glasses, but they were too big for his face. Being an engineer, somehow he concocted some kind of screw, some wire so it would hold it on his nose. He looked almost like Frankenstein, with wires sticking out and screws sticking out the side of his head, and that man was wearing those glasses! He could see, you know. Things like that, and we thought it was very funny, you know. People were kind of teasing that man with those glasses, you know, "You look like Frankenstein." Things like this happened all the time, you know. You had to laugh sometimes, you know. There were songs, I remember father, we one time got together in our building, there was, my father brought a friend home with him. I still had some ration left and the next day we were suppose to get our new rations, so he decided let's feed somebody, so I said, "Okay, whatever we had we could share it." He brought that man, and he was a song writer. And he had some music with him, some sheets he wrote lyrics in a song about the ghetto. And it was so beautiful, and then he called somebody, another man who could sing. Even with all the tragedy, we sang. And somebody else would, recite poetry, you know, just something to get our mind off from hunger. This was still in the early stages. But later, we were so far gone, nothing could have entertained us, you know. Just one-track mind, "I'm hungry. I'm dying from hunger; I want food, food, food." You know. This was the main subject everybody talked about.

SL: Okay, let's bring you to the time when you decided to leave the ghetto, and you said that was because there was really no place for you to live anymore.

RK: Everything was hopeless. Everything was just; there was no rations, no food, no place to stay. Some parts of the ghetto was closed off because they pushed us closer in together, because there weren't

too many people left. In the beginning we were overcrowded, it was wall to wall people. And it was, everybody was sick, everybody was, it was just so hopeless that we got to a point "They cannot do anything anymore to us." What's the use, hey want us to go, we go, you know." There was, oh I hope nobody, nobody ever get to a point of such a hopelessness as we felt then.

SL: So you decided to leave the ghetto and you went on the trucks, which you didn't know where they were going.

RK: Yeah, to go. We didn't know where, no.

SL: You said that this was sometime in, you think, the late summer of 1944?

RK: Yeah, yeah, '44. This was in August.

SL: How long did the trip take before you were arrived at the destination?

RK: I think, we lost track, because, you know, we didn't see daylight, we didn't see night, it was just closed off. We didn't know.

SL: Oh, they took you in closed trucks?

RK: Closed trucks, yeah. Cattle trucks, you know.

SL: Now, were they trucks, or were they trains?

RK: Trains, trains, yeah. You know, those.

SL: You went by train on a cattle train?

RK: Cattle, yeah. That's right. I think it must have been either 3 or 4 days.

SL: You received no food or water during this trip?

RK: Just before we went up, we, you got a piece of bread. That's about it. Each of us got a piece of bread. This was everything, no water. Just a pail to use as a toilet, a bucket, you know, in the middle of the wagon, you know.

SL: Do you recall what your thoughts were when you were on that wagon as to where you were going?

RK: We knew, it was almost like a feeling. This is our last trip, you know. People were crying, people were hysterical and, in the beginning, we talked and dreamed. "Maybe this, maybe that," you know. All

kind of fantasy, but deep down everybody knew this was the end. Finally, enough, that when they went by, actually, I don't know, we lost track of time, really. I didn't know if it was daytime outside or if it was night, or what date, we didn't know anything, you know. It is terrible to get people in such a condition. No feelings at all except we were sitting just holding hands, you know. You knew that this is it.

SL: What was your arrival at Auschwitz like? What-

RK: It was absolutely bewildering. All of a sudden, the train stops and the doors open, and it was daytime and it blinded us, you know. [inaudible] So long being in the dark, we couldn't see for, I don't know for how long, I couldn't focus on anything. The only thing we could hear was, it was horrible shouts, with German, you know, swearing at us, pushing, and I could feel I was moved here, move there, pushed, I was just like a robot, you know. All of a sudden, I could, my eyes got adjusted to the daytime, to light, and I realized, well when we arrived that hundreds of people out of those wagons, and there were soldiers with dogs, and machine guns, pushing here, pushing there, screaming, people crying, people being kicked, people being beaten, it was such a bewildering feeling. I kept saying, "Where are we? What's going on? What's happened?" You know. It's just like you were, you dream, and you are trying to wake up. I kept saying, "No, I must have, this must be a nightmare, I'm gonna wake up any minute and this is not happening at all." You know. That kind of feeling, very bewildered, we didn't know what was going on. We saw barracks, huge barracks but fences first. Miles and miles of fences, and finally, they told us to get out, to line up, men here, women here, you know. And all of a sudden, I realized that my brother and my father went one direction, and Hela, my sister-in-law and her mother and I, we went in a different direction, and I realized we won't be seeing each other anymore, we are being separated, and just when I had picked up a little suitcase I had, were-we had our last piece of bread in it, and I ran out and grabbed the bread out of the suitcase and I ran to my Dad and I gave it to him, and I was pushed right back, you know, to the women's line. And I could tell my Dad was terribly nervous because, while they were marching on, they told them to

march. There was so much going on, so much shouting and shooting and screaming and crying, I really- it's unbelievable, I cannot describe it. It was just a nightmare, a horrible nightmare is not that horrible, you know, [to] what was going on then. This was Auschwitz. And I realized my Dad- all of a sudden- I knew he knew what was going on. He started breaking his bread, breaking it and just giving it to this man, and this man, and I knew he was share the bread because it was the last piece of bread I will ever eat, you know. Somehow, I felt that that's what my father was thinking or feeling. He did it in such a nervous way, you know, because of him, he was a very calm man, you know, very intelligent, and very thoughtful man and he always psychoanalyzed things, you know, he was that type of, a thinking man, and I knew, the way he was, I was watching the way he was breaking that bread, I knew that something terrible, he know-he knew that something terrible is gonna happen to all of us. And he says, "[sounds like: Meisel], let's eat that bread, everybody should have a piece of that bread." You know. And we were marched in different directions, and we came in, well Hela and her mother and I, we were just holding on like for dear life so we won't be pushed, separated, you know. Then, they took Hela's mother away in a different line, probably the older people.

SL: This was a selection?

RK: Selection. And Hela and I, we were just hanging onto each other and shaking. (crying). And, then we marched, they marched us into a huge building and they told us to get undressed, strip all our clothes, and there came soldiers in and out, in and out, like pushing us around like we were cattle, not human beings. And then they told us we gonna take a shower. We didn't know, about-a shower is a shower, but then they did select some people for a different shower, and they put, anyway we went into a shower. Well, apparently, it was the right shower, it wasn't the gas shower, but we didn't see Hela's mother anymore. Hela was very upset, and so was I. [crying] And they shaved our heads and they were spraying us with all kinds of, I don't know what they were spraying us with, and finally we were done. While they were shaving my head, somebody else was shaving Hela's head, and all of a sudden I realized Hela's not near me and I realized we were separated. And it was so funny-finally

they let us go out, you know, somebody else was in line, and we were suppose to go out a different door came onto a hallway, and I kept looking around, "Hela! Hela!" calling, and then somebody else next to me was call "Ruschka! Ruschka!" that's what they were calling, it's Rose actually, little Rose, you know, Ruschka in Polish. All of a sudden, we looked at each other, and we didn't recognize, it was Hela, standing right next to me and I didn't recognize, she had beautiful long hair, braids almost to her waistline. Everybody admired it, she was a beautiful girl. Everybody admired her hair, you know, it was thick, black, black, real black hair. We looked at each other, she was calling me, looking for me, and I was looking back, we were standing next to each other and we didn't recognize each other, naked and without hair. Can you imagine that? No, nobody can. And we looked at each other, with all the tragedy, and I don't understand, we start with tears in our eyes we started laughing. [crying] I don't, and then, and then, we had, they marched us off to a different place and there were lying piles and piles of clothing. We had to leave all our luggage, everything. They checked our teeth for gold fillings, or whatever, and I suppose some people, who had- maybe they pulled it, taking someplace else, I don't know what they did. I am sure they did just that. Then we had to leave all our clothes in a big pile, and they gave us those horrible Auschwitz uniforms and with the stripes, it was almost ridiculous. A tall person got a short dress, a tiny little person had a long dress, it was just absolutely unbelievable. We were pushed around again, marched off again to the barracks. This was something else again. We had to sleep, just lined up like sardines, actually like sardines in a can. One person on the top of the other, you know, with, you had, I was lying between the legs on somebody else, and somebody else was lying on top of me. That's the way we slept, one next to the other. In the morning we were rushed out, the *Kapos* you know, they make horrible shriek voices, and those were Jewish people- I think they were Jewish, I don't know. Yeah, I am sure they were Jewish. They rushed us out, this was our first night. It was just terrible, it was so hard, it still was in August, the box locked, no windows, and you piled on top of each other. People were crying, people were hysterical, some people were sick, some people had diarrhea, right on the top of each other, you know. It was just, I don't

know, I don't think anybody ever, some people had nightmares. I don't think anybody had ever had a nightmare like this. This was, it's undescrivable, I cannot, you know, you can read a million books and see a million movies, it's still not the way, you cannot describe it. And is somebody cried, they were hit, you know, the *Kapos* was hitting them, and not only the person who cried but the people next to them, so everybody was watching out for each other. Not to move, not to turn, not to do anything, we just lie like sardines, literally, like sardines in a can, that's the way we were lying there, all night long. In the morning, you know, they chased out of the barracks again, earlier, the crack of dawn. And this is the northern part of Poland which gets real cold at night, very hot during the day at that time of the year. We didn't have shoes, somehow I managed somehow to get two left shoes, mind you. This killed my feet, we had to stand out in line, they were counting us. They let us stay there I don't know for how long. People were just fainting, we had to stay. First, the *Kapo* counted then some German woman came and counted, then somebody else came and counted, I don't know why they want to count us, they know what they had there. And I was- the food- then they want us to wash in another barrack, which was just a little faucets, just the water wasn't running, just dripping. Hundreds of people just managing- barely managing to wet your hand. How can you wash that way? Pushing and shoving and some girls had their periods, just blood just running down their legs, nothing, you know, to clean, or nothing, no pads, not even a rag, you know. And I was there, and then there was selections again. I remember one time we went out, they told us, they took us to a different place, a distance away from our barracks where we were staying, and we had to get undressed again, it was another selection. So Hela, my sister-in-law, she had pleurisy in the ghetto, she was sick, so she had a little scar, probably where she had the drainage from the fluid from her lungs, so she still had a little scar on the side of her chest. And we were, all of a sudden we realized, if somebody wasn't perfect on their body, they took them away. So it was a feeling that I was afraid for her because of that little scar she had on her chest, so I told Hela, let's change places or I could kinda be out in line and somehow cover her scar with my shoulder, or something like that, and the German notices what I was trying to do, that I was a

little bit out of line, and with his fist just pushed me back, but somehow I realize I got to save Hela, and I just managed to fall this way, so he never noticed that she had that scar. So, they picked some people out, probably older people, and the rest were marched back to the same barracks and I was there for about ten days. It was undescrivable. The food was just, some kind of, I don't know what it really was. It wasn't food, it was just enough, not to die, enough to live. Just pure torture. In the evenings, always counting, always the crack of dawn we had to go out and count. We didn't get any sleep. No food, no sleep and the heat during the day and freezing during the night. It was just unbelievable.

SL: Did you have any labor at all? Were they making you work?

RK: Not then, no, no, not then, not then.

SL: You mentioned to me that you met a cousin of yours.

RK: Yes, we met, my cousin, the one we moved in with right away in the ghetto, she was there, and somehow she wanted to be with us because she was alone, and naturally, we were cousins through marriage. Her husband was my first cousin, but we were very close. I don't know, we managed somehow- we sneaked her into our cabin so she stayed with us, you know, and that's probably one time they just, they were counting and counting over and over because there was one more person, you know. And we stayed together, we managed somehow, we stayed together, at least the three of us. Kinda looked out for each other, you know. At least we had somebody to cling to, you know. People were just absolutely like zombies, some people just wanted to die. They didn't even let them die, you know. If somebody did die, we envied them. Nobody felt sorry for the dead, because they don't have to suffer anymore. That was almost envious, it wasn't almost, I was actually envious for the people who died. They don't have to go through all that, and on the top of everything that I had to go through, I could, I used to wake up, even if I did fall asleep, used to wake up in such a sweat, about my father, about my brother, "What's happened?" You know, "will I ever see them again?" My mother- we gave up hope, you know, 'cause she was taken away in '42. Then, oh about, I think it was about

ten days, then out again, shout and screaming and shooting with the machine guns, always machine guns. They marched us off someplace, they marched us off to a field right next [to] where we arrived, where the crematoriums were, you know. And they told us to stay, to wait on that field, right next to the crematorium, and we realized, then later on somebody told us there was another cabin not far from that field, some people, Jewish people must have been, well, my friends, you know, this was the people who worked in the coal mines, they had their barracks there, and some of them came and told us that this is usually, and we looked at their arms we didn't get any number, usually for the people who didn't get the numbers, they didn't bother to give a number, we were destined for the crematorium, for the ovens. We didn't care, faster the better, you know, sooner the better. But we would, they left, they must have forgotten about us, because wagons kept rolling in night and day continuously, and the ovens, the smoke was going from those ovens. It was, the smell, it was just terrible. During the day, we were lying with no food, no water, it must have been about 48 hours, we were lying in that field, like they had forgotten, they had completely forgot about us. Apparently, that's what happened because they were so busy with so many transports coming in with people, and crying and screaming we could hear night and day, it never stopped. It never stopped. They were so busy burning those poor poor wretched people. All of a sudden, a bunch of Germans came and told us, shouting, they always shouted, always shouted, in German and horrible swear words, you know, called us all the lowest of the lowest name, you know, to get up and *schweinehund*, you know, all those terrible words. The line up again and marched us off, we didn't know where, we thought, "This is it." All of a sudden, you know, we realized what was going on in Auschwitz, you know, especially when we were lying next to the crematorium. And they are packing us into wagons again, and the wagons were just terrible. Apparently, they were transporting, they were transporting in those wagons some of them, must have been flour, it was all white and white dust, and then others were coal dust, you know. They packed us all in those wagons and they closed it and all of a sudden we were moving and we were riding again. We didn't know what was going on. They were taking us from Auschwitz.

Rosa Katz: Oral History Transcript

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SL: I'm going to have to interrupt you because we're out of tape.

RK: Okay.

END OF TAPE 3, SIDE 2

TAPE 4, SIDE 1

SL: You were transported then from Auschwitz again in the cars you had idea where you were going.

RK: No idea of where we were going, but later on we found out, and this was so ironic and almost very funny, very, very funny. This was one of those things which I, actually, a little revenge we got, you know, the people. Apparently what's happened, later on we realized what's happened. We could hear halfway, you know, we going after a while, a day or so, we felt like the train stopped, moving here back and forth, you know, like attaching certain wagons, you know, and changing tracks, or whatever. Later on I figured out that's what it was. Then our train was moving again, oh about another day. Finally, we came in and all of a sudden the doors were open and out in the daylight again we looked and we came to our station in a beautiful city. Then all of a sudden, we noticed someplace it says "Berlin" Berlin, Germany. They told us to get out from the wagon, and we were just a sight! First of all, our heads were shaven, people who were in the coal wagons were just like black dust, dirty. The ones who were in the other wagons, I don't know what it was, flour, or some kind of white material. They looked like ghosts, [laughs] you know, all white, with white dust, and, as I told you, you know, the dresses, the prison dresses they gave us, a tall person had the short dress, the short person had the long dress. We looked just like a masquerade, really. If it wouldn't have been so tragic, we looked at each other and we had to [laughs], we actually laughed, you know, we looked so funny. And then they told us, we had our toilet buckets on the wagons, they told us to remove it and carry this with us. And all of a sudden, we were thinking, we realized we are in Berlin, and Berlin has been *Judenrein*, I don't know for how many years. All of a sudden, you know, we were marching on the streets, beautiful, clean, beautiful, Berlin, you know. Beautiful boulevards and streets and everything. Beautiful city, and the German people they stop and look, "What is this?" You know. There we're looking shaven, they didn't know if we were men or women, with you all shaven heads, you know, carrying this bucket. Then we realized! "Do you know where we are," just went mouth to mouth, "you know where we are," you know, we're not suppose to talk or anything. Somehow, we managed somehow to get the message

from one person to another. We are in Berlin, did you know, and they don't even, I'll bet you anything they don't even know they got, we were about 500 Jewish women. I bet you anything they don't even know they got 500 Jews there, all of a sudden, and Berlin is *Judenrein* and here they got 500 dirty Jews on the top of everything. (laughs) They use to call us dirty Jews, but we were literally dirty, you know. Coming from Auschwitz and staying in those wagons. All of a sudden, someone said "Let's leave a souvenir, I don't know if we gonna be staying here or not," we were moving those buckets, you know, and spilling it all over Berlin. This was the funny part, and it, somehow it made us laugh, you know, it really, I forgot that I could laugh. And all of a sudden, for the first time in I don't know in how long, I started to laugh, you know. Just the thought of it, we are spilling all that mess all over the beautiful Berlin, spotless clean Berlin, streets. And they brought us into barracks, it was just coming from Auschwitz, it was heaven, you know. Bunks, bunk beds, but first we had to have showers, there were showers galore. I don't know, there must have been about 10-15 showers in that place. First of all, we had to, naturally, the clothes had to be thrown away, it were so filthy and dirty. For ten days nobody- couldn't wash, and it was just undescrivable how we looked, just undescrivable. We didn't look like human at all. So, finally, we could shower anytime we wanted to. We went, they told us we were now gonna be assigned to work, but we didn't know what work, or where we were. We realized it was Berlin, but nobody told us, and I was, most people, we took, naturally there were 10 showers, we were- we were about maybe 200 per barrack, there were three barracks, I think. And we were showering continuously, just to get that smell out of our system from Auschwitz. I still could smell Auschwitz, it doesn't matter how many time I washed and scrubbed myself, almost fanatically, I still could smell Auschwitz, the ovens, and the dirt and the filth, and it was just almost fanatically we scrubbed. Day and night everybody was in the showers. Well, we were, the food was eatable, and somehow we got the strength back, you know, somehow we feel it was a different atmosphere, you know, but still, it was still a mystery, what are we gonna be doing here? We know, we knew that we are, not so much in danger as we were in Auschwitz, we knew that we were here for a purpose, but

we didn't know what are we gonna be doing. Nobody told us anything, because no German came near us because we were in quarantine. I think it was about two weeks or maybe a little longer, finally some big shot German, a huge, huge, huge guy, and we recognized some of the soldiers who were with us on, with the trains came out again, count again, and I don't know why they were counting all the time, all the time counting. And then, there was somebody else with a booklet, and he, they were trying to take names; so apparently, later on we figured it out. They thought, we were all in a big transport, and that transport from Auschwitz, there were about 500 French women. The French women suppose to go to Berlin to work for Krupps. So apparently the officer who was in charge of that transport made a mistake. Instead of the French people, the wagons with the French people, he took the wagons of us, Polish Jewish women. The French women went with the other people, I don't know how many wagons there were, about 500 people, we were in that camp, 500 people, and we went towards Berlin. And the Germans didn't know it yet. Now the funny part comes. The Germans didn't know that we were Jews. They took it for granted that, they ordered French women and that's what they got. Listen to that, ordered, French slaves, they called us slaves, *häftlinge* So, that big officers, almost like, they treated us like we were soldiers, sound off, you know, the names. First of all, he was trying to talk to us in German, and then he realized that maybe we don't understand what he was saying, which most of us did, cause knowing Yiddish, it's pretty similar, you know. Then he asked if there was anybody who could speak German between us. There was a couple girls, she was from Czechoslovakia, but she also could speak German, so she raised her hand. Okay, so he told her to tell us that we gonna be working at Krupps. First of all, he wants to have all the names. So, okay, fine. The first person, "*Was du name?*" What's your name? There was a Goldberg, there was a Rosenstein, there was a Rosenblatt, and then, all of a sudden, he stopped. We could tell, probably a blood vessel must have busted in his head, because his head turned purple. He realized, we are not Germans but who has Rosenberg and Goldberg? Jews. And he asked us, "What are you?" So the translator said, "We are, most of us are Polish Jews, we are all Jewish women." And he called the officer, who was in

charge, and he took out his gun, with the barrel, and he started hitting him over the head, right in front of us, and kicking him, and swearing and we stood there watching a German being beaten. Can you imagine what this meant? This was one of our little revenges, you know. Actually, I could say that, and it was funny. It took so much effort on our part not to start laughing. We were just holding onto each other by, you know, on the knees, you know, and squeezing our hands to each other, you know, and saying, "My gosh!" It was worse waiting for that you know. They realized it was a big mistake there, and it probably would have cost them, if the bigger, if the other higher officers were to find out that instead they brought 500 Jews into Berlin, *Judenrein* Berlin, they probably would be sent to the Russian front! I am sure some of them did go there right away, then we never saw them again. They were, apparently, they were afraid to let anybody know who we were so they just left it alone. This probably saved our lives. They left us alone and gave us a big speech that we were gonna be working at Krupps, and we have to work hard if you want to stay here, we want to be surviving, otherwise we gonna be sent back to concentration camps, they gave us a whole spiel, you know. And that was, they gave us clean clothes, changes, and then they left. That's the way we came to Berlin. By pure mistake.

SL: So working at Krupps then, did you still stay in; were you living in the barracks? Were you--?

RK: Yeah, we were living, this was Krupps ammunition factory is in [inaudible] and our barracks were a couple blocks away, so we didn't have too far to walk to work. Then we also had a selection, there was somebody, I think, the men who came to select the people for different departments, it was Braun, you know the scientist Braun. I would swear to it, I am not sure, but that's the way he looked to me. Every time I see Braun on TV, he reminds me of that man who came to select people. So he had to look at the hands, you know, a different kind of works, you know, delicate work, like watch, time clocks, you know, like for the bombs and all that. They needed somebody with fine hands, fine fingers. I was actually selected to go to work for the *montage*, This means to work with the clocks, with fine instruments, and that's where I worked.

SL: What kind of work did you do?

RK: Well, make parts, we had to file them very fine and put them together, the little parts for clocks, for time bombs.

SL: You knew that what you were doing, you knew that it was eventually going into a bomb?

RK: Yeah.

SL: How did you feel about that?

RK: Terrible, terrible. And we walked side by side with some German people.

SL: Did they ever find out you were Jewish?

RK: Yeah.

SL: How did they feel about that?

RK: Well, some of them were very nice. We not, you know, there was always at all time- there was an SS woman in every department, watching us. We not suppose to talk, we not suppose to, and the Germans actually, they themselves were afraid to talk to us. I am sure there must have been told no contact whatsoever, except for what the work is concerned, but nothing personal. But still sometimes, some people, managed somehow to talk to some people. Apparently, one of my friends, she worked next to a man who, was he told her he was a Communist, and he was, well, you know, he wanted to have information on what's going on, where we were, what's happening, you know. And somehow, she managed somehow, because they were working side by side, so we learned to talk without moving our lips, really, like a ventriloquist. You managed, she managed, and some others, I did too at one time, we managed to answer the information. And then we thought maybe they are just trying to test us, you know, if we give information, maybe they are not, they don't really want to know, they just get us into trouble, then we decided not to say anything, just refused to answer. Cause you don't know who they were, they were Germans, that's all we knew. But some of them did bring sandwiches and put it down, hoping, just with the idea that we should take. I can truthfully say, one time there was a sandwich lying next to me on my desk, or on my bench where I was working for a whole day and I

didn't touch it. I didn't want to have anything from them. Lot of girls did it. I forget, I'm gonna survive. The food that we were getting was nothing to compare with what we had in the ghetto, it was better, because they needed us to work. We were slaves, that's what we were called: slaves. They needed us to work in the factories, so the food wasn't bad at all. We got our strength back.

SL: What kind of food was it? Do you remember offhand?

RK: It was eatable. It was done, and enough for me, you know. Maybe for some people it wasn't enough, but we could survive with that.

SL: Was it again bread and soup and other.... ?

RK: Bread and soup and sometimes meat. It wasn't bad at all, a lot of potatoes and vegetables. And sometimes, sometimes we use to get milk too. Sometimes not very often, or every weekends, on a Sunday.

SL: Did they make you work 7 days a week or did you get Sunday off?

RK: I think we got Sunday off. We worked Saturdays, yeah. This was, it was like heaven to us after going to the ghetto and then Auschwitz. This was just like heaven to us. But then, something else started - the bombardment. I lived through the whole destruction of Berlin. But the most- they were bombing Berlin night and day, towards the end. The Russians were at night, the British were in the morning, and the Americans were in the afternoon, continuously. And we weren't allowed in the shelters, so we had, we dug ditches in our back yard where our barracks were, you know. During the night we had to go out there, in the ditches, foxholes for protection. And somehow, that were always, naturally, they always wanted to hit the ammunition factories, and the section where we were, it was all industrial, working for the army. There were the railroads, and the Krupps, and there were some other, I know there were some Krupps, it was just a tremendous, tremendous company, there were buildings and buildings and buildings, it took up several blocks, really. And then, apparently, I don't know if this was also Krupps, but there were other building that looked like factories and all kinds, it was apparently this must have been an industrial section of Berlin [inaudible]. Now it is under East Berlin now. And

the railroads, that's where they were hitting all the time and we were right in the middle of it. Many times, and it's almost like a miracle none of us was hurt. Our barracks were never hit. It was many times we were just surrounded by fire.

SL: Did the plant that you were working in get hit?

RK: Several times, but not bad. We still could work in it. Finally, another time we came back from the next day after a terrible night of bombing and they counted us again counting. Nobody was missing, we were all there. All of a sudden, the Germans were calling us the Devils, *Teufels*, because nothing ever happened, many people, many of the Germans we worked with, many times, you realize they are not there. They never came back because they probably were hit, you know, where they were living. And towards the end, they allowed us to go down in the shelter, if there was raid during the day and we were at the factory, they let us go into the shelter, but not completely down, a higher level of the shelter. They had several levels. And, you know, some of the Germans actually didn't go down. They stayed on the same level we were at. I bet you anything they probably believed that if they are gonna be with us, nothing will happen, because there was so many raids, so many bombings, you know, and we never and we were all accounted for, and it never hit our barracks. Maybe the Americans or the British knew where the barracks were, I don't know. That's a possibility. Sometimes we had to cover our faces with blankets, which I never did. This was the funniest thing, you know, I wasn't even afraid. I kept sitting watching the skies lit up with all those lights from the bombs, you know, the reflection. First they threw lights down so they could light up the area so they can see where to drop the bombs. It almost looked like a Christmas tree with all the lights in the sky. And this was, I actually enjoyed it. I was under the same bombs, could have hit us too, but I was not afraid. I kept saying, "More, send them down more, more bombs, more bombs, let them have it." This was my revenge, really. I am not a vengeful person but in this case, I feel whatever it was dished out to them, it wasn't enough, what they did to people, for no reason. They called us political prisoners. Who knew anything about little kids were political prisoners? It's a big joke, isn't it?

SL: What kind of contact did you have with your guards? Were you heavily guarded?

RK: Yes, as a matter of fact, I've heard, one of the SS women got really friendly with one of the girls, the one who could speak German, they asked her to be in charge, you know, the translation, she was in charge. She got very, very friendly with one of the SS women which was hush, hush, you know, cause the German woman, would have been- probably if this would have come out, she would have been removed, I'm sure. After the war, I understand she went back to Czechoslovakia, and this German woman joined her later on. That's what I heard, I don't know if it is true or not. The *Kommando Fuhrer*, the German officer who was in charge of our camp, he was very kind. He tried, you know, he was afraid, but he wasn't vicious as the ones in Auschwitz, you know, or in the ghetto. He wouldn't talk or nothing like this to any of us, but he didn't kick, at least he didn't shout it, he wasn't, we had a feeling he was okay, he was okay. But one time, I remember, we had one SS woman on the floor where I was working, and if we had to go to the bathroom, we had to have her permission that we could. I don't know what's happened to that woman; one time she decided she's not gonna let anybody go to the bathroom. And naturally, if you have to go, you have to go, you cannot hold it. And some of the Germans, the ones who were working with us kinda intervened for us. They called the *Kommando Fuhrer* and he came and we could hear him scolding her and after that, we were allowed to go to the bathroom.

SL: Let's see, how long did you remain there and why did you finally leave Krupps?

RK: We were there for eight months. We left, we could hear because the Russians were taking over Berlin. It was towards the end. This was in April of '45. No, it wasn't April, it was March, this was in March, because the Russians were there. We could hear, every once in a while we could overhear the guards outside our barracks. They were talking with each other. Every once in a while somebody overheard them talking about it. Naturally, this went right away from mouth to mouth, you know. The news, and we could hear, like firing, like guns shot off, from a distance, from a long, from a distance, but we could hear it. Apparently, the Russians, later on we found out that's what it was, the Russians were

outside Berlin, and they sent us deeper into Germany. First, we went into Oranienburg, yeah. Before that, I have something else to tell you as far as Berlin is concerned. We had several, several of the women, including myself, we had toothaches and we reported this, we had a lot of toothaches, and you know how a toothache can be miserable. Finally, there were quite a few, they told us they were gonna take care of it, you know, they were trying to do something for it. They gave us some aspirins or something; anyway, there were several people with the same problem. Finally, they decided they gonna take us to a dentist, so about ten girls, they put us in a station, some type of a station wagon, and they took us there. They took us to Oranienburg, which was outside Berlin, not too far. This was also a camp but this was for political German prisoners, and they took us into, there was an officer, he was in a uniform, and over his uniform, he wore a white gown, he was a dentist, you know. I only had a toothache in one tooth, he pulled five teeth. Five or maybe even more, I don't even remember. I know all of a sudden I didn't have any teeth on both sides of my mouth. And the other girls, the same way. Without any anesthetic, actually, nothing. So this was one incident in Berlin, except with the bombs, but the bombs did not disturb us at all. We were almost fighting with the British, every time we knew which one, we already figured out who comes when, you know. We were actually fighting with them, it was our way of fighting, you know. This gave us some kind of purpose, you know, you were just like you, when you go to a ball game and you kinda feel your team should win. This was our team, you know. We kept saying "Come on, come on boys, lets go, lets go, lets go." You know. It was something similar to that.

SL: I'm gonna have to turn the tape over.

RK: Okay.

END OF TAPE 4, SIDE 1

TAPE 4, SIDE 2

SL: You mention, that it was in March of '45 that you left Berlin, you stopped working at Krupps and they transported you to Oranienburg?

RK: Yeah, that's right. It was, I remember, we had to walk through holes. They made us walk to Oranienburg, which was quite a few miles, and we noticed going through Berlin, a lot of people leaving, you know. The Russians must have been really outside Berlin at the time. We didn't know for sure, but thinking back now, people were just running, rushing, and you could see, you could see trucks with furniture piled up, you know, like they're moving. You know, Running away, in deeper to Germany, away from the Russians, and we stayed in Oranienburg a very short time.

SL: At the camp?

RK: At the camp, this was also some kind of camp up but it was just mainly for the, later on we were told this was a camp for the German political prisoners, also for prostitutes. Well, I suppose they could name anybody a prostitute, you know, and jail them, you know. We didn't stay there very long, we weren't in contact with anybody, actually, from the other prisoners and we were separated. I think we stayed there a day or maybe two days. I don't remember exactly, but it was a short time we stayed there. Then we were shipped again to Ravensbruck.

SL: Now were you, did you make that trip by cattle car?

RK: By cattle car, yes.

SL: That must have been a real terribly frightening time then because you were on your way back somewhere after having been-

RK: Yes, on the way back, out of, you know, we really got our strength back, you know, working at Krupps. They needed us as slave workers, so naturally they had to feed us, so we could be productive for them. Not out of consideration for us, they fed us because they needed us to work for them. And this was frightening because we've been in a camp, you know, to go back to that Hell, you know, it was just very frightening. We didn't know what was going on because we could see a lot of military action

on the highways, you know. Those wagons we were driving on, railroad wagons, there was a little window we could look out and we could see a lot of movement, military movement. It was something in the air, we knew something is happening, but we didn't know really what. There was a lot of excitement, tension, you know, we could feel that. And we arrived to Ravensbruck it was one of those concentration camps again, similar, not as big as Auschwitz maybe, much, much, much smaller, but the same buildings, the same, there was a hospital, and I heard other people, the prisoners there they looked just terrible, walking skeletons, with those big eyes bulging out, and it was just very, very terrible after we got out of Auschwitz, you thought, "Oh this is it." Now coming back it really got us down, you know, there was nothing in the world, they could do anything to us anymore, you know, you have no feelings, no fear, nothing, just completely gave up. And all of a sudden, we kept getting all kind of packages, Red Cross packages. One after another, but apparently, those packages kept coming in all the time for us, but we never got them. With all kind of foods, you know. And we, by the time we got this, again we were starved again, and—

SL: Did you go through the same process when you first got to Ravensbruck?

RK: Yeah, they shaved us, they shaved our heads, you know, meantime, when we were in Berlin our hair started growing back. I remember we had one of our supervisors, a German man, was our boss, you know, my department where I use to work, my hair started growing back again, and I have natural curly hair, and it was very curly and some of the people said, how pretty hair I had, you know. And they always use to go behind me, like with his hand, clip, clip, clip, you know. "I'm gonna cut your hair and maybe I take an ear off," you know. Well, I do, you know, while I do it, you know kinda scared, "So go ahead and do it," and I answered him, "Go ahead and do it." You know, but, you know, it didn't matter any more.

SL: So when you got to Ravensbruck then you went through that whole process again?

RK: The whole process again. There was also a crematorium there, there was smoke and the smell, the same old smell as Auschwitz, and this really, this really got us, really down. Luckily I was together with

my cousin. We stayed together. Somehow we managed to be together, and my sister-in-law again.

And we were there for about two weeks, I think.

SL: The same type of barracks situation? Crammed in?

RK: Same type of barracks, but it wasn't as crowded. They didn't have so many people anymore, you know.

SL: Were they feeding you at all?

RK: Very poorly, practically nothing. And we were actually starving again. Starving again and beatings, pushing, counting. I don't know why they wanted to count. Who had the strength even to run away, even if you could run away? Where would you go? You didn't have the strength to get up and walk even, to get out to be counted.

SL: Was there any forced labor that was going on there?

RK: Not, not as far as I know. But later on there was a lot of experiments going on there. We noticed there was one place, which were a lot of people lying in bed. Apparently, those were the guinea pigs. And they looked just terrible. Some of them were lying in bed without legs, apparently they cut their legs off. I don't know what kind of, exactly what they were doing, but that's what they, and then there was one room there was bodies. There were some men, must have been also slaves, prisoners, they were moving bodies, by the cow, you know, one of those wagons, you know, two-wheeled things, you know that you had to push, piled up bodies, moving from one place to another. I don't know what they were doing with them, probably to a burial place or maybe to the ovens to cremate them. And this was going on all the time and you know, somehow every time I saw that I was trying to look at the faces, maybe I would recognize somebody, maybe it's my brother, maybe my sister, or the children, you know, my sister's children. Still, even though I was so down and so half starved to death, I still, I was still searching, you know. The people there, they looked just absolutely terrible, walking death. Sometimes some people, nobody looked at each other, they didn't care, you know, just existing actually, just existing, a miserable existence, actually. And I was searching, even there, searching.

Maybe somebody, maybe a friend, maybe a neighbor, maybe somebody from my family. Even maybe somebody was there I didn't recognize them because they looked so terrible. Then packages, they got start giving us packages, Red Cross packages, and this caused the death of many people, because there was canned stuff, canned goods, which should have been cooked, and packages they just lying all over, you didn't have the strength to carry it, couldn't even lift it. So, we were eating, and until today, I cannot take peanuts, for that. I cannot tolerate that because the only thing we could really eat was the peanut butter, they had in jars, we were able to open it. And this made us so sick, we had dysentery from it, because it was rich and we weren't use to any kind of food like that. We got so sick, and there was, and the toilets were right in the open. It was so horrible that we had to go to the toilets in the open, big buckets, and you know, people walking back and forth and you are sitting there with your bare behind and going, and many times some of the SS women will go by and just hit us on the bare behinds, you know. It was so degrading, it was just unbelievable. And packages were lying all over the place. People just abandoned it and didn't have the strength to carry it.

SL: The packages were mostly food?

RK: Food, yeah, isn't it sad? This could have saved our lives and now when it was all over, they start giving us, they didn't know what to do, maybe the leaders in that camp probably wanted to save their skins when the Americans or the British would come in, they would see that they are passed out, and they weren't so bad to the people, in other words. And those packages didn't help us then at all, it made it worse for us. It was too late, because we couldn't tolerate the food, the rich food, it made us sick. We all had dysentery, and a lot of people died from it.

SL: Can you describe to me then the liberation by the Red Cross and how it happened?

RK: This was just something beautiful, but we didn't realize what was going on. We did not know what's happening. All of a sudden, we were called out again, counted again, lined up again, and marched off someplace. All of a sudden there was somebody taking, they wanted to have all our names. We had a number, in Berlin we had a number, my number was 389, I think, if I remembering right. I think that's

what the number was, and it was so many years to till anybody asked my name, except, you know, your close friends, and all of a sudden, even our close friends we didn't call each other by name, we [were] just zombies. All of a sudden, somebody is taking our names down; it took me about five minutes to think of my name, "What is my name?" you know. First, my name I gave her, my number from Berlin. No, I want your name, your last name, your first name. I stood there for about five minutes thinking what is my name, you know. Finally, it came to me and I gave her my name. We still didn't know what was going on. Nobody told us anything. We thought, "Oh boy, probably this is it, this is the end," you know. By that time we knew about the ovens, you know, word got around, but we didn't care. That's whatever should happen, just to get it over with. They couldn't do anything to us anymore. We had no feelings, no fear, nothing, just nothing, just a sack of bones, really. No flesh anymore but bones. To do something to a human being like that. And then we waited again, waited again, then all of a sudden, buses kept start coming in to the camp, and the soldiers in uniforms and out, from those buses, and they were kind of herding us, real fast, "Hurry up, hurry up, hurry up, let's go in." Pushing us into those buses and taking off in a hurry. We didn't know what was going on; those were the Swedish Red Cross buses. We thought them, German officers, you know, they were wearing uniforms. You didn't see swastikas, but some of the soldiers didn't wear always swastikas. Actually, we didn't look that hard, you know. We saw soldiers and buses and taking us someplace, but the buses were nicer, they were ambulances, you know. And then we were flying, and those people, some of them could speak German, they were trying to explain to us but we were not capable to comprehend what they were talking to us. And they had food there, but when the soldiers, the Swedish Red Cross soldiers, looked at us, they were afraid to give us the food, because they knew we were sick, we were all sick from those Red Cross packages. The only thing they let us have it was water, sips of water, you know, they must have been trained in Red Cross work or first aid type of work probably. They realized we couldn't have anything solid because we were so bad off. And we were just flying to one city after another, and at night, all of a sudden, we heard airplanes above us and there was some bombing,

they were bombing us on the way. Apparently, later on we know the story how this came about. Himmler made that pact with Folke Bernadite. He wanted an affidavit from Folke Bernadite that he saved 5,000 or whatever the number was, Jewish people in order, you know, he, because the war was almost over. He wanted to save his back. This way he was the good one and he saved all those people from camp. And probably somebody else found out and that's why they were bombing us. We were hiding, during the night we were hiding in the woods, and then during the daytime we were running. We made it to the border, to Denmark, and then in Denmark, when we came to Denmark, we didn't go into the city, they were right by the border, they had barracks put up and the tables were just piled with food, all kind of food, but who could eat? Isn't that was ironic? We slept in barns, you know, with hay on it, because who knows what kind of disease we had, you know, after all those years in camp, so they kept us there, and the people that, the Danish people they saw us in our condition and they were just crying, just looking at us. They couldn't be kinder, but what could they do you know. They were afraid to keep us there too long, because after all that bombing some people were injured. They were kept in Denmark. They had to be taken to the hospital in Denmark. And the next day, we stayed there overnight, and then we went to Copenhagen, and all the people were greeting us on the railroad stations, you know, with flags, trying to give us cigarettes, trying to give us food, and we weren't even able to reach out and take any cigarettes, but we could see their kindness, you know, the fear, the way we looked and the uniforms we had on and the way we looked. It was just horror, you know, we could see their horror and then we realized that we must look like a fright, you know. And from there we went on the boat, on a boat, and across to Malmo. Yeah, Malmo or Lund? I think it was Malmo.

SL: When was this? April?

RK: This was April already. The end of April, April 28th, I think it was April 28th. And when we came in, we still hadn't apprehend yet what's going on. A little bit but we didn't have the strength really to rejoice, we still were doubtful, we didn't trust we didn't know what was going on. We came into Malmo from the border, we had to walk, and then a band was playing, flags were flying, people in the windows,

people on the roofs, people on the streets waving us and it was just beautiful. Later on, I saw it all over again, and I realized what a beautiful welcome we got. They took us right away, naturally, to bathe, and to be sanitized, you know, there were spraying, you know we were dirty. Let's face it, we were filthy, and they cleaned us up and gave us clothes, brand new clothes, and then they took us to the hospital and millions) doctors were continuously hovering over us, making tests. And a lot of people, my sister-in-law, Hela, she had to be taken to a sanitarium. She was there for quite a while. I was just undernourished, I was just dehydrated, no strength, but no active illness, you know, I just needed nourishment, that's about it. So, after all the examinations and tests and x-rays and cleanup, and some clothing, you know, change of clothing, it was about maybe 10 days, a week or so, we were sent to a quarantine, Smallands Anneberg, I think the place. They put us in a church, with military bunks in it. We were, by coincidence, it was kinda sad really in a way. We were there for about 3 weeks, 3-4 weeks I think. We were about 27 Jewish girls and then 25 Polish Gentiles in the same barrack. There were some incidents there that was just so unusual, I don't know how this happened, apparently, there was tension, there was a lot of tension. The Jewish people were on one side and then they're on the other side, there was a lot of name calling. It all started, with all the tensions, it all started, a lot of Jewish organizations started coming in, sending in stuff, clothing, money and drugs and medication and all kind of nice things, you know. And they didn't get anything. This was just from Jewish organizations, and they were kinda resenting that, because nobody, they didn't have any organizations at all to bother to see to it, but the Jewish people in Sweden did a lot, you know, whatever they could. They couldn't come in because we were under quarantine, but they sent stuff in for us, lettuce, and all kind of tape recordings, welcoming us, and you know, stuff like, and nothing was done for them, so this caused a lot of resentment. And there were some instigators there, who started to call, "You just wait when you come back to Poland, we'll teach you a lesson," you know, all that kind of stuff. It was almost, and we got to a point after a while we were strong already, we got to a point, "We are not in Poland anymore, and we are not gonna take that," me, myself included, we were kinda, we became

kinda agitated. We are not gonna take this from them, and we kinda fought back, but we lived under the same roof. Some of the women, the Polish women, they were very nice and they, one older person actually had a heart attack from all that tension, you know, she couldn't take it. Then there was an incident between them. There was one girl, which I remember, one of our girls, a Jewish girl, Rachel, kept whispering she recognized somebody who was on the other side of the room with the Gentiles, she says, "I swear this is my cousin, but what would she be doing taking communion?" you know, when the priest came with them. And finally this other girl recognized Rachel too, and she was afraid to make it known. Finally, one time, in the middle of the night we heard whispering and I saw the other girl came to Rachel, and she told the priest, "I am afraid to let them know that I am Jewish because she was hiding out with them as a Gentile girl, she never let anybody know that she was a Jew, that's the way she managed to survive. She was the best friend of the one who was instigating all the troubles. So finally, they found out and sadly had to be removed because they would have killed her when they found out she was Jewish.

SL: You mentioned to me then that you and your cousin and then was it your sister-in-law who eventually joined you and you went through a little village and learned and well began to work in the tailoring, doing tailoring? Was this a long time afterwards?

RK: This was afterwards, then after that, we were, after the quarantine, we were sent to Holsbybrunn, which was, they give us, a whole, a resort village, actually, and there we had Swedish lessons and we were free, we could go and come, you know, after the quarantine. And we had all kinda entertainment, and all kind of organizations came into the camp, and we were in contact with the Swedish people, which they were just absolutely great, you know it was more socializing. You were more, becoming normal.

SL: How many people were there at that resort with you?

RK: There were quite a few, there were quite a few, oh I would say maybe 200-300 people, yeah. Most of them were German Jews.

SL: And you were being supported by Swedish government there? They were too?

RK: And Jewish organizations. Yeah, the Jewish people in Sweden, really, and also, I think it had something to do with the Jewish-American organizations and really probably the government too.

SL: Was this where you met your husband?

RK: That's where I met my husband.

SL: So how long, how long did you stay there?

RK: In Holsbybrunn we stayed, oh, a lot of people went, some families were found, some people had families in Sweden, that discovered them, you know, and they took them out, they went to live with them. Then, eventually, people went to America, you know, from there, and it was less and less, and then it was not enough people to keep a big place like this, so we were sent to a different place, [sounds like: Rind] which was a small camp. It was, I think it was a school at one time, and from there most people went to America, or where ever, they had papers to go to, and also to work. I went to work, with my cousin and my friend, Elsa.

SL: And where did you go, do you remember the name of the village?

RK: Vegby, Vegby, it wasn't-oh, it was about, I don't know, 50 kilometers from Gothenburg.

SL: What kind of work were you doing?

RK: In a tailor shop.

SL: How were you received by the Swedes in the smaller community?

RK: Very nice, partly they knew the story, and naturally, they must have been told all about us. We were it. We were, we were only the three, three girls in that particular village, and those people were just great, absolutely great. We had a completely furnished apartment, it was, there was one difficult thing because we couldn't speak the language, and there were [a] couple students which they weren't home during the week, they only came home for the weekend, that could speak German, which it helped us little bit, but most of the time it was very hard to communicate, especially to do shopping, you know. The grocery stores weren't like we have it here in America. You have to have a list and tell

the grocer what you want and like a kilo of butter or kilo of potatoes, or flour, you know. Here you go to the store, you pick what you see and what you want, what you need, there in Europe, you know, actually in Poland was the same way, I don't know if it still that way. But there weren't like grocery stores like we have here, you had to say what you want, and you were waited on. And this was very difficult. Elsa and I, my girlfriend, we were the same age, we did, we did all that studying because my cousin, you know, she was mourning, her children, and she just couldn't, she just couldn't learn the language, she just couldn't. She picked up here and there some words, but she couldn't, she didn't do as well as we did, we were younger, you know. So we, actually, did all our shopping and it was very difficult. It got to a point, they got to know us after a while, they just let us go behind the counter and pick what we want, even though we had dictionaries and we studied before we went shopping, they still couldn't understand us because the pronunciation, we didn't say it the way, you know. They couldn't understand us, and people were just following us, everybody, especially young men, and they were very curious about us, and they wanted to get to know us, but we couldn't, , they couldn't speak to us, you know. It was almost like sign language, you know.

SL: I am going to have to interrupt you because we are running out of tape.

RK: Okay.

END OF TAPE 4, SIDE 2

TAPE 5, SIDE 1

SL: After you got to Sweden, did you discover any surviving family members, other than the cousin that you were with? Did you ever find out if anyone else had survived?

RK: Yes, much later, through, I think through my uncle. I suppose, they find my cousin, Morris, in New York. He lives in New Jersey, Fair Lawn, New Jersey. He, I don't remember how this came about, I think through my uncle in New York, in Brooklyn. He found my name, and then he found my other cousins, I have two cousins in New York, living in New York, also survived. We were very close. We grew up together in Poland. They a little younger than I. One was same age and Morris is a little younger. Andre is about the same age as I am. I think through my uncle, they wrote to them and my uncle sent the addresses back and forth, and that's the way we got in touch. Morris was in Italy, and from there he went to Israel, and then he looked my sister up, and he came back, you know. He had an aunt in Detroit which, his mother's sister, we were related. His father was my mother's brother. His mother's sister lived in Detroit, and somehow she wanted to come to this country. Morris went to the war, I think in '48 war. He was in the army in Israel.

SL: How...

RK: Okay, go ahead.

SL: How did you finally get in contact with your sister in Israel?

RK: As I told you before, somehow it was just almost like somebody was whispering to me. I kept thinking maybe my parents from the grave, I don't know, if there such thinking, you know. It's mystical, how in the world did I know her address? You know, because I never paid any attention to that as a young child, you know. And I wrote my first letter, and then by the time I was able to write, to get myself together in my mind, you know, it has been such a long time, I didn't read or write, it was no way I could do this, you know, going through all those horrible things, you know. Your mind was almost a blank, you know, it took me quite a while to pull myself together, you know. But, you know, I did write right away, to my sister, as soon as I could. Through, I remember when we, through the Red Cross.

They took names to notify families where ever we wanted. I mean when we just arrived in Malmo, the first time in Malmo, we had a service for all the people. There a rabbi, there was a rabbi there, and he told us that, actually, we should consider our age from this day on because we were newborn on that day we came to Sweden, so I keep saying all the time I am twenty years younger than I am at the time, your know. In '48 I was about 19 or 20 years old when I came after the war, so I was born in '48, no '45 when I came to Sweden, so this is my new birthday. He had a service at the time, you know, for us as newborn and it was very touching, very moving, so he gave us the blessings and so on. People were crying, it was a very touching service. Then, this was after the quarantine came, then he told us we are free, then all of a sudden we really apprehended what's happened, you know. Then we could go back in our mind, all the welcomes, you know. All those things I told you how the band was playing, people were greeting us on the street, on the roofs, from the windows, we didn't notice it then, at that particular time when we marched the street in Malmo. This was later on, you know, you realize what we went through and this was actually, they were welcoming us, we were free then. At the time we were just in a daze. We didn't apprehend what's happening.

SL: When was it that you finally saw your sister again?

RK: Oh, it was much later, much later. We got my sister here in '59.

SL: So from between 1935 and 1959 you didn't see your sister?

RK: No.

SL: You were in contact with her though after the War.

RK: Oh yes, oh yes.

SL: What about contact with any relatives in the United States after the war? Did anyone get in contact with you?

RK: Oh yeah, we were continuously in contact, I was with my cousins, Andre and Morris, for a while he lived in Canada. They came here to visit us and we were in New York several times to visit them. My

uncle came when we were living in the Statesville, in North Carolina he came to visit. Surprised us, really.

SL: When you were in Sweden though, were you in contact with relatives in the United States?

RK: Yes, with my uncle.

SL: Sending you anything?

RK: No, not really.

SL: Just letters?

RK: Just letters, just letters. I also had an uncle in Argentina. He's the one who disappeared after, during the First World War, and nobody knew what's happened to him. Till oh much, much later, we thought he was killed, I mean my parents, my grandparents thought that, but he was in Argentina all that time. And he, I don't know how in the world he got my name. Because, you know, I heard my grandmother talking about, my mother talking, but I never, somehow, had anything to do with him because I never knew him. But he wrote to me a couple of times.

SL: Then why did you decide to leave Sweden, what made you choose the United States?

RK: Because of my husband. He went to America. I probably, if it wouldn't have been him, I would have gone to Israel, because after all I had my sister in Israel, you know And then the war broke out, and I, then one of my cousins, my cousin Marsha, who lives also in Israel, she was also one of the survivors, she went to Israel, she was in a kibbutz in Sweden and then from there she went to Israel, and she spent some time in Cypress. And I felt I just couldn't go through that again.

SL: Why don't I ask you a few questions about your husband, since he's come into the picture now?

RK: Okay.

SL: First of all, what's his full name and his date and place of birth?

RK: His full name is Bernt not Bernard, Bernt Katz, he was born May 22, 1920, he was born in Malsfeld, Germany, which was near Kastl, Germany. He was an only child. His father died when he was very young. But he lost his mother in the Riga ghetto.

SL: What happened? Can you briefly tell me what he went through during the war? How he ended up in Sweden?

RK: Probably the same ways as I did, from Riga. They were sending, you know, first, he was in different prisons, then he was sent to Riga to work for there for the army, you know. It was a terrible camp. A ghetto also, and they had to work. He went through the same, he had a lot of beating, you can still see the scars on his forehead. He was assigned to some kind of work outside the ghetto for the army. He worked behind the front, probably cleaning up and stuff like that. And he somehow managed to, probably steal some bread, and he smuggled it in, he smuggled some food in to the ghetto too, for his mother and, he had some cousins, younger cousins, you know, you know, who stayed with them, the parents were killed, or disappeared, so Bernard's mother took them in and she kinda cared for them. Naturally, the people were starving, same way, hunger and beating and the same old thing, illnesses. So Bernard smuggled many times some food into the ghetto. They had to leave early in the morning and they were brought back in, into the ghetto, probably in the evening. This was going on for years, I don't know how long. They were also picking up, you know, like in Lodz, picking out people and send away, you know, probably to the crematoriums, and same way, his cousin, who was living with them disappeared the same way. And his mother disappeared the same way. She was just taken away from him.

SL: And so he ended up being liberated by the Swedish Red Cross?

RK: By the Swedish Red Cross.

SL: From Riga?

RK: No, not from Riga. The same thing, the Russians were closer and they were sent in, I think from Hamburg, some kind of camp, and from there the Red Cross took over.

SL: And you met him in Sweden?

RK: In Holsbybrunn.

SL: Now last night he showed me a scrapbook, notebook that he's kept of letters. Could you just tell me a little bit about what those letters are?

RK: Well, Bernard got himself very much involved with the management of that camp in Holsbybrunn, you know. He was almost like helping out, the manager was a Swedish man put in by the government, and he kinda supervised, you know, saw to it about food and, like a caretaker of the people, you know, to see if they have everything that they need, and medical attention, clothing, all those things. And somehow, Bernard got involved with that, and he helped them. He had a lot, a lot of friends because he helped a lot of people in the ghetto, you know, smuggling, he risked his life doing this, he was beaten many times. Have you noticed on his forehead? He was beaten terribly, many times, he was caught stealing, smuggling food into the ghetto. He felt he has to do this, you know, and then he had an obligation felt he should, he's well read and [inaudible]. Maybe sometimes he doesn't express himself, you know, with his accent, you know, but he is very compassionate man, and he felt he gonna help, a lot of people didn't know how to go about it. He somehow managed to get lists of addresses from different organizations, where he could get lists of people, of the survivors. This way, you know, people overlooking, you know, always putting ads in, and he got involved all the organizations he was continuously writing to different organizations, using his own money, which his relatives sent to him, you know. Bernard's relatives were very, very supportive. They were not close relatives, but they did an awful lot for Bernard, you know. They send the papers, they send, right off, he was one of the first ones to leave for America, that's the way his family took care of him. Right away. And he somehow managed to get all the lists from all over Europe and from America where people send in names looking for so and so and he found a lot of people, got them together, he wrote for them and find out in the, a lot of similar names. Sometimes they were not related, so he found out all the details and he got a lot of people together that way, and people were very grateful to him. You saw the letters.

SL: So he was able to leave for the United States earlier than you?

RK: Oh yes, he was one of the first ones, the first boat leaving Sweden for America was Bernard and a few other people, but Bernard was one of the first ones to go.

SL: And you had to wait for your number to come to the quota?

RK: Yeah, because I was, his family also, right away, made papers out for me. I had about four different sponsors, which was enough.

SL: So when did you finally leave Sweden?

RK: In '48.

SL: And when, why don't you tell me about how you managed to leave, 'cause you weren't married at that point.

RK: No, when Bernard left in '46, before he left we were engaged, and then when my sister-in-law, Hela, came, we had a little party. It was an engagement and also like a going away party because Bernard was leaving, and it was kinda sad because we were engaged and, you know, I felt God knows when we gonna be together. He's going to America, you know, you, a lot of stories, husband going to America and forgetting, you know, their wives, you know and after all we weren't married, you know, we loved each other, and we were, Bernard was very devoted to me, you know, I kinda depended so much on him, you know, he was looking, trying to find my family too, you know, different organizations. I think, because of me, he was trying to find my family he got kinda involved for other people too. And he was doing this for quite a long time, because he got the lists of names from different organizations. So, he left, we all I went with him to Gothenburg from the camp and that's, you know, it took about two years and I still had to wait. I had letters from him every day. We write to each other practically every day and somehow it got kinda discouraging, I felt kinda lonely too, you know, I didn't want to get involved with anybody. And here living in that village in Sweden, were a lot of people, oh they just want a date, and finally my cousin said, "You should go," you know, when they asked me to dances to parties. She actually insisted, you know, "You are too young to sit around and

do nothing, you just nothing, Bernard wouldn't mind if you go to a party, to a dance." So, finally, she talked us into it, Elsa and I we did go to a parties and dances, you know.

SL: So then, he came back for you?

RK: He came back, he came back in '48. This was in March, in '48, you know, he was told by somebody, you know, probably which had knowledge from some Jewish organization, you know, on how to get, who helped a lot of refugees with passage and so on, that maybe if we could come back and marry as a married woman, make new papers out, it might be a better chance for me to come to America, faster. And he took that chance, but there was no guarantees. But he took that chance, he saved every penny, he worked very hard and saved every penny so he could make that trip. But before he did that, he was a very proud man, he didn't want the relatives to say, "Look, we spent so much money on him to bring him to this country, now he makes two years here and he goes to and he spends his money to go on a trip to Sweden again." So, before he did that trip, he sent the money back to all the relatives, so that, you know, he didn't want to owe them anything. But some of the people, one relative kept the money, and the rest of them sent the money back. They realize he is very proud, you know, he didn't want to have any charity, you know. Nobody could say, you know, look he is spending our money and he goes to Sweden again, you know. And they sent the money back to him as a wedding gift, they knew all about it, so that's when he made the trip.

SL: And you, so you came back with him. You got married in Sweden? What date?

RK: We got married in Sweden, March 9, '48.

SL: And when did you leave for the United States?

RK: This was in April, sometime in April. Beginning, yeah it took about ten days, and we arrived April 19 in America. I think it was the 1st of April we left Sweden.

SL: How did you make the trip? What method?

RK: By boat. *Gripsholm* Line, *Gripsholm*, it was a Swedish boat.

SL: Where did you sail to?

RK: To New York and Bernard's cousin was waiting for us there.

SL: Do you remember having any special feelings when you saw the Statue of Liberty?

RK: Oh, yes, oh yes, it was overwhelming, and also frightening, you know, a new land, I finally managed to learn the Swedish language, which was very, very difficult, you know. To be able to go to a store, to be able to talk to your friends, to your neighbors, and to express yourself, your feelings, you know, conversations. To have just a normal conversation, it was such a big achievement, you know, after struggling with a language and not being able to express yourself, and all of a sudden you manage to learn, you felt very secure, very good, you could talk with your friends, you know, with my Swedish friends. It was just great, a great feeling and the only thing I could think when I arrived, I was very frightened, "Oh my goodness I don't know any English!" The only thing I knew to say in English was "Thank You" and "okay," or "not okay", all right, you know. And then I keep thinking, my goodness, I got to start all over again to learn the language. It was kind of frightening. Although I felt good because Bernard could speak some and this was helpful, you know.

SL: How long did you stay in New York?

RK: Oh, about a week.

SL: Do you recall your impressions of New York?

RK: Very impressed, very impressed. I remember the first treat, American treat, [laughs] I will never forget it. I'm gonna treat you to something very American, oh I was all for it, you know, very excited. He took me to a drug store, where all the young, all the people went there for Coca Cola. It was the first time I tasted Coca Cola, was it Coca Cola or Pepsi Cola, I don't remember which, anyway one of the colas, and I tasted it I almost, my head just turned purple. It tasted to me just terrible, almost like medicine [laughs]. I was very polite, I was always taught to have good manners, I could not swallow it, but I forced myself to swallow it, you know. I had a mouthful of Coca Cola, and it felt like I am going to choke on it, but I swallowed, and I said, "Oh, that's very good," I didn't want to disappoint him, [laugh] you know, he was, it was a surprise to me to have something very American, you know. And I

didn't want to say I didn't like it, but it was a strange taste to me. I never tasted it before, you know, it tasted to me like medicine, you know.

SL: Do you drink it now?

RK: No, I didn't, I just couldn't, [laughs] I say I am not thirsty. I didn't tell him how I felt about it. But I said, "I am not thirsty, and it tastes real good," and the music, you know, the jukebox, you know, so I was kind of impressed, very impressed with it.

SL: Did you ever acquire a taste for it?

RK: No. No, I don't like, I really don't like it.

SL: Well, when you left New York City, did you go immediately to--

RK: Statesville.

SL: Statesville, North Carolina?

RK: North Carolina.

SL: How did you end up going there? Why were you there?

RK: Because my husband had a job, he worked there.

SL: And what kind of job was that?

RK: He worked in a plywood factory which Mr. Rochlin, the owner of the factory, Abe Rochlin, he's dead now, he was just great, just great. He actually, he was also from Poland, Warsaw. Originally, he was a Russian Jew, but after the Revolution, they escaped Russia and they lived in Poland. I think they lived in Lublin first, and then they moved to Warsaw and he also was in the plywood business in Poland too. He escaped, he somehow, he and his family managed to get out right in the beginning of the war, I think, I am not sure. I think Mr. Rochlin was, before the war, and then he somehow, he managed to get his family out in '39. And Mr. Rochlin started a little factory in States, in North Carolina, a plywood factory, and he did quite well. As a matter of fact, he did just great after several years, he had several factories, huge factories. And he bought a factory here in Wisconsin, he had several in California, and he did quite well. And Bernard was actually with him from the beginning.

SL: And Bernard got a job through some relatives in this country?

RK: Yeah, yeah. Not really close relations, you know, a relative of a relative, you know, around ten corners, you know. It was explained to me how they were related, they live here in Oshkosh, too. We are still very close friends, you know, we knew each other from the beginning. And through him, he got him that job, and Mr. Rochlin was very, very kind, very nice. I was actually, you mention Mr. Boschwitz, this is his father-in-law. And I remember Mr. Rochlin took Bernard aside and he told him, "Look you got to learn the business and you, I give you every chance, every opportunity to work yourself up, it is all up to you, you have my full support, whatever you want to do, the field is open to you." He was very supportive, and Bernard did work himself up, and he has been with the company, this was his first job.

SL: What's the name of the business now?

RK: Now it's Pluswood Industries, here in Oshkosh, the company [with] a different names in Statesville.

SL: How long did you stay in Statesville?

RK: Five years

SL: So that was from 1948.

RK: Yeah, till what? '53. Yeah.

SL: Briefly, if you can, could you tell me just a little bit about what it was like in Statesville those first couple of years? I would like, of course, to talk about Oshkosh more, but just if you could briefly tell me about Statesville.

RK: Well, Mr. Rochlin's daughter-in-law, Irma, she was just great to me. Although we couldn't communicate because I couldn't speak English, but I could feel, you know, I had people behind me. They realized right away they could not give me any hand-me-downs, because they realized right away I am not the type of a person, I wouldn't accept that. We're independent. I wanted to work right away. I wanted just any kind of job. I didn't want anybody to help me that way. Irma was just great, and also Louise Israel; this was Bernard's relative who gave him the job, his wife. I remember we

went, I need clothes, a few clothes I took along with me from Sweden was out of style. I bought some clothes in New York, but we didn't have enough money, you know, Bernard was just completely broke. He spent all his money, first of all he stayed a whole month in Sweden, longer than he anticipated to begin with. So we just couldn't afford, I had to wait a little while till we had some money, then finally I went shopping. Louise went with me shopping, she was, she's a Southern lady, you know, from South Carolina, speaks with a very heavy southern accent, and she couldn't, I couldn't speak to her and she couldn't speak to me, and we went shopping. Can you imagine that? I couldn't speak any English. [laughs] It was so funny, so we went to Greensboro, North Carolina, it was a larger city, better stores, and she took me there to shop. So, I needed shoes, I needed, you know, I needed everything, really. So we went to one store to buy shoes. It just so happened the salesman who took care of me overheard us, realized, I think Louise explained to her I don't speak English, and I'm looking for shoes, just to show me and I will pick, you know, whatever I need. And the owner of that store was, just happened to be Jewish, and he overheard what Louise was telling the sales person about me, and he came over, and he started talking to me in Yiddish. It was just a lifesaver. [laughs] This is so frustrating. Nobody can really appreciate that, because you never had to go through that, not to be able to, you felt like an idiot, you know, not to be able to talk, you know. Your brain, you're intelligent enough, you wanted to express certain feelings and what you need, and you wanted to say what you want, your opinion, just a little conversation, just, but you couldn't do it, it was very frustrating. Finally, he came and he talked to me, then he helped me pick shoes, he actually gave me a price on it, I didn't ask for it, but he was very nice, really. Then Louise told him, and then he ask Louise what else do I need, and he asked me, "What else, is this what you want to shop?" And I said, "Well I want to shop dresses." And you know he left his business and he went with us, and he took us to another store, must have been a friend of his, they were also Jewish people. He helped me pick dresses out, and he, and Louise was very grateful to him because she couldn't explain, you know, she couldn't talk to me. But somehow, he knew exactly, we could communicate almost sign language.

And he was just great. Louise is still my best friend, those here in Oshkosh, they moved to Oshkosh too, they moved before we did from Statesville.

SL: I am going to have to interrupt you because I have to turn the tape over.

END OF TAPE 5, SIDE 1

TAPE 5, SIDE 2

SL: Keep on going, you said you had another story you wanted to tell me about Louise.

RK: Oh. Well, this was, you know, in the beginning in Statesville and then Mr. Rochlin bought the- his daughter got married to Mr. Boschwitz and they bought a company here and Alfred was the supervisor of the plant so they moved Alfred here to help Mr. Boschwitz with the plant here and Bernard stayed behind kind of, at the time Bernard worked himself up a little bit already, and Bernard, he got, the Rochlin's moved to California, they bought another place in California. We got their house to live in and Bernard was kind of supervising the plant in Oshkosh and the Israel's moved to Oshkosh. I kind of missed them terribly but, in the meantime, I made a lot of good friends in Statesville. People were, a few Jewish people, you know, we were kind of back and forth, you know, we were nice. Although financially we could never compare ourselves with them, they were quite wealthy people anyway. But this doesn't bother me because I don't look at people, what they have doesn't matter, this doesn't impress me. It's the person what I pay attention to. But after, everything just worked out just so beautifully, although I missed the Israels, Louise especially, but somehow, you know, that's life, you know. I've said so many goodbyes in my lifetime, you know, you just take it in stride, what else can you do. Everything just was working, I mean I had my babies now, they were just beautiful, two little beautiful boys, they were just great and Irma Rochlin, was just beautiful. She was my best friend, but she moved to California. This was really hard for me to lose two great people, you know, which, really, we were doing so many things together, and I was included, you know. Like I belonged to them, you know, not a newcomer, you know, like a member of the family. Any party or anything was doing, we were included, and it was just, I really loved them, and when the boys were born, Irma was a nurse before she was married to Larry Rochlin, but she didn't work, and that's after she married Larry, you know, she didn't have to. She didn't leave me for a minute in the hospital, she put, actually, she put her uniform on and stayed with me, I had a long labor with Arthur, and she didn't leave me for a second. Finally, I talked her into it to go home, and my husband too. This was all

night, it took over 48 hours, and finally I talked them into go home, and she had, Linda, her oldest daughter was just a baby, about a year old, not even a year old, I told her "You got to go home and check your baby," you know. Finally, she- I let her tuck me in and nothing happened with me, so she decided, "I am just gonna go for half an hour and be right back, I just wanted to see the baby and what is going on in the house." And Bernard to say "I am gonna go to the office and be right back." As soon as they both left, Arthur was born Monday morning. When they came back it was all over. They were so disappointed because weren't with me to the last minute, you know, they were there all night long, all day and all night, they were with me and were holding my hand, and as soon as they left me, [the] baby was born.

SL: Let me ask you about moving to Oshkosh then and we will talk about that.

RK: Okay.

SL: You came to Oshkosh in 1953?

RK: Yes.

SL: And because your husband was transferred?

RK: No, because the factory burned down in Statesville.

SL: Oh.

RK: This was a shock, really. Originally, they wanted us to go to California. Somehow California was our destination, our kids moved there. But they sent Bernard here first. It was so nice, the people who worked from them in Statesville, they lost their jobs, the factory burned down, so Mr. Rochlin offered them jobs here and in California or in Wisconsin, if they want to. A lot of people came to work here, but they went back home, they were homesick. And Bernard left by himself, I was still in Statesville, you know, they transferred him here a little while. We were actually supposed to have gone to one of the factories in California. And after, Bernard was here alone for about six, seven weeks, I don't remember exactly how long, then Franz decided that Bernard should stay here, work here, and that's when we moved to Oshkosh.

SL: Where did you live when you first came here?

RK: Right, first, when we came here, Bernard came back and we drove with the children, you know. Our furniture was left behind, we didn't know if we gonna stay or not. They got, Boschwitz's and Franz got us a furnished house, because our furniture was left behind. And we lived in Senholz Court, you know, its in Oshkosh and we had a nice little house there, but this was only temporary, you know, it was a furnished house. And then it was decided that we gonna stay, some people, friends of ours, packed all our belongings and shipped it to us, and we rented an apartment on Otter Street.

SL: How long did you live there?

RK: We lived there for about two years, and then we rented a house on Grove Street, not far from here, a brand new house. It was very nice, near the schools, same schools, you know, same district what we have here now. And we lived on Grove Street for about five years and then we built a new, our house here on Doemel Street.

SL: What's the address here?

RK: 2012 Doemel.

SL: And how long have you been living here?

RK: Since '59, it's about 20 some years.

SL: And you husband then remained with Pluswood, and you stayed in the vicinity?

RK: Yeah.

SL: What is his position presently?

RK: He is supervisor of the shipping department. It is a big place now.

SL: How many employees do they have?

RK: I think about, maybe 500, or maybe a little less, I don't know exactly.

SL: Is it still plywood?

RK: Yeah, plywood. And you know, if we moved back to Oshkosh, Louise and Alfred are here, and then we were, Irma and Franz were just great too, you know. Our children were similar ages and the kids were always together, playing, you know. So I actually didn't come into a strange city, there were more Jewish people here, but I had close friends right away, and Irma and Franz, they were just great. Very supportive, and Louise was right there too, you know. When we came here I could speak already English, it was a different story. It was so funny, we still went shopping together, you know, we kinda socializing together. I remember one time we went shopping, Louise and I, we went to a store, I think it was the Boston Store, and we were looking. Louise still speaks with a southern accent and the salesgirl, you know, with my accent and Louise's accent, but it was funny. The girl was listening to us talking and she turns to Louise, not to me, but to Louise and she says, "And what country are you from?" [laughs] We thought it was funny because Louise looked at her, you know, she expected her to ask me, not here, after all she was born in this country, I don't know how many generations but, you know, she just happened to have a southern accent, and I definitely have a foreign accent, but she didn't ask me from where I am from, but she asked Louise what country she's from. [laughs] We thought it was very funny.

SL: In those first years that you were here in Oshkosh, did you ever encounter any anti-Semitism?

RK: Well, not really, not really, one incident we had when we were looking for an apartment, because we had that house, the first house and we moved in just temporarily, just about three months, we had to move out because the people only sublet us the space just for a couple months, so we had to find something. And there's an ad we answered, you know, there is an apartment a man wanted to sublet, rent his house actually, I think it was a house. Yeah, it was a house. He was moving to Florida, and he wanted to rent the place. So we went over there, with our children, and the boys were little, and he wanted me, because naturally with a empty house, with your furniture, our furniture wasn't here then yet. He wanted to see who are the people, you know, and we had a nice conversation. It just so happened he come, his parents all came from Switzerland, so there was something in common

already, European. And he liked us and he agreed to rent us the house. It was fine, it was fine with us, it was a nice comfortable house, enough rooms, you know, a nice backyard for the children. And by the time, we shook hands and we agreed on the rent, everything was all settled and we were quite pleased with the whole arrangement. We were still talking, and we was leaving the house, we were in the door, and he says, "Boy I am so glad I met you people, I am very, very happy to rent it to you, but let me tell you I am glad I found you because I would never rent, I would never rent this place to, you know, to Jewish people." He didn't realize we were Jews. And we were very desperate to get a place because we had to move out of that house we had. And I turned to him, and Bernard looked at me and I looked at Bernard, and I really got hot under the collar, but I managed, I learned through all those experiences I had, to control my feelings in way, and I told him, I looked at him right straight back, you know what, "You better look for another tenant because you are not going to rent this to us neither because we are Jews," and we left. He was in shock. You just rent this place to Jews and I don't think I wanna rent your place, I don't want it since you made that remark, and we left. This was the only time.

SL: Did you feel you had any problems that would be typical of a new immigrant here? Did people take advantage of you because of your accent or—

RK: I don't think so. Even though you are an immigrant, this doesn't mean you are dumb. [laughs] You learn the ropes, you know, you know what's right and what's not, especially [as] I liked, I was reading a lot, you know, I felt it; in a way I am lucky I was able to learn. Apparently languages come easy to me, I could, I learned, I just love reading. This probably helped a lot, and I was always, in Statesville, I had a tutor, a high school teacher, only for a very short time. And she was, she always told me, "Rose, you gonna, you gonna speak a better English then most people in this country," you know. Because, you know, I don't like, maybe it is a feeling of I don't like to use jargon words, you know, I learned the proper words, you know, as much as I can, and that, I had her for just a very short time and the rest I did it on my own practice.

SL: Did you receive any help from the Jewish community in Oshkosh when you first came here?

RK: Help, what do you mean by help? Financial help?

SL: Well, any kind, either financial-

RK: Oh, no.

SL: Did they come and were they pleasant to you and try to get you into the community?

RK: Oh yes, yes they did. I have to admit that. Naturally, we could not compare ourselves to those people here in Oshkosh. They were all established with businesses and financially they were way, way ahead of us. They were way, right now, you know, they don't impress, you know, diamonds and stuff, those are dead items. This is, those are material things, and it's not important to me, but, financially, you know we, we couldn't compare ourselves with any of the people here. You know, that conversation were their trips and their vacations, we couldn't afford those things. But, I know the sisterhood from the Temple welcomed, a large group of them came to welcome, you know, when we moved in our apartment on Otter Street and we were a little settled. They came to visit, all of them came to visit, and this was very nice, you know. And then I joined the sisterhood right away.

SL: Can you recall any special acts of kindness in those first years from anyone or any particular organization or person?

RK: Well, yes, yes I could. Anne and Franz were really and Louise and Alfred well, Bernard was sick a lot and they were very, very supportive, especially Franz, kept reassuring Bernard not to worry about his job, his job is gonna be here forever, you know. If he would have worked for somebody else, he probably would have, look you don't produce, you don't earn, you know. But they kept his job, his position open, he was sick quite often. When we came to Oshkosh, oh, about the first year, I got pregnant with Ruthie and he had a slipped disk, was very, very ill, was almost paralyzed, he couldn't move, but he didn't want to go, he wanted to wait until the baby was born before he went in for surgery, but as it happened, I went in to have the baby, and he couldn't work, he just couldn't. And Alfred and Louise and Anne and Franz took care of the children, and then they saw to it that I had

help later on in the house, and actually, Anne got a maid coming in from New York, for herself, because she had two little children, Mrs. Bashwitz, and she let me have her for a short time. And then when I came home from the hospital, Bernard was in the hospital having surgery, very, very ill, and I didn't stay too long in the hospital. Louise spent the whole night with me because the woman who was suppose to come to help me couldn't come because I left the hospital sooner because I wanted to be home with the children because Bernard was in the hospital. The first night I was alone with the children, and Louise spent the night with me because the children, Marky he was just two years old and he was just hanging on me, Ruthie was the baby and kept waking up every two hours for feeding. It was a terrible night. If it wouldn't have been for Louise, I don't know what I would have done. I had to hold Marky all night long because he didn't let go of me. Apparently, everybody was great to the children, they took them here and there, but the children, as little as they were, they realized Mom and Dad weren't there, something was going on. Children sense that. All night long, I had to hold Marky and he kept falling asleep, he was a chunky little guy. I couldn't lift him so Louise had to pick, every time, I was sitting in a chair holding him and Louise was up with me all night long, all night long we were up that night. And finally, Marky fell asleep and I said, "Louise let's put him back to his bed, he's asleep." And as soon as Louise picked him up and put him to bed, he woke up again screaming, and I had to hold him again. So, they were very supportive. In the Jewish community, I got right away active with the Temple and the sisterhood, I was teaching Sunday school, when my children started Sunday school, I got active, you know. My pet project was always the rummage sale with some other people, and then the Passover, you know. It is funny, I have a nickname. I am the *charo-set* lady, because I don't know for how many, for twenty some years, I have been making *charo-set* for the whole, for the community's *se-der*. If somebody else would do it, probably my feelings would be hurt because this is my job. Apparently, I haven't heard that, you know, I am always asked to make the *charo-set* for everybody. And we have sometimes over a hundred people for our *se-der*, for community *se-der*, a lot of *charo-set*. But this is my job, I do this every year.

SL: You've been working now for the past couple years as a nursing assistant.

RK: Yeah.

SL: You want to tell me a little bit about that, how you decided to, why you decided to go to work, and how did you chose that, and where exactly are you working now?

RK: Well, I felt, you know, when the children grew up real fast, and the boys left, and then Ruthie, my daughter, she was a student nurse, I think she kind of encouraged me, you know, to take that course. It was advertised in the paper, that course, for nursing assistant from the vocational, from the Fox Valley Vocational School. She says, "Mom, why don't you," you know, I was kinda at a loss, because the children left home and, you know, and I liked to do a lot of sisterhood work, and for a while I was a volunteer with the Red Cross, somehow, I felt this is not like a job. If I didn't feel like it, I didn't go. I needed some kind of obligation, something a feeling of being productive and needed, you know. The children grew up. So, I took that course and I passed it. And right during the ceremony at the graduation, I was approached by the hospital. I don't know why, how this came about, maybe they needed a talking Jew in the hospital, [laughs] I don't know, I shouldn't say that. I shouldn't say that. I was approached to get the job right, if I want a job at the hospital, and I said yes. And then I took it.

SL: And which hospital is this?

RK: Mercy Medical Center and I work on the surgical floor, on 2 North.

SL: How often do you work?

RK: I work full time. Eight hours a day, 40 hours a week.

SL: Do you work on weekends also?

RK: Every other weekend.

SL: Do you enjoy it?

RK: Yes, it is gratifying, you know, I feel in my small way I feel I have something to do with people going home, getting better and going home, especially on the surgical floor, you don't have people staying there for too long. Every once in a while we get somebody who stays a long time, but people come and

get, they recover, and they get better and they go home. That's a good feeling. You know, and I meet people. It is interesting, you get all kinds, you know. Sometimes you have very interesting conversations and I like that.

SL: Do you regret making the decision to work full time?

RK: Well, sometimes, you know, when I get tired I feel oh maybe I should go part time. If it is too much, I will go probably part time. Not yet, right now I still am okay.

SL: I'd like to ask you a little bit about your children, to be more specific because you've mentioned them on and off. I would like for you to tell me their names and their dates of birth and where they were born. We'll start there.

RK: Okay. My oldest son, Arthur, Arthur Norman Katz, he's named after both grandfathers. Arthur, in Hebrew are Abram. My father had two names but we picked just one because he wanted to name after Bernard's father Noah, so his English name is Norman for Noah. He was born March 12, 1951 in Statesville. Then Mark, Mark Simon, he is also named after my brother Moshe, and Bernard's favorite Uncle Simon. He was born September 6, 1952 in Statesville. Ruthie, Ruthie was born September 10, 1954 in Oshkosh. She was named after both grandmothers. Her full name is Ruth Sarah. Ruth is for Bernard's mother Rucha, and Sarah for my mother. And she was born in Oshkosh. And Marilyn Lila, she was born December 31, 1965, in Oshkosh. She was named after my sister Miriam and my grandmother Leah, Lila.

SL: Okay, now let me ask you specifically about each one. Arthur graduated from college?

RK: Yes.

SL: What school?

RK: School of Business in Madison.

SL: And what is he presently doing and where is he living?

RK: He lives in Milwaukee. He works at the hospital, St. Michael's Hospital in Milwaukee. He has a position in the administration.

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SL: And, he is married?

RK: He's married to Susan.

SL: What is her maiden name?

RK: Zencraft, Susan Zencraft.

SL: And they have a child?

RK: A little girl, Sarah, and she is expecting another baby in February, sometime in February.

SL: So how old is their baby now?

RK: Sarah is about 20 months old now.

SL: Does his wife work?

RK: Yes, she's a head nurse at St. Luke's Hospital in, I think in the pulmonary department.

SL: Okay, what about Mark, where is he?

RK: Mark is in Riverside, California. He works, he's involved with Special Ed, Education. He's a counselor coordinator.

SL: And, did he graduate from a Wisconsin college?

RK: Oshkosh University and then he went to Fullerton College in, I suppose it is Fullerton.

SL: Yeah, right.

RK: Is the city Fullerton?

SL: Yeah, I think it is what the university is in California.

RK: You're right, California, yeah. He's almost done with his Master's degree.

SL: Is Mark also married?

RK: Yes, he is married to Carol Redfern, her maiden name is Redfern. She's a California girl.

SL: Do they have any children?

RK: One little boy. He's 17 months old now, Daniel.

SL: So you have two grandchildren?

RK: Two grandchildren.

SL: And, does Carol work?

RK: Right now she's back in school.

SL: What is she studying?

RK: She wants, I think she wants to go back to the school of nursing.

SL: Another nurse.

RK: Another nurse, she decided on that because, well, I hope she likes it.

SL: And what about Ruthie, where is she?

RK: Ruthie is in Anaheim, California. And she's a nurse. She works in ER in Emergency Room and she's a certified nurse for cardiac ICU cardiac and she is also a paramedic, licensed paramedic. She has quite a few qualifications in different fields.

SL: She, you mentioned that she attended a five year program here, was it in Oshkosh?

RK: In Oshkosh, yeah.

SL: And she recently was married?

RK: She was married July 6 to Ray, to Ray Welch, and he is with the Anaheim Police Department, and he plans to go back to law school. He wants to get his law degree. I hope he does.

SL: What about Marilyn? Where is she?

RK: Marilyn is still in high school. She is in ninth grade.

SL: She's the only one home then?

RK: She's the only one home, and she keeps us young. (laughs). She's a good girl, she is involved with BBYO right now and she loves it. And all of a sudden she's on committees and it's kind of funny, I like that, I like that. And she, she made a lot of friends with some Jewish boys from Sheboygan, you know, they were here this summer a couple times, and the boys so much like a song, a title to a song, *The Boys from Sheboygan*, we kinda tease her. She gets a lot of letters from different kids from Milwaukee work, she went to a different conclaves, and she loves it.

SL: All right, well, I am going to turn the tape over, all right? **END OF TAPE 5, SIDE 2**

TAPE 6, SIDE 1

SL: I want to ask you what we call the control questions. The questions we ask of everyone, and, of course, we don't look for a right or wrong answer, we just want to know how you feel about certain things. First of all, do you and your husband speak English in the home?

RK: Only English, yeah.

SL: From the very beginning did you just speak English?

RK: Yes, we tried, we tried very much because we felt very strongly about it, especially because we felt kinda self-conscious about our accents, you know. Sometimes, you know, there were discussions, discussion groups, I almost felt embarrassed to say something because I was afraid I might express myself wrong, or not correctly, you know, and I felt, well I was kinda self-conscious about it. And I didn't want my children to feel any way like that, I want them to speak properly, I want them to master the English language like any other kids on the block.

SL: Do your children speak any other languages?

RK: No, my oldest son took Latin in school. And Mark took Spanish, and I still have to hear a word out of him. But, apparently, he, working in Riverside, apparently there are a lot of Spanish speaking people. He claims it came in handy, you know, sometimes, because he had to deal with Spanish people. Ruthy took German for two years. Ruthy took German for two years and she knows certain expressions, she still remembers some, but she decided after two years she had enough of it. Marilyn is taking German right now, which once in a while I have to help her out with.

SL: How much do your children know about your experiences?

RK: I am not sure, that's why I want to make the tape, I want to have copies because they never ask questions, and if I, they're never old enough, I never wanted them to know anything while they were growing up, I wanted them to be adjusted, happy little kids. I didn't want to put that burden on their shoulders. But I was kinda waiting when they were older, when they were teenagers and all they, they should come to me and talk about it, but they never did. Every once in a while I would bring up, I had

a feeling they didn't want to hear it. I don't know why, I hate to believe that they weren't interested. I like to believe that they didn't want to talk about it because they knew it was a painful subject to me. I hope that's what it is, and they didn't want to upset me. But I feel it now, I feel that it is so important to know your roots, you know, that's everybody talks about roots, I suppose, especially since that movie came about. They should know what's happened. Not only my children, I think the whole world should, we should never let it be forgotten. This is something that should be brought up in the open all the time. Because God forbid I don't want ever something like this ever to happen to anybody, and especially, naturally, especially my own children. I wouldn't want them to go through a horrible, terrible experience like this. It should never happen again. And by bringing this up, and making people aware of it, maybe in some way, this might prevent disasters like this in the future.

SL: Do you think your children may have faced any problems in school because they didn't have a large extended family, no grandparents, or cousins?

RK: I would imagine it was hard for them because holidays were always hard for me because I remember my own childhood, how much fun we used to have at holidays, at Hanukkah. The relatives, uncles, cousins used to come to our house, we played cards, we played games. There was always somebody. My children didn't have that, especially at holiday times, I had to keep them away from other people because they were busy with their families and I didn't want them to be in their way. And other children had fun with their uncles and aunts and cousins, especially grandparents, unfortunately, they didn't have, they don't have the memories of grandparents, or the pleasures of having grandparents. I would imagine this must have been hard. They ask what happened; they asked what happened to their grandparents when they were little. I always told them they died, they are dead. How did they die? I didn't want to tell them that, because why disturb little kids, you know. I didn't want them to have nightmares, I wanted them to grow up adjusted, well adjusted and secure.

SL: In comparison to other families, do you think that your family is closer to one another than other American families?

RK: Well, I would like, I would like to believe that, although now they live so far apart. They were very close while they were growing up. They were very close with each other, you know. They were close enough in age to have a lot of things in common, they could play games with each other. But, now, I hope that they will try to be in contact. I always, I bring this up all time when I am with the children or when I talk to them; remind them, "Did you call your brother? Did you call your sister, remember its," you know. I want them to be close because I know how envious I am of people, you know, when they talk about their sisters visiting, or a uncle visiting, mother or father, especially when there is a Bar Mitzvah, a Bar Mitzvah, or any kind of celebration in the family and you see the relatives coming. We had bar mitzvahs and there were no relatives, you know and this kind of depresses me. Although all our friends came, the whole community, whoever was in town, they always came to any of our celebrations, the people did come, they showed up for that, but still, I was very grateful, but still there was that sadness, there was no family.

SL: Do you see yourself as a more concerned parent than other people?

RK: I just cannot imagine any parent not to be concerned about their children, you know. I feel every parent is, that's what I think, I am very concerned about my children the best, I always say, "The best is not good enough," you know, for my children, when it comes to education or food or care. Even when we went on vacation, I just always tried to get the best help, you know, the best babysitter I could. Hopefully, I did, you know.

SL: When your children were young, what were your greatest concerns for them?

RK: The greatest concern for them? Naturally, that they should grow up to be well adjusted, they should be happy in life, that they should have good careers, good education that's what we wanted for them. Most of all to be happy and well adjusted. I think this says it all.

SL: Who are your close friends now in Oshkosh, are they mainly Jewish, or non-Jewish, or mixture?

RK: Mainly Jewish, I would say. I have a lot of Gentile friends working with all Gentile people. Maybe they are friends, I don't know, because, my best friend is Betty Nenshoff. She lives a couple houses down

the street. We were very close, always been for many years, and Louise and Arthur. I feel, I think, the Boschwitzes, although we are not so much together socially any more, but I know I can count on them. They proved it so many times with all the sickness we had in the family with my husband. They were always behind us.

SL: Do you have any friends who are also Holocaust survivors?

RK: Yes, oh yes-

SL: Do you want to stop a minute? Ok. [tape stops]

SL: Are you friendly with any survivors who live in this area?

RK: Yes, the only people, Gerhard Hirsch, I think I mentioned it to you. He survived Auschwitz, he was there for five, I think five years. He worked for the coal mines, and he is very ill right now, terribly ill. He has cancer and he is dying.

SL: And also, this is actually the way we learned about you is a woman that you were with in Sweden, Mrs. Alpert in Green Bay.

RK: Yeah, in Green Bay.

SL: Do you see her at all? Have you spoken to her?

RK: Yes, when was it, last summer. She was, her husband had some business here in town, and she came with him. And she called me and she came over and we had a nice visit. We should be more in contact than what we really are. I suppose we all busy with our little worlds, you know.

SL: Do you belong to any organizations of survivors or landsmanshaft?

RK: No, no. I feel, I've met some of those people, at one time we were at a resort place. It was [inaudible] somewhere in there, in Wisconsin, by, I think it the Illinois border, some nice resort place and there were a lot of people from Chicago and Milwaukee there. The only conversation they had, it was they still talk about the camp, and I don't want to do that. Sure, how can anybody forget that, but I cannot live in the past. I have to, I always wanted to raise my children to be secure in the future. I want to live in the future, I cannot live in the past, I cannot always talk about it. But maybe because, you know, I

have never been in contact and we had very few people here. Maybe if I would live in Skokie, Illinois and know that the majority of them are survivors, probably I would have been drawn into that type of living, but, there is other things to discuss, you know, the past is past, you know. You know, talking about it brings out all the horrible memories, although you always think about it, it's inside of you. How can you forget that? By talking and bringing it out I think it hurts even more, you know.

SL: The Jewish friends that you have in Oshkosh, are they mainly American-born?

RK: Yeah.

SL: What have been their reactions to your experience? Have you ever discussed it?

RK: We did off and on, but I had the feeling nobody wanted to listen, they don't want to get depressed. If you get together at a party or some kind of social gathering, just to have a good time, who wants to hear about horrors like this, you know. So, I actually, I don't like to talk about it too much.

SL: What do you think is the general feeling of American-born Jews towards the Holocaust?

RK: It's a horrible experience. Definitely, it is a tragedy. I would imagine that's what they feel about that. Who wouldn't?

SL: What about non-Jews have you discussed your experiences with any non-Jews?

RK: As a matter of fact something came up, I told the girls I work with that I will have that interview with you, and they were, some of them made a remark, "Rosa this is gonna be very difficult for you. It will bring all the memories back." I said, "Sure, I am sure it will," but I had to think about it a lot. My first impression was, no. And then I thought about it and I said, "I felt like I have an obligation," I wanted to do this. I wanted to do it, I feel this is such a tremendous thing what happened, such a tragic thing what happened to so many people, not only Jews. There were a lot of Christians killed. This should never happen again, and this should never be forgotten, and I do it, I feel because I don't want my parents, they died, you know, and that feeling that they died in vain, you know. Their life, their death, the unjust death, what they had, should never be forgotten. It should be talked about and it is important that we should keep this alive.

SL: So, have you talked to any non-Jews about your own experiences, or do they just know about it in general?

RK: They know, not, I didn't go in any details. It is just too painful, why, why bring it up, you know.

SL: What do you think is the reaction of non-Jews towards the Holocaust in general?

RK: They're shocked, it is almost unbelievable. I think most of the girls I work with, they read a lot about it. But reading, and really talking to somebody who went through it, it is quite, very emotional, and I don't like to talk about it. We don't, there's so many other things to talk about on our breaks, you know, we discuss politics, we discuss little things, small talk, let's put it that way. Nobody wants to be depressed with all those horrors.

SL: I want to ask you now, a question that we've kind of discussed without the tape recorder on because you are in a certain type of situation that many people that we've talked to have experienced also, and that is that your own children have married non-Jews, and one of the questions that we ask everyone is, either how do you think you would feel if it would happen, or what was your reaction when you realized that your children were being involved with non-Jews?

RK: Well, the girls, my sons married are just absolutely beautiful people, and the same my son-in-law, he is just great, and he is very devoted to my daughter. He made her very happy, which I am very grateful for that. Because happiness is the main thing in life, really, you can marry a Jew and not be happy. This can be quite miserable. Naturally, my concern is, you know, like the Jewish tradition, you know, our tradition is handed down, like the ceremony in the Bar Mitzvah, the Torah is descended down from father to son. This is kind of, I don't know if this will happen for my grandchildren. This bothers me, but as far as my daughters-in-law, both girls are just lovely people and I love them. And naturally, you know, it would have been nice, I am not saying that my sons should have married somebody else, they love them, and I am happy for them, that they met people so nice and they are happy with, that's what counts. It is very important to be happy, life is too short to be miserable. But my only concern is, you know it, somehow it's a break in our tradition. I am not a fanatic about my

religion, I think I'm Reform and liberal about it, I don't observe any Orthodox rituals because I don't believe in it, because it doesn't apply anymore now, to now days. I believe I can be a modern Jew and be a good Jew, and we are proud to be Jewish, and I hope that my children feel the same way. This is my concern, especially, since I am the only one who survived. I feel, I ask the question, "Why was I, why did I survive?" And then I was blessed to have four beautiful children. So, all of a sudden, I realize that's probably why I survived, because to me, my children will carry on, like in the old Jewish tradition, our belief, our Judean should be handed down from generation to generation. This is my only concern as far as my children marrying Gentile people, but as far as people, as partners to my children, I love them all and they are great. I hope they understand, I am sure they will be listening to that, what I am saying, those are my deep feelings. Nothing against them, I love them. I wanted to make absolutely clear. It is just, my concern is that the tradition was somehow broken, it's not gonna be a continuation, that's what bothers me and I feel guilty about it.

SL: Now, you mention that you were very active in the Synagogue and the Sisterhood and you take part in the rummage sale and everything. Do you belong to any other clubs in Oshkosh, anything that you are involved with?

RK: I did before I started working. I was a volunteer at the Red Cross, and I was always very busy with my family, especially my husband being sick, I just, sick quite often, and I just didn't have the time, and I, to do anything more, and I always believe, you know, my family always came first. I don't believe a lot of women do that, trying to be so great with working different charitable organizations, trying to save the whole world. In the meantime, neglecting their own children and family, you know. I think you do the best, biggest job, the most rewarding job if you take care of your family and raise them as decent human beings. I think this is quite a job accomplished.

SL: I want to ask you a few questions about your religious life today. Do you attend Synagogue with any kind of regularity?

RK: Yes, as often as we can, although we don't have any regular services. We have a visiting Rabbi and we get all kind of students, some of them are good, some are not so hot, and right now we have a freshman of a Rabbi, {laughs} you know, he needs a lot of practice, but we give him a chance. Like anything else, he needs to learn.

SL: What about traditions in the home. Do you keep kosher?

RK: No. No, it's impossible in Oshkosh. Well, I shouldn't say impossible, if you wanted to, you can manage somehow, but we don't have any kosher butcher shops here, it has to be sent in from Chicago or Milwaukee and what is kosher? Kosher is cleanliness, and I am intelligent enough to know how to keep, you know, not to eat any dirty food or cook it properly and, you know, it's for health reasons is actually the kosher idea.

SL: What about, do you light candles on Friday nights?

RK: Yes, we do.

SL: Do you have a *seder*?

RK: We have a *seder*.

SL: You observe the tradition?

RK: Traditional things. We light the Hanukkah candles. We did more so, you know, when the kids all were here. Now there's just the three of us.

SL: Did your children attend Hebrew school?

RK: Yeah, Sunday school, yeah, they were prepared for the Bar Mitzvahs and Bat Mitzvahs. Marilyn just had one last year.

SL: And you mentioned that she is involved also in Jewish youth.

RK: Youth group, yeah, BBYO.

SL: How have your feelings about religion changed since your Holocaust experience?

RK: It changed an awful lot. I was bitter, I have to admit I was very, very bitter and disappointed after the War. It was a long, long time, till I finally realized there was a *seder* to be observed, and there's a

Sabbath, you know. I just couldn't, I just couldn't associate myself because I felt very, very bitter. Because, I realized, all of a sudden I realized nobody's left in my family, and the horrors I've seen, and the horrors I went through myself. How could, I was taught, and I was also teaching to my Sunday school students that God is very charitable. How could a charitable God allow something like that? You know. Those are the feelings I had, but I changed. After I had my children I wanted them to grow up to continue as Jews and to be proud. I could never be anything else. This is, so I suppose it is built into you, you born a Jew, you die a Jew, it doesn't matter how hard some people will try to change, you're still Jewish. There is something in you that's kinda hard to explain, it's mystical maybe, I don't know.

SL: Could you describe to me a typical day in your life right now?

RK: Oh, it's very routine. It really is. You get up early in the morning; make breakfast for my husband and go to work [laughs]. Well, at work, there are sometimes things happening, everyday something different, you know different people, and I enjoy that. I suppose I am a talker, [laughs] I don't know. I like to discuss, and somehow, I can manage to have conversation almost with anybody, you know.

SL: What do you do then, say when you come home in the evening?

RK: Oh, when I come home in the evening, sometimes I have to make a detour to the grocery store, buy some groceries, and then I come home, kinda tired. I need to relax a little bit, then prepare dinner. Sometimes in the evening you go shopping, or we go over, the usual thing. I like to crochet, I like to knit a lot, and sometimes you have a meeting at the Temple or Friday night we go to Temple. Like last Sunday we had something new we did in the Temple, we had bingo games, you know. We needed an earning fund, so we all went there. We lost a lot of money, but it's for the Temple so we don't care.

SL: What about on a weekend? What do you do when you have spare time on the weekend?

RK: Well, sometimes we go to Milwaukee, sometimes we go out to dinner with our friends, it depends, sometimes we just, there are a lot of things to be taken care of around the house, sometimes we just need to relax, you know. Nothing too exciting. Talk to our children.

SL: What are your hobbies and special interests?

RK: Well, I am very much interested in, I am very much interested in politics. It is really, maybe I would be probably better off not to get, I get very excited when I see all those speeches, especially now, you know. With all the conventions and all that, and I feel very strongly about the injustices, but welfare frauds they cause, because I see it in the hospital, you know, people come in, you know. I am more aware of it since I started working in the hospital.

SL: You mention also that you do crocheting and knitting?

RK: Yeah, I do a lot of that. I made so many afghans I cannot look at another afghan [laughs]. I just finished sweaters. I made one for Marilyn and my husband first, and I finally I made one for myself. But then I couldn't believe it, are you actually going to keep this for yourself. All my kids have afghans, you know, two of them, each of them. Marilyn has one, I made one for her. Finally, I made one for ourselves. I like reading, and every opportunity I have, although sometimes I come home very tired, it is tiring working in a hospital.

SL: What type of interaction do you have with your neighbors?

RK: Very cordial. I always used to say, "I wish my neighbor would come and borrow a cup of sugar this way." But it use to be much better when I was home and the kids were little, you know, somehow you're more in contact, the kids playing with the other kids. There's a lot of, lately it has been a big turnover in our neighborhood. People we got acquainted moved away and new one moved in, everybody goes about their own business, I suppose, you know.

SL: Well, you mentioned that you like to do a lot of reading, what types of books interest you the most?

RK: I am very impressed, I like to read Taylor Caldwell's books. Right now I am reading, a love story, it's by Isaac Bashevis Singer It is also a story about survivors, and how they got themselves involved, you know and adjusted in America. It's a funny book; poor guy got involved himself with three wives [laughs]. And I enjoy that. I don't like to read about the Holocaust, but this it's kinda of book.

SL: Have you read any books on the Holocaust?

RK: Yeah, but every time I start reading something like this, I get depressed, and I rather not read that.

SL: What newspapers and magazines do you receive in the house?

RK: Well, my husband gets *World* magazine, I get the *Woman* magazine, *Marie Claire*, we use to have the news magazine and then the business magazine, we used to have.

SL: What about newspapers?

RK: Local newspapers. We use to get the *Northwestern*, the *Milwaukee Journal*, but not, we canceled it.

SL: Did you watch the *Holocaust* program?

RK: Yes.

SL: What was your reaction?

RK: It was well done. It was just the story of one family, a tragic story of one family. Can you imagine how many families, how many thousands of families went through the same thing. It was well done.

SL: Did people become more interested in your experiences after that show?

RK: Yes, yes, there were several remarks with the people I work with and there's one Dr. Graiewski he is, used to be our doctor. He had a private practice now, he is not anymore, he is a doctor at the university. He called me up. We got kinda close with him, and he called me up to tell me that they are thinking of me while watching that movie. He made several remarks on that subject.

SL: Have you traveled in Wisconsin?

RK: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

SL: What parts have you liked the most?

RK: We went to Wisconsin Dells. It was very nice there. We went to the Madison area and we traveled a lot in Michigan. When my sister was here, we took her all over and we went to Mackinac Island, we went to Canada. We have seen a lot of the New York State, and we went to California several times. Naturally, since the kids are living there, we have been there several times, but before that, we went to San Francisco. We spent our vacation there. We went to Vegas.

SL: I am going to have to turn the tape over. **END OF TAPE 6, SIDE 1**

TAPE 6, SIDE 2

SL: Did you, do you feel that Oshkosh reminds you at all of Lodz or of Poland?

RK: Oh no, oh no, no no.

SL: No similarities?

RK: No similarities, except the climate, maybe. It, you know, we live in Lodz in a Jewish community, we lived Judaism, you didn't have to go to a Temple to be, to let people know you are a Jew. You are, your neighbors were Jewish, you schoolmates were Jewish, your family was all around you, you know, you lived everyday, like the people in Israel, the same way. The majority of them are not even Orthodox, you know, they don't even go to the *shul*, to the temple. But they live Judaism every day.

SL: How satisfied are you with the cultural atmosphere in Oshkosh?

RK: Well, I am not too satisfied with it. That's probably why my children had to leave Oshkosh; there was nothing much here for them as far for their professions or their social life.

SL: And especially, I would imagine, after growing up in Lodz where you did have so much culture.

RK: Yeah, it bothered me, and then again, it was a good place to raise your children, a small town, we didn't have all the frictions that big cities have with inter-racial troubles in schools, and apparently, my children in California, I remember Mark telling me, absolutely keep Marilyn here till she finished high school, they wouldn't want her in California in many of the school there. Apparently Wisconsin schools are better than. It was a nice safe place to raise children, you know, we didn't have to worry about demonstrations and all that kind of stuff.

SL: How much happier would you have been living in an area of greater Jewish population?

RK: I probably would be, I probably would be happier to be in more contact, you know. If you live in, although I have very, very good friends, but sometimes you are thrown together with people, which normally you wouldn't choose them as a friend, but it is such a small community you are thrown together, like it or not. And a big community you have a choice. That's the only thing, you have a choice, you can choose with whom you want to be together. Whom do you want to invite to a party or

not. In a small community like, when Ruthie was here, we had an engagement party; I could never, not in a million years, could I exclude somebody, not to come. What we did we put in the bulletin, the sisterhood bulletin, a Temple bulletin mailed to everybody every month, I think, I put in the bulletin, the whole community is invited to our party. That's right, a lot of people will have parties and will exclude one or two people, and I think that's wrong, especially in a small place, you know.

SL: How do you feel about living in Wisconsin with its high percentage of ethnic Germans?

RK: Well, actually, this is already third generation so I don't consider them, I cannot blame them what's happened in Europe. There are a lot of people who came in, German people who came in after the War and they claimed they had nothing to do with any of this, any of that, maybe they didn't, I don't know, but I don't trust them. Even Himmler said he had nothing to do with it, he just followed orders, he didn't know anything, and all those big criminals. Everybody knew they had a lot to do with it and they claimed their innocent they didn't know anything about it. Some of the people I believe maybe they did have something to do with it, I don't know. In that case, I don't want to have anything to do with them, I don't associate. I will be cordial, I wouldn't be nasty or anything like that, but I don't have anything to do with them.

SL: What effort have you made to acquaint yourself with Wisconsin history?

RK: Well quite a bit, I think, because of the children. I always was very interested in what they were studying, you know. And sometimes I like to know what they are studying and I like reading a lot, and I am interested in things that's going on, and I am aware.

SL: How do you feel you have contributed to the Wisconsin community?

RK: I don't know. I raised good children, they are not delinquents, I think this is a big contribution to Society. If you raise your children and get them, and put them out into the world as decent human beings, that a big contribution, I think.

SL: Do you feel an obligation to Wisconsin for giving you an opportunity to start a new life?

RK: Well, we worked for whatever we had, nobody gave us anything, and we didn't want anybody to give us anything. We were very proud people from the beginning. Nobody, I think, I am very proud to say whatever we have, we earned it, we worked for it. Nobody gave us anything. We worked for everything we have. And we also were very, very happy that we were able to send our children to college, although they helped a lot, you know with part-time jobs and so on, but we made it possible. Actually you couldn't put three children through college practically at the same time without them helping a little bit. Being in college meant very much and I feel, and I am very grateful for that. Cause I feel education is very important.

SL: What was your reaction when the American Nazi Party wanted to march in Milwaukee?

RK: I was very, very upset about it, and very shocked. And people say, "Oh, that's nothing, it's a little band." I don't think we should disregard that as a little band because Hitler started off as a little band. I think we should keep an eye on them, definitely, because there will be always somebody, you know, people who will follow. There are a lot of people out there who are just followers. And they like to hate, and if there is an opportunity, they're gonna follow right or wrong, people will follow. We saw this what's happened. Hitler started out with a small band and look. People laughed at them. I don't believe we should disregard that.

SL: How satisfactory do you find the American system of government to be?

RK: There is no such thing as a perfect government, but it's by far it's the best government there is in this world to be. We still have freedom of speech, we even have a right to complain [laughs], which if you would do this, I think all those kids who are demonstrating against the government about the draft and all kind of things, I wonder if they would have been able to be so outspoken if they would have been in Russia or any other place. They probably wouldn't have been, they probably would have been demonstrating in Siberia. I think, sure there are a lot of things should have been improved and worked on it and make, there is always room for improvement. I don't care what regime you live, and I think this is far the best government, the best country.

SL: How do you feel about the prominence of Jews in American, in American society?

RK: I am proud of it, but lately, I am very much afraid because, let's face it, the Arabs are using their influence with their oil, money talks. And I think, somehow the Jewish community in this country allowed, I don't know if they, they allowed the Arabs to go ahead of them. I suppose they couldn't do anything else because people will go along with wherever they can make a buck. The influence in the government, the high jobs, like Kissinger, Jarvis or many others, it's great, it's great.

SL: What do you see as the most important issues facing American today?

RK: Most important issues? I think most important issue, I think America should try to get stronger, try to have a stronger army. I am completely against war, but also to preserve peace and security for the country for the people, we got to be strong. I am the last person who wants war because I know what war means, first hand, not by reading books but by horrible experience, by horrible experiences. I think this country we should try, we cannot trust the Russians, we cannot trust the Chinese. Sure we should have communication, we should communicate with them, definitely, because you cannot disregard them, they are here. (coughs) But on the other hand, don't trust them too much.

SL: To what extent do you believe there is anti-Semitism in the United States?

RK: There is anti-Semitism in the States, I believe there is a lot, especially, the Arabs have been doing a terrific job lately. I am surprised they didn't thought of it sooner, but they are doing a good job of it. And there are also a lot of church groups. All of a sudden they are interested in politics, you know, they are trying to make it an all Christian society, naturally this, even though they don't name it by the name, we are not Christians and this is something to worry about, I think.

SL: How secure do you feel as a Jew in America?

RK: Is there such thing, really? We don't know. From experience, from the past experience, right now, it is good, and hopefully, we can keep it that way. But there is always, like those hoodlums, you know, with the Nazi Party is growing, they are getting stronger, even in Europe. Just recently, bombing of a Synagogue in Paris and all kind of incidents all over Europe and also the Nazi parties in Skokie,

marching and all that, this shouldn't even happen, but it does happen, and I think the Jewish community should be very much aware of it. We should not close our eyes to it. We should be aware of it, and if we could somehow prove them how ridiculous and how dangerous they are, I think we should put a lot of effort into that.

SL: What are your feelings about Germany and present-day Germans?

RK: I could never go back to Germany, even if my life depends on it, you know. I just could not go back to Germany. I hope that the German people, they are not the same, it's a different generation. I don't know their feelings, because after all that new generation were brought up by the old one, you know, and as I said before, it's handed down from generation to generation. I don't know how much it's been handed down, and how, I don't trust them, that's about it, I don't trust, I don't know.

SL: Have you ever received any restitution?

RK: Yes, but not too much. I received restitution for the time I spent in concentration camp, which was, I don't know, \$1,500-2,000, something like that. Then I received a small amount from Krupp.

SL: So it was just a one or two times?

RK: One or two times, that's about it. I don't get a pension, which most people do get. I don't know why I was refused. Which I feel it's not fair because how can you tell anybody the nightmares I have. You know, I don't talk about it, but how can you live through something what I did and not have emotional stress from time to time.

SL: Have you ever returned to Poland?

RK: No. Never, and never will I hope.

SL: You have the same feeling about returning to Poland as you do about Germany?

RK: About Germany, right.

SL: Have you ever been to Israel?

RK: Oh, yes, yes.

SL: How many times?

RK: Once, and I, we were hoping to go maybe next year again.

SL: What do you, how do you feel about Israel?

RK: Oh, very proud of it. I remember I went, in Tel Aviv, I was so proud, you know. I was so overwhelmed, I had the feeling I wanted to stop the traffic in Tel Aviv [laughs] and just shout on the top of my voice. "We did it! We are free, we have a country, we have a government, Jewish government, Jewish army, Jewish policemen, Jewish everything, you know, Jewish country." Oh, it means a lot to me, an awful lot to me. Naturally, I went to Jerusalem. People use to tell me that you get so emotional when you come through the Wall. I said, "Come on, how can you get emotional, it's just an old brick?" You know. I just, I couldn't imagine this, how can this be, you know, after all we are not fanatics, you can, we're intelligent people, how can you get emotional about an old brick, but I assure you, I have never prayed so hard in my whole life. When I came to the Wall, I sorta, I don't know it's was hard to explain, it was so overwhelming that I just wanted to pull my heart out. I prayed for everybody, even for the dogs and the cats in the neighborhood. It's a good feeling.

SL: Do you think it is easier now for you to talk about your experiences then it was five years ago?

RK: Yes, it is. Oh, right after the war I couldn't even talk to people, you know, which the words were, I was just, people of my parents' age, I couldn't talk to them. Not that I was envious of they are alive and my parents weren't. It was just, you know, I knew they would have been that same age now, or next year, or whatever. I just couldn't talk to those people. I was I used to get very emotional about it. It took me quite a while till I got over that. And I am still kinda hoping, maybe I don't know if my parents, they would have been too old now, if they survived, I would have known, you know. I know I would have known through my sister in Israel if they would have been alive. I know my brother was killed in concentration, about two days before they were liberated by the British. He was in Buchenwald. He was killed, he was poisoned. You know, a lot of people were poisoned just before, they gave him the poison then, and a neighbor of ours who was with my brother, he is in Israel now. He came to my sister and he told her that he witnessed him dying. What was the question?

SL: I asked if it was any easier for you now after all this time to talk.

RK: As I told you before, I very seldom talk about it. I don't like to bring it up, not with my friends or with my co-workers. If somebody brings it up, it's very, I get very emotional, I don't want to talk about it.

SL: How do you feel about the increasing awareness in America concerning the Holocaust?

RK: Is it any, I don't know if it is an increase in awareness. Is it an increase awareness?

SL: It seems to us as we are writing the questions that there has been an increase in awareness in the last couple years.

RK: I hope it is.

SL: You are not the first person who had that reaction by the way.

RK: Yeah. I hope it is, because it is important for people to know what's happened, you know.

Unfortunately, history has a way of repeating itself, and this frightens me. I don't want my children or my grandchildren to have to go through that.

SL: How do you feel about the fact that part of the funding for this project has come from the federal government?

RK: I think it's great. I appreciate that.

SL: And my final question is, why do you feel that it is important for you to participate in an oral history documentation project?

RK: As I told you before, my first impression, I felt, no, it's gonna be too hard for me. But I gave it a lot of thought. I felt, well, at least I can do this. I feel I don't want my family's deaths to be in vain. Maybe, if this is gonna contribute to prevent something like this, in a small way, I should do it. That's the reason I agreed on that interview, because I feel almost like I have an obligation. I hope I can, I got it across in a proper way. I am kinda emotional right now, you know. It's, I have to admit it was hard for me. I think I surprised myself, I thought I would be more upset than I am upset, it's a avalanche of the whole business, all of a sudden, almost, it's alive to me right now, which, although, actually I kept remembering certain details, you know, certain holidays, you know, you remember, oh, we did this

and this and that. All of a sudden we went from date to date, really from one incident to another, the whole thing, the whole nightmare came alive to me. But I am glad I did it. Now since it's almost over, I will calm down, I am sure I will. But especially I am glad that at least my children will have a copy of that, because I don't understand the reason, I hope they can explain after they listen to that, I hope they can explain to me why they never wanted to talk about it. Is it because, for what reason, I don't know for what reason? And at least now, I feel good about it, that after I am gone, after I am not around, at least they know what's happened.

SL: Well, I want to thank you very much for sharing this with me and with everyone here because I think you speak very well, you articulate very well and, you know, you've really said a lot things that were hard to say, and for me, you know, I appreciate it very much. Thank you very much.

RK: Well, I am glad it's over. I have to be frank about it. It is over, isn't it?

SL: Yes, I am going to turn it off now.

RK: Okay. [laughs]

END OF TAPE 6, SIDE 2

END OF TRANSCRIPT