

Cyla Stundel: Oral History Transcript

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Name: Cyla Tine Stundel (1921– 2009)

Birth Place: Czartorysk, Poland

Arrived in Wisconsin: 1949, Milwaukee

Project Name: Oral Histories: Wisconsin Survivors of the Holocaust



Cyla Stundel

Biography: Cyla Tine Stundel (also found as Sztundel) was born in Czartorysk, Poland, on March 5, 1921, to a family of Orthodox Jews. They later moved to Maniewiczze, which the Soviet army occupied in September 1939. The Jews lived there in relative safety until the German invasion on June 22, 1941.

In September 1942, the Germans segregated the Jewish residents into a ghetto and, within days, murdered them all. Cyla and a younger brother escaped death by fleeing into the forest the night before the executions. The rest of her family perished.

Cyla and her brother lived from day-to-day, stealing food and sleeping in the underbrush for more than two years. They emerged from hiding in 1944 after the Russians recaptured the Ukraine. In the Ukrainian city of Rovno, they were befriended by Abraham Stundel, whom Cyla subsequently married. The three traveled westward by train in search of safety. In early 1945 her brother died of tuberculosis. Finally, in December 1945, Cyla and her husband reached the Fernwald displaced persons camp near Munich, Germany. Their son, Ksiel, was born there in 1946.



In 1949, while Cyla was in her eighth month of pregnancy with their daughter, the family immigrated to the U.S. They arrived in Milwaukee on June 13, 1949. Her husband found work as a carpenter and Cyla devoted herself to raising the children. Cyla also became an active member in her neighborhood Jewish community. She continued to lead the life of an Orthodox Jew in a Polish shtetl in Milwaukee, speaking the Yiddish language and surrounding herself with friends of a similar background. Cyla eventually moved San Francisco where she died in 2009.

Audio Summary: Below are the highlights of each tape. It is not a complete list of all topics discussed. Recordings that used only one tape side are marked: (no Side 2)

Tape 1, Side 1

- Cyla's family and childhood in Maniewiczze, Poland
- Shtetls and pogroms in Poland
- Traditional Jewish life in Poland before the war
- Outbreak of World War II

Tape 1, Side 2

- Anti-Semitism and Zionism during Cyla's youth
- Religious life and living conditions in rural Poland in the 1920s and 1930s
- Russian occupation of Cyla's village, 1939
- Religious and mystical stories

Tape 2, Side 1 (no Side 2)

- Germans invade Maniewiczze, 1941
- Mass murder of Jewish residents, 1942
- Cyla's chance escape with her younger brother
- Hiding together in the woods for two years
- Cyla meets her future husband, 1944

Tape 3, Side 1

- Cyla's marriage in December 1944
- Life in Kiwerce, Poland, at war's end
- The family's difficult journey westward toward Munich, Germany
- Displaced persons camp at Fernwald

Tape 3, Side 2

- Life at Fernwald after the war
- Immigrating to the U.S., 1949
- First impressions of New York and Wisconsin
- Starting over in Milwaukee

Tape 4, Side 1

- Life as a new immigrant in Milwaukee in the 1950s
- Establishing herself in the city's Jewish community
- Cyla's subsequent children and family life
- Her husband's Holocaust experiences

Tape 4, Side 2

- Cultural and religious life in Milwaukee's Jewish community
- Cyla's attitudes toward American culture
- Americans' understanding of the Holocaust
- Cyla's attitudes toward Israel and the U.S.

Tape 5, Side 1

- Anti-Semitism in Milwaukee
- Cyla's feelings about Jews in American society
- Cyla's feelings about Israel and Germans
- The role her experiences played in shaping her later life

About the Interview Process:

The interview was conducted by archivist Sara Leuchter during two sessions at the Stundel apartment on February 20 and March 9, 1980.

The first session lasted 90 minutes. It ended at Cyla's request due to great emotional pain. As she discussed her escape to the forest, she grew more distressed and broke down completely when speaking of the death of her brother.

The second session was conducted in a two and one-half hour taping. Cyla was often animated and at times very entertaining. She speaks with a very thick accent that can at times be difficult to understand.

Audio and Transcript Details:

Interview Dates

- Feb 20, 1980; Mar 9, 1980

Interview Location

- Stundel home, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Interviewer

- Archivist Sara Leuchter

Original Sound Recording Format

- 5 qty. 60-minute audio cassette tapes

Length of Interviews

- 2 interviews, total approximately 4 hours

Transcript Length

- 90 pages

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Transcript

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Key

SL Sara Leuchter, Wisconsin Historical Society archivist
CS Cyla Stundel, Holocaust survivor

TAPE 1, SIDE 1

SL: The first thing I'd like to talk about is your family background. First of all, could you tell me a little about yourself, where and when and you born? And, also, if you could tell me the same thing about your parents.

CS: Okay. I was born in Czartorysk, that's a little town.

SL: What country is it?

CS: Poland. That's Ukrainian now. That was... in 1920's it was Russia. Then the Polish people took over. That always goes back and forth, Ukraine. And I was sixth of...from the children.

SL: What was your date of birth?

CS: It was seven children. My date of birth was March 5, 1921. And then we moved, when I was three years old. We moved to Maniewiczze. My father built there a mill and we moved over there. There's where I spent all my life on through the wars.

SL: Could you tell me about the names of your parents and where and when they were born?

CS: My father was born in Czartorysk in 1885 and my mother was born in Dubno, to the same State, you know. And they was related. My grandpa came to visit my other grandparents and he saw mother and said "here's a nice boy for you" and Papa was sixteen years older and he came and then, my mother didn't fall in love like that, but later on they had a beautiful marriage, her loved her. They loved each other very much. They was devoted people and my grandpa, my father's father was a very nice guy.

SL: What were the names of your parents?

CS: My father's name was Wowe and my mother's name was Golde.

SL: And her maiden name?

CS: And maiden name, Gahr and my grandparents, the other one from my mother's side was my grandpa was Yankel and my grandma was Frume and they was related. They was about sure they was related because my grandmother has the name, the maiden name Tine, like my father's name was Tine and that was like a clan, because they, you know, the marriages wanted to stay inside not other thing [laughs].

SL: Did your grandparents come from the same area, Czartorysk?

CS: Yes, that's about 100 miles away, 150 kilometers that was kilometers and Ma used to tell us how wonderful that was. My grandma, my father's mother was very jealous. He was the youngest son and she was very jealous of my mother [laughs] because she took away her son. My grandfather he used to go every night to *Shul* and that was a eight miles to walk and he would never come without somebody, a poor people to bring them [home] to eat. That was very good, very. People tell me, now here in the United State there was a guy what he knew them. When they saw me, they all told me the stories about my grandfather.

SL: Do you have any special stories about your grandparents, going to visit them?

CS: This grandparents, I cannot have because they died before I was born. I used to hear you know; from my older brothers and sisters, they used to tell. They used to remember the first World War grandpa was very happy. My grandmother used to stay with us for nine years. When grandpa died--he had cancer. And he knew he dying, you know and the night before he died, he called. My father was the youngest one, he gave him the left hand and my uncle was the oldest, he gave him the right hand and he said, "Don't get mad, no, he's the oldest son, that's why I'm giving him the right hand and you the left hand." And told 'em what to do, how to bury him and what to do with grandma and he gave my Daddy advice. He said, "When you are going to do little business, do it by yourself; when you are

going to do bigger business, you should always ask advice, your older brother, for advice you should.”

They was very close, a very close family and that very healthy people, you know. When they used to walk everybody, tall people, slender [laughs]. And story [they] tell, because they used to live in the village and that was, you know, where Pogroms used to be. And they wanted too...then some other villagers came and told my Daddy that a couple guys wanted to kill him, kill the family, you know and it [sounds like: wilted], you know, our family. And they was very scared, because those used to go on a lot of this things. Then my pa went to a Rabbi, to ask a holy man, you know, what he should do. And he told him “Go home, my son, don’t be scared. Until they come to you, they’ll all get killed by themselves, the main guy. And that was like this. You know, my grandma cook hot boiling water, you know, they didn’t knew, they locked all the doors and windows. “They shut in,” all the villagers used to say you. They’ll see the villagers’ family. And they was at the, here you call it a market, they came from the market and they got drunk. And it was wintertime and the sled, when they went from the town, to the village where they used to live. This sled bumped in a tree and he got killed, the guy, like. The same thing like the Rabbi said.

That was a hard life. Not hard in economical, no, like the [Jews] and *Goyam* to be together, that wasn’t easy life. It wasn’t. Some of them [non-Jews] were very nice. And after this, when we moved to Maniewiczze over there. My grandparents was there. I had other side of grandparents from my mother’s side. And when they used to come, holiday, you know. They all would get together every evening. Like they’d sit awhile, some would boil [water] and make us tea, and sit together. It was a different life than that.

SL: The family was close together.

CS Yes, very close together, the family. And then my brothers grew up. I have three brothers. And then, in 1929 we wanted to move to Israel. To Israel, to move, you know, you supposed to have a lot of money then. You used to call it “capitalism”, you supposed to have a capital. They we, we wanted to sell the business. We had a mill and a sawmill. And the kids, my brothers was young, they was very Zionist

and my Pa too. And we was, everything was settled, the ready. And then came a guy, you know, he was a *bundist*. (A member of General Jewish Labour Union) And the *bundism* they didn't keep about Israel. And he was sitting—cold night he talk to my father. “Why should you go there? To get malaria, to dry up the swamps and everything? You'll die there! You have everything good here.” That's what kept my father.

SL: Talked him out of it.

CS: Yeah, talked him out of it. And until the day the wars was, my brothers were so mad at that guy, why he done this. Now, my uncle went away, my grandma's brother.

SL: Did he go to Israel?

CS: He went to Israel. He was a lawyer. He was very happy there.

SL: Could you tell me about your brothers and sisters, their names and if you can recall when they were born?

CS: My older sister was, her name was Marim and she was born in 1908, I think 1908. And she was married when she was nineteen years old. It was a beautiful wedding eight days of going on and celebrating [laughing]. No, my Pa was against the marriage, you know.

SL: Why's that?

CS: Oh my God, because he [the groom] wasn't tall, my Pa liked tall people. [laughs] Oh, then she was leaving to Pa, Pa said there was no wedding. Then she got so sick, you know. Then he decided talk him in. Other sisters: Perl was born in 1910 she used to be a dancer; she was beautiful you know a dancer and everything. Prizes she used to take! Both of them, they was you know. I don't know, but not that my sister's know they was something, you know. And then, my brother was born in 1912. And my Pa was in the United States. [laughs]

SL: Oh, that's right. Yes.

CS: Yes, he came back because Mama didn't want to go there. And then after the other brother, another brother was born, that's Liebl, my brother and that was born in 1912. In 1915, was born the other brother.

SL: His name was?

CS: Ben Zion, yes, then, in 1919 was born my sister Haike, older than I. She was born when they run away, that was when the war was going. When the war was, where we used to live, Czartorysk, you know. This before I was born. This was the river, the Styr, over there they dying—where they used to fight. And that's why they run away because the fighting was going on. And every day, you know, they used to go by the house, our house was near the river because we have the mill. Our house was the center of this. You know, People used to come in the morning, the Jewish soldiers, you know and Mama used to make them food and everything. And then later, after the battle, this wasn't like now, Pa used to go and see in them, he found them dead, on the battlefields. Then they couldn't take it; they ran away. And they stayed until 1920, they stayed in Krasnystaw, that's in Poland, near Lublin.

SL: Excuse me, were you the youngest child or was anyone born after you?

CS: No, two was born after me; I was the sixth.

SL: What about those younger children?

CS: The younger children, one was born in 1923, Yolik and one was born in 1925, now he died when he was three years old. It was then wintertime, going on a flu. They didn't have the medication that they have now. Life wasn't so bad after the war, you know, after the First World War. My dad went again, you know, in business. Oh, one time they wanted to kill my Daddy!

SL: Who did?

CS: Ah, from the same town, [sounds like: another] Jewish fellow. My Daddy went to buy merchandise for the mill, you know. What they need; machines. And this guy knew that he has money with him. Then he took—I don't know, he gave [hit] him over the head with something. And he [the thief] thought that he was dead; he took away the money. My Pa was alive yet and he begin to scream. His friend sitting

in the riverbanks and heard him screaming somebody, he ran out. And the same time, you know my brother waked up. That was in, you know, home, this was a different devastation. And, how old was my brother? About four or five years old and he screamed "They killing our Daddy!" In this thing, you know, they used to tell, people don't believe in this things. They used to tell the stories. This wasn't a story, this was a true thing. [Tape stops and restarts]

SL: Do you think you can tell me about your father's business. What did he do?

CS: My father, we have a mill, you know, what you make flour and all kinds of barley and different things-- and oil. You know, the farmers used to bring it, the wheat and the corn and to make. And they used to make... Then a sawmill, they used to make to send out to Poland. When the snow goes at the rail route; you know the snow shouldn't cover up the rail route, we used to make such cheap. They used to call big things from wood, you know—board and like, we used to. And people used to work, about thirty people used to work three shifts by us.

SL: So it was a fairly big establishment.

CS: Yes. That was big. That was department by itself. That was a big establishment until 1934; then we lost everything because there came the Depression and different thing happened and we lost. So the childhood was--my mother and father they both was one goal: to educate the children. No, no trade a trade it wasn't in Old Country that was—that was not time because in our family it was no workers. Everybody is businessmen and this and Ma didn't want to teach nobody their trade. Then my brother he want very much, my older brother he wanted to learn something. Said a person then, "Okay," she agreed bookkeeping, you know. And then he took over the bank; that was a Jewish bank. He was working, then he was President; he was young yet. And then my other brother went to school until 1936, something then. He went away to a big town, Lodz, there my uncle used to live and there he liked to electric [an electrician] you know. My cousin was an engineer he used to teach him how to tell electricity. And the girls — that was not thing a girl

should work in the Old Country. You know, she was home, she went to school and after school she used to have good times [laughs], not to work girls didn't work. And then in 1939 the War broke out. It was a happy family life, my family was very dedicated family. And to help people, one thing what I learned from my family, my mother and father was the same and my older sister used to teach me, when somebody comes to you and ask you something; when you have just a bread, a half you should give away and a half keep for yourself. Never let out nobody with nothing. My Ma used to teach it to me and my father. And I knew I saw what they used to do — always charity. You never saw such a things, like to help people. Not just Jewish people; even Gentile people who needed help. And they taught me the same thing; the house should always be open for people.

SL: Well, I can tell that just by—

CS: And I would like to tell you a little story of what happened—and Again, people wouldn't believe-if that's okay, that wasn't from my time it was from my Pa was a year and half old.

SL: Oh, please.

CS: When they used to live in the village what I told you, when my grandpa would bring every time somebody for supper. And that one night he brought a guy, from where the guy came, what he was, nobody knew. The guy, my grandpa brought him and he was sitting, the villagers came in they was drinking. He didn't want nothing to eat just he was sitting and talking with the villagers and in the night, then my Pa [as an infant] cried and my Grandpa said "Oh my, what's the matter?" he was coughing and he told him "Don't worry, he'll be healthy" the guy, the stranger [said]. Then in the night, Papa begin to cry in the crib and Grandma looked and that was light; all light, the room was alighted and she think what it means and she got scared, you know. She closed her eyes and she told my father "Be quiet, shh." Then, when she said it, the light went out. In the morning, my grandpa went early he went for business away and the guy, the stranger waked up. And what did he have under his head? A sack with stones! And he said, he was standing at the door, he said, "Give me a *nedove* [Yiddish for "handout"] give me charity, something." And Grandma told him, my grandma was a vicious woman,

she said "Take the money and eat something" and then, he said "Give me" like he talked to you, very strong. She got mad at him, why he was talking to her like that. Then he went away. He knocked [slammed] the door he went away. My grandpa came; she told him the story. He said, "Foolish woman, what did you do? Why didn't you give him something?" She said, "Because he didn't want eat nothing, he just said 'give me something!'" And he sent out people to look at [for] him; and nobody could find him. And next week, five people died in this house; five kids died. And just Daddy [survived] was it. Just people was from the children, these died from eighteen to five years old.

SL: Your father's brothers and sisters?

CS: Yes. That's a true thing. Then they went again to Big Rabbi and they cried. He said, "God sent somebody, like a Angel." "And then she would grab something on top of what? What came into handy, she would give to him, throw to him. Then this wouldn't be happening." Because he said, he couldn't see how five people in one house should die. And Grandma, all her life, you know, she cried at this. This, through the years and that is a true things that happened. You know, that's another thing, Grandma used to tell us to the kids and we knew that it was a true thing.

SL: So do you think that it one reason that you take care of strangers?

CS: Not this reasoning, they liked to do them. When somebody comes; even, you know, I'm raised like this, to help people.

SL: Do you think you could give me a description of what the town was like that, that you grew up in?

CS: It was a small *shtetl*, you know, people knew each other, they done business with each other and Gentile people were [sounds like: past]. They lived together nicely. Still, you could feel when Pilsudski, the Marshal, the Polish Marshal died, he liked very much the Jewish people and they was cared for him. And when he died and Hitler came to...over there in Germany the anti-Semitism begin then. They used to catch Jewish people; they used to beat them up. And still, they was scared. They didn't do it in the daytime. In the nighttime in the bigger towns like in Poland in Warsaw in this, they used to grab and cut their beards off. What was begin already anti-Semitism grew stronger and stronger.

And then, in 1939 the war begin. And my brother, the second from the oldest, he was in the army then. And we didn't knew, we run away from our town to a small Jewish colony. That's one street they used to call a "Jewish colony," because they were afraid of the bombs, we were scared. And when we came there- then woman, I remember like a woman and she brought, you know, she brought some eggs and butter and milk for us and Daddy wanted to pay her. And she said "No, I wouldn't take any money by you." And we asked then "Why don't you want any money?" And then she told us: when she was young and her husband died and she was left with five children. My pa always used to give her flour and barley and these things she should have for the kids. And she told him: "I didn't forget what you done to me. Now you need, you're not home then I'm helping you." That always repays to be good.

SL: Could I go back a little bit and ask you a couple more questions about your family? First of all you had told me before, that you father spent some time in the United States. Could you tell me why he decided to leave?

CS: The United States? Because he was 21 years old and Ma was left with two children, home. And he was very handsome; he didn't look like a Jew at all, you know, he was blue eyes and blond hair. Then I had an uncle, and he was scared that Father would forget Mother. [laughs] And he wouldn't write, that he would leave her over there or something. And he wrote to Mother, a letter and he said Or [either] take him back or come here. And my mother didn't want to come here. She thought that when you want to keep kosher and everything, that here [in the United States] you cannot do it. And she didn't want to leave her parents; I think that was the most important reason. Then, she wrote to my father a letter that he should come back and he came back. And when he came back [laughs] he asked my little sister- didn't recognize him. He asked, "What is your mother doing? Where is she going?" She said, "She takes me and Marim by the hand and we go always for a walk.

And then he came back and my brother was born in 1914 when the war begin. Then my uncle wanted to take, after the First World War was over, he wanted to take two sisters over here to United

States. And my ma wouldn't let. She said, "I wouldn't exchange my children for a piece of paper!

From that I saw what our mother done, you are there and she cried her eyes out for you." She didn't want to let the children go.

SL: So, what kind of cousins did you have here, in the United States?

CS: I have here in Milwaukee, I have two cousins.

SL: Did they come here before the First World War?

CS: Yes, they was born here. My uncle stayed here, you know.

SL: You have an uncle or cousins who live in Madison now too.

CS: Yes.

SL: What's the name?

CS: Two uncles [sounds like Teri] and Howard Schwartz, and I have here, he's a dentist, he's same guy, yes. My uncle is dead already. They both are dead. When I came here, they were alive, yes.

SL: Do you think you tell me something about the way that Czartorysk or Maniewiczze, what they looked like physically? What the town looked like?

CS: The town has one main street. Like here a main Street and little streets, you know. And it was divided, a railroad-- our town was divided in two, like one side and the other side because the railroad went in middle of the town. And that was a industrial town, you know, that wasn't a big one.

We had factories, we have three sawmills and factories, Belgians built something, they made things up, I don't remember what. Then the war came with the Germans. And the youth were very organized. It was a beautiful youth, you know. They had Zionists, now they run around; they used to have like clubs, our clubs. There used to be *Chalutzim*, *Shomer*, *Betarin* [sounds like: Grazma niece] everybody what he believed, belonged. And songs and every week used to come together and talk about Israel and how to go to Israel and how to build. That was a different life then here. That was move patriotic, very much.

SL: But patriotic like in a sense towards Israel?

CS: Towards Israel, yes. To go to Israel and to build the homeland, yeah a lot was communist to — because to better out world they thought that wouldn't be anti-Semitism, like this. Everybody would be equal. And they want to better out this world, you know. And maybe, you know, the constitution in Russia is not a bad one; if people would go. After the constitution, they come to, like the constitution like Marx and Engels wrote, that wouldn't be bad. But it never can be like that. I don't think it can, my opinion. I don't think it can work out. And every Saturday, you know, a Friday night they used to go to *shul* and [when] a holiday came. Summertime would used to have vacation take a pail in the morning and go in the wood and pick blueberries and blackberries and mushrooms because that was so like a vacation. We'd go away for a whole day and have fun [laughs] in the woods.

SL: Would you walk there?

CS: Sure, we walked but three miles or four miles. Were I used to live there was all around forest, a lot. That's how people, in the war, how they ran away because out town was with all around forest and even where used to live, used to be forest where people used to come for their health. Then for summer, we used to have villas. They used to come, a thousand people from all over Poland. They used to be for the lungs and for the heart. Where the air was very good. And thats brought a lot of business in our town too. A thousand people, yes used to come.

SL: I wanna turn the tape over, okay?

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1

TAPE 1, SIDE 2

SL: You were telling me about going into the woods and picking berries and stuff like that.

CS: Berries. We used to walk, you know, from the neighborhood, the kids used to come. We used to live downstairs and the windows used to be open. And my girlfriend or a boy used to take a stick and make a "Come on, we going!" Now, I was young, they didn't want two young children to take, and take too bread, with hard pickles, with out butter. We came, We walked five miles to the forest then the sit down and eat and tell stories. And then they used to go into the forest to pick the blueberries. And the blueberries were big. One thing we used to be careful-snakes; that used to be a lot of snakes.

And it was so much fun and so much laughing and singing. And coming back, the sun was shining and they'd lay down on the sand, you know a from a hill to go down.

SL: You would roll down?

CS: We roll down from the hill and then when came home, Mama used to buy already blueberries, by the farm they used to bring. [laughs] They didn't need it, no that's what fun. Or mushrooms, we used to go and pick. Until I got older, then went with two girlfriends, of mine. To pick, not blueberries, mushrooms we went to pick. When the came in the forest. And there was guys, working you know, cutting the trees, lumberjacks. And then they saw us. Oh, they said "Thanks God we have now, girls." And the other, my girlfriend's sister, the older one, looked [at them] and she told me quietly that the biggest, were very bad people, you know. Let us run away, and they called to the other boys, they should come and then they saw here Jewish girls, you know that was something. And they wanted to rape us then. Then, I was running! I used to be an athlete I used to like sports. And I outrun everybody in our town. And the I saw it, I turned to look after me, I begin backwards to go. And they being to run and they ran after us. They wanted to catch up. Oh my God, we lost all our mushrooms and everything. And then that was the railroad you know, a little house where the guy used to live there. We run to there and they stopped them and they said, "That the first time Jewish girls can run away from them." Another yes and then I came home and told my mother and she never let me go

anymore to the forest. That was dangerous, when a girl got... Then with boys you go together, you go positions and then just three girls was went together. That wasn't a good idea [laughs]

And they used to soccer, you know, we used to play a lot. At our mill, we used to have an acre of land and my brothers build a soccer field and the neighbor children used to come, boys. I used to play soccer with my brothers too and jump. A meter high, I used to jump, exercise, a lot of exercise we used to do. We used to like it. And wrestle, you know and my pa used to be proud of me, how we used to wrestle. And then I think I told you this, that one guy wanted to beat us up, the girls and I beat him up.

SL: No, you never told me that.

CS: That was in a different town we move in. 25 miles from Maniewiczze. That was in 1937 when anti-Semitism begin, everything. And there was a river where they used to go to bathe, the girls, Friday, that was afternoon we went to take, you know, with our bathing suits and then boys came out from the town and they begin to beat up the girls. Yes! Then, I was the strongest from out house and I saw, then I took with my hand and began to beat them! One, one, one [laughs] and all the girls ran away on the other side and I was left alone. And a guy came with a paddle, what they paddled from the rowboats, with a rowboat and he run straight at me to hit me with this. And then I bent down on the side and he couldn't hit me with it, he just hit the ground. Then I pushed him and sat at him and begin to beat him up! And he was but sixteen years old too. And his father, so his father was a shoemaker thing, what I'm doing. He took a knife and he was after me with the knife. Then I ran away. And father - the boys was there and they saw what went on but they couldn't come to help me, because they was far, you know that was you know, what will happen. Then my father went to the temple and everybody said to my father. "My God, do you have a daughter! That she beat up." And I didn't tell it to him because I was scared, you know. I told my sister not to tell [because] they wouldn't let me go again. Then, my pa came home and he was smiling and he tells me, "What had happened?" I said "Nothing." He said, "What happened when you went over there to the river?" Then

I told him. He said, "You know, I am proud of you, you done a good thing." [laughs] You know, that such a things that's keeps in your memory when you young.

SL: I'd like to talk a little bit about your religious life, your family life. You were pretty Orthodox in your family?

CS: Yes.

SL: Did you go to *shul*?

CS: No. Girls in the Old Country didn't go in the Old Country to *shul*, girls, no. Like, we went to Hebrew Schools. My ma was very very religious. My father was more—he used to go to *shul* every, he used to *daven* every-twice a day. No, he gave us—we should become what want to be. He didn't insist we must to do this things. Like my brother became *bar mitzvah*, he didn't insist and that you must go to the *shul*. He said, "Now you thirteen years old, you have your own mind and think what is good for you." No, Ma was...back in the Old Country this wasn't how shouldn't be religious. Everybody was religious when that came a holiday that was beautiful, like birthdays or Passover. Every child has from toe to head everything new things. Then we used to play in the [sounds like: wallmuth]. And this was something excited. Here that's everything, you have everything, every day you can eat *matzo*. Everything, you have all the things, that wasn't any excitement and over there we used to wait for holiday or we used to wait Friday, for *Shabbat*, you know. To bake *challah* and bake cakes and all the goodies we used to make for the *Shabbos*. Here that's nothing. The children, they don't know about these things because they have it every day, they can. There's not excitement for them. And that used to come a holiday, *Shavuot*, that was the nicest holiday.

SL: Why? What did you do?

CS: Then, spring when summer begin we used to go to the fields, out and Mama used to make blintzes you know the [sounds like: daily] foods and bake and we used to pick up the green stuff and put that the floors and all lilacs and flowers, the house was smelling [nice]. That was different. You saw the different between a weekday and a holiday. The house used to smell different, look different, dishes,

everything different. And here you got the same thing. That's no difference-- Thursday, Friday. I still keep the tradition that Friday must be everything cleaned and cooked and everything I cook. No, still that doesn't have the same meaning like it used to have in the Old Country. And then, every holiday was beautiful. When it came a holiday, then it came *Simcha Torah*, you know. And my both brothers had birthdays then. My oldest brother was born then and my youngest brother were born then. We used to make them birthday parties. And we used to go the *shul* and make from, like here for to making for Halloween, the yellow pumpkins, we used to make from the pumpkins all faces all cared out.

SL: Really?

CS: Yeah, because there was no electricity [laughs] and to put a candle inside, and go to the *shul* and dance it was, you know, such a life will never return back.

SL: Would you celebrate the holidays with cousins that you had in the town?

CS: With friends, with cousins, with everybody, you know. And with *simchas* every from all houses went to the houses, you know it used to be the old-fashioned oven. We used to bake bread and everything and take out the food and eat one... that was a lot to be drunk at *Simchat Torah*. You could get drunk. [laughs] And so they worked all week, that was, you know, a class of people that worked all week, hard, no when it came *Shabbat* they knew [how to] relax, everything's supposed to be for *Shabbat*. Fish and soup...they saved all week for this day, you know, they should relax. No business. No nothing. They celebrated the Sabbath, you know. And the town was, you know I used to go to school with the Gentile people. I have a lot of friends, Gentile friends, girl friends and so friends they used to be together and they used to live nice, one with [the other]. And then up to 1939 it was like that. Through the 1940's, I told you, when Pilsudski died then hat more anti-Semitism in our town too. They used to beat people up in the night when the used to go to the train. Somebody they used to catch and beat them up. In the daytime they was yet scared. But in the night...they used to beat them up.

SL: Now is this something that was really a new occurrence for you to have this growth of anti-Semitism or was it something you were kind of used to because you were Jewish?

CS: No, I wasn't used to. You know, I was used to it like at school sometime. They used to beat us up or something, no I was always standing for my rights. And that's why my brothers used to stand for their rights. That wasn't until Pilsudski died, then we felt it more.

SL: And what year was that?

CS: That's 1933, '34 then people felt it more because they used always to say, "When he'll die, then we'll show them — the Jewish people." Even when soccer playing, you know, they used to play the Maccabeus they had the Jewish and the Gentile used to come from college and they used to want beat one another. When the Jewish people won, the Maccabeus won, then they used to say, "Let the old guy just close his eyes and then we'll show what." They would throw already bombs [inaudible] in the bigger towns, you know. They used to show how they hated us so with business, my pa used to do with the Gentiles, business. They used to come to us and buy and things. They used to like my father because he was a very honest man. He wouldn't cheat a them, nothing. And every week us used to be a market, a big farmers market like they used to come from all the villages and from all the bigger towns and to sell and to buy and cows and good things and all. And they used to make a living from this. People in the stores used to buy materials from the villagers — farmers used to come and life wasn't so bad. It was working.

SL: What was your education like, up to the War? How much school did you have?

CS: I had like high school. I went to Hebrew school.

SL: You graduate from high school?

CS: Yes.

SL: Did you have to study Polish?

CS: Yes.

SL: Was that the language you spoke at school?

CS: Polish, yes.

SL: At home you spoke Yiddish.

CS: Yiddish, Hebrew. Hebrew, Yiddish. You know with my brothers and sisters we used speak more, a lot of Hebrew. And in school we need to speak Polish because they was mad when you spoke Jewish [literal English translation for the language “Yiddish”]. No, in our town we liked to speak our mother language. Jewish, we used to speak. You know, when we talked, we didn’t like Polish, to talk Polish. It wasn’t our language. And that used to come once a week that used to come a Hebrew teacher in the Polish schools.

SL: Really.

CS: Yes and one had religion, used to teach us religion. For the Catholics, used to come, a priest teach them, for the Jewish people, used to come for the Jewish kids, used to come a teacher one hour religion, Jewish religion, they used to teach, sure.

SL: I had no idea. You told me you belonged to a Zionist youth club?

CS: Yes. How couldn’t I belong, when my brothers and sisters, the older, all belonged? You know, my brother was the oldest, how you say it; they organized the Zionism in our town. And they used to go around and have they have speeches all over the towns. First, there was [names of Zionist clubs], later they become *Chalutzim*. *Chalutzim* that is more socialistic [laughs]. Yes, and my brother was in a *kibbutz* a couple years.

SL: He was in Israel on a *kibbutz*?

CS: No, no there used to be *kibbutz*. When you wanted to go to Israel then you supposed to go in a *kibbutz*. In a *kibbutz* used to come girls and boys in working towns, where there was factories over there, to get used to work. And the it used to come, they used to give certificate, a couple of guys, you know when they had worked so long, they used to give a certificate. [Only] So many people could go to Israel. When you had a certificate then you could go to Israel. That’s when the government was

made up. That's how lots of people went to Israel. There were all kinds of organizations, you know:[inaudible], *Chalutzim*, *Shomrim*. First, you are *Shamer* and then you are *Chalutz*

SL: You told in the pre-interview that you had some cousins who were socialists. They were pretty wealthy. What type of business did they have?

CS: Mills too, bigger than us. Mills and an electric company belonged to them. And still they didn't need. They were so rich and still they was socialist because they wanted to better how the working class. They that quality should be — one shouldn't have too much and the other have nothing. Like I told you, the constitution's not that, to go after the constitution, you can't do it. That's impossible, they should be. Who is elected to be, these guys they have everything and the workers are working. Because they saw in 1939 when they came to our country — I told them it, the workers was workers. The rich people had, they paid them off, they was educated, they had good jobs and there's no equality for nobody and even there, there is some. The educated people separate keep themselves the workers separate. Now, one thing, when you have a good head, they would send you to learn without money. They pick up from the workers and they see he has the possibility to become a doctor or something he has a good mind, then they'll send him. They wanted to send me, I should learn to be a doctor.

SL: This was the Russians, when they came?

CS: Yes, after 1939, No my ma wouldn't let me go away to Moscow. They want to send me to Leningrad. They picked me up.

SL: What did you do after you graduated from high school? What year did you graduate?

CS: About 1935.

SL: And you said fled from the town in 1937. Is that when you left?

CS: No, 1937 we moved in a different town, you know, Kolk but you know for three years just we stayed there. Because the family was already known, that's the socialism. The police were after my brothers

they didn't do nothing no on account of my cousins, you know. And we went a lot through on account of this.

SL: Okay, so you had graduated from high school. What were you doing then when you moved to Kolk?

CS: Nothing, [laughs] we belonged, I helped my mother we used to go so girls, you know, they didn't work.

SL: You told me you were learning to become a seamstress?

CS: Yes. Just to know how to do things, not to sit, because you get bored to sit all day in the house. And then we used to have rowboats. I have a lot of friends. We used to come together and go out — bike, writing bicycles, go to meetings. That time kept going fast. Because my mother saw then that everybody needs to have a trade, you know. That's no good without a trade. She used to tell me "I didn't want," and she used to tell me, "you know, now I see I was wrong. High in life would be, learn something. You should know you never know what life will bring to you." That why she wanted me, now, I didn't like it I didn't want to do it because I wasn't interested in this.

SL: As you got word that Hitler was rising to power in Germany...

CS: We couldn't understand it. We couldn't believe it. That was in 1939 when the Russians occupied our territory in Ukraine they took this part and Poland the Germans took. And then we couldn't believe that such things. People used to run away and tell us the stories. And we couldn't believe that in the twentieth century that such barbaric things should go on. That was impossible to believe.

SL: Did you have a radio or any other way of getting news about what was going on?

CS: They didn't let you know what was goes on. Then in 1939 when my brother, he was in the war and we didn't hear nothing from him you know, that's so many people got killed that's Poland and Germany. My mother, she disappeared every day. She disappeared and we didn't knew where she is. Later she told us and we used to cry so much, we thought that our brother is dead, you. We didn't hear, everybody came back already, but he, we didn't hear. And then every time somebody came and said they saw him this way walking and that way walking and no came, nobody. And then it was a Tuesday

and you couldn't go from one town to other because there was a war still going on. Then a little boy came in and said to my mother, she was baking bread then, he said to her. "Auntie Golde, your son is alive! My Pa came from Maniewiczze and your son is there." And she couldn't believe. And I was [inaudible] and I got so excited. I used to cry so much, we loved our brother so much. I ran to my older brother and, "You know, Ben Zion is alive!" And then we thought maybe he made a mistake, he saw somebody else and he came and told us he was alive. And then my brother took- there was no railroad to go out 25 kilometers, that was. Nobody wanted to go, you know a wagon with horses. Then he paid a guy a lot of money he should board with him. He went to Maniewiczze and they, they was right: my brother was there and he came back and My father cried when they brought him back. That he cried! My pa never let his emotions to see us, how much. No, He used to take his clothes, to the closet he used to look and said, "God, send them without legs, without arms, I don't care, we should just hear his voice." And when he came to Maniewiczze, to my sister's, two sisters was live, when he came there, he knocked on the window. And my sister was feeding the baby, she had a small baby, [sounds like: under a year] she said "Who is that?" And he said, "That's me." And when she saw, the baby fell down she was so hysterical. And you know, that was such a seldom a guy come back from the army alive. And then he came home. That was something, I don't know. That was a holiday for us. Then my ma told us where she used to disappear, she used to go at the cemetery with another woman. And there was a holy man over there, was his grave. There was already roots and trees, everything. No, he used to say before he died, they found out, that when something will come in the town, they should come to him and pray to him, maybe he can help. And there she used to make the disappear all day and later cry, "You should protect your son." It was like that. And he came from the war. You know what were the first words he said to my mother? "Mama, I have a regard from grandpa and grandma." And they was dead already. And she said, "What do you mean?" And then he begin believe in God. Because before, you know, he was like all the young people. And he said, like the Germans took them at a big field, you know and they begin to bombs to throw them and the machine

guns. And people was killed all around them and he didn't knew what to do. And he had just his, shove and he dig a little hole in there to hide himself, you know. And he saw a tank was coming straight at him where he was there. The tank was coming, a German tank. Then he said he didn't know, or he fainted or fell asleep or what happened. He saw the tank but didn't know what happened in then. When he saw the tank, he didn't knew what happened to him. And then he opened his eyes and that was dark already, that was quiet just people groaning from their wounds and everything and he saw in one side was standing my grandma and one side, my grandpa. And they was protecting him, where he was there. And that why he began to believe in God, since then and he came. They was dead, they wasn't alive. He saw them, standing and protecting where he was in the fox hole hiding. That such a thing, people cannot believe now.

SL: Well, it really says something about the strong beliefs people had in the supernatural. In a way, religion plays a part.

CS: This is something supernatural. Because, with me, I was very sick in the war by myself. I has malaria, I had meningitis and I couldn't walk already. I cried that I'm dying. You know, in the woods you have no medication no nothing. Then my sister, I dreamed of my sister, she was dead already and she told me "Don't worry." My mother came to me "You will be okay." That is something supernatural.

SL: Do you remember the day that the Russians occupied the town? Do you remember what your feeling was?

CS: [Laughs] Oh, the feeling wasn't such a good one because they killed a lot of people you know. The Polish army they came and we thought it was the Russian army and we went out to meet them with red flags. And that was the Polish army and they begin to shoot And they burned our town and lots of people got killed then. That was in 1939. We wasn't home. We ran away to the Jewish colony. There, they used to shoot at us. No, when the Russians came, that was a new life came in, you know. Singing and dancing for the youth, you know. And right away they was standing in line for food. [laughs] You know still it was a different life.

SL: They were excited because they were socialists?

CS: No. Not with socialists, they was excited. We was happy that the German didn't come there. Yes, and they was from 1939, they came in, that was in September, in October they came in, the beginning and they was until 1941. It wasn't bad for the Jewish people. And lots of people would send out word, you know. They didn't tell them my pa was rich, my friends, the Gentiles. They said that my pa worked for a mill because they shouldn't know. This was a different life, you know. For the youth, it was very nice. They went back to school; they didn't look at the older people. They said, "The older people we cannot do nothing, for them, no." We need children, that is our future, the kids.

SL: You didn't see it as a life-threatening situation, then having the Russians come in?

CS: No, no, no, people run there! This wasn't life threatening, no.

SL: Then what did the Russians do for you, as far as sending you to-

CS: School?

SL: Yeah or going work?

CS: Then they gave me a good job, I had.

SL: What type of job?

CS: I was managing a store, you know. And it was the best thing to manage in a store then you had everything.

SL: What city was this?

CS: This was Kolvel. They was nice too. You know, when they come in, I didn't suppose to sell just for the railroad I used to sell them. You were supposed to be a live there. They tried to help our people. They tried to be nice to our people, you know, because to show that their good. People went to school and life got straightened out, you know.

SL: So you trusted them.

CS: Yes.

SL: Okay I'm going to stop the tape now.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2

TAPE 2, SIDE 1 (no Side 2)

SL: Now you told me before that you made a trip to Odessa at one point, to visit some relatives. Do you think you could tell me more?

CS: Yes, because my mother's brother was in the First World War; he was left there and we was left on the other side in Poland. Up to 1930 they wrote letters. Then my uncle died and later my aunt died. And that was left seven children. And we wanted them, we could take them over. My uncle United States wanted to take three kids; we wanted to take three and divide them, and another uncle wanted to take. They didn't want, they said, "We'll stay to stick together." And always amazed at my ma used always to cry; she used look at me, she used to tell me I looked like my uncle; she used to cry. And then when the Russians came to us, to occupy the territory — right away we tried to get in touch with them. And then I worked at the railroad, then I had my vacation, they gave me a free ticket. And they asked me "Where do you want to go?" and I told them "I want to go see my relative in Odessa" and I was the first one — they didn't let us in yet in because they were scared, you know, to let strangers in from a different country. Now I knew the people that gave the papers, you know, what you need from [sounds like: ink] over there. And I came because I used to sell them vodka when they needed some and when I came in he told me right away — this was a Wednesday — he said turning at [inaudible] "Well give you the propers," they called it. That was Wednesday and Friday night I left to my cousins and they sent me a letter I should come — a invitation and Sunday I was there.

SL: You went by train?

CS: By train.

SL: How was that?

CS: Oh, the travel, my ma told me "You should no take any cigarettes, I didn't smoke — you should take no food or nothing they can put you to sleep. [laughs] You know she was all scared to let me, the first time I went away so far. She cried and she wanted to protect me. When I came in and asked there was a Jewish lady, she was going to Odessa too. She was from Odessa and she was visiting her son

and I asked her, “Are you going there?” She said, “Yes, and well your relatives wouldn’t come, you come to me and next day I’ll take you there. And then we stopped in Kiev and she took me to her friends in Kiev. At Ritschkovoj oh, is there a beautiful, beautiful, where the train comes the station. Oh! You never saw such a beautiful!

SL: What did it look like?

CS: All glass, all from glass. That was a Germany, Hitler they destroyed it; maybe now they built another one. And then I came in Sunday about two o’clock, I came into Odessa. And I was all scared; my heart was pumping I’d never saw in my life! And then I was looking and I saw a lady; a beautiful young lady, standing with a little girl about four years old with a bouquet of big roses and a man, beautiful dressed! Of course, they said the Russians were barefoot and big! This was a lie! She wore a beautiful dress, and she ran between the people, she looked at me and I looked at her. And she said to me “Cylshka?” and I said “Manya?” and we begin to cry you know and she took me to her house. Then in the next day, in the morning my cousin came — with her brother, the oldest. That was such a feeling, that’s hard to express, the tenderness — the love and care of them. And they gave me the best time of my life. The biggest ballet, they took me. They had tickets to shows, prepared for me. They didn’t know what to do with me. Then my uncles wish was we should married you know, their children and then my mother’s should get married, one of them. And then when the saw me they said that they liked me very much. I had a cousin in Lenigrad, he was a Captain on a ship, and they wrote him a letter right away, that they liked me very much. That he should come; that it’s their Daddy’s wish should be fulfilled. And he said next moment he’d have a vacation and he’ll come to our town. He came to us and he wanted to see my mother, his aunt — that’s all that they had. And they took me to the Black Ocean [the Black Sea], they call it *Chernoje More*. They took me over there and we went swimming; we went boating there, and to the zoo. And I stayed there two weeks and the last day the Sunday, they made a go away party for me. All the kids came together. No two wasn’t home, the guy he what he was the captain and another one was a movie star — from my cousins.

SL: Really?

CL: Nina. And then when my oldest cousin need to go away, he hugged me, he kissed me and said "Goodbye." Then I begin to cry and run away, I couldn't say goodbye to him. I don't know why! No, he said "Why do you cry? You see, now we've found each other and the border is open we can go to each other and we want to see your mother, our aunt. I couldn't talk even and I cried. And When I went in the night — Sunday I left — and I came Tuesday home— no, that was a feeling already. Because the window shade they let down from the train, you know where you sit, it was something. That was the port, you know, that was a big port, Odessa. And I came home Tuesday and Sunday morning I was standing in store and my two brothers-in-laws they took already in the army for six weeks. That was a tension already and a guy runs in from the Russians and he tells me "Do you know, that they shot at our planes?" — That was a airfield near us, five miles from us. "And that's dead people already?" He couldn't believe it. Without a warning without nothing the war begins in 1939. And my sisters were crying. My older sister went to see her husband, 30 miles from our town. And when she came there, everything was already taken apart, she couldn't find them. I don't know where they took the soldiers over there. And she went with a little boy, five years old and they need to walk back. More women went to see their husbands.

SL: This was in 1939?

CS: 1939, yes. No—this was 1941.

SL: Forty-one, this was the Germans

CS: Yes. That was Sunday. Monday, Tuesday we need to work with the soldiers we gave them food in the restaurant. This was a mish mash that was terrible. Wednesday that's getting worse. Near us was the fighting we saw the papers, the burning the papers and the invasion begins with a lot of trucks. The I and older brothers and my younger brother, tell our parents: "Let us leave, let us run away." And my ma right away Sunday, the first day, she made us all sacks. You know, when we should need to run we should all have to put on couple dresses and things what we need. And when I worked I was a

stenographer. You know I made my normal word more then I was supposed to make and my picture was at the railroad at the station. My and three more people that made over and that's buried by the Russians it was a very big thing. I was scared so much that my picture is there that was a terrible thing. Everybody was running, then my mother said "No." She's not going. She was in the First World War, running away and that's no good. She'll stay here. The Germans are not so bad. You know, in the First World War it was better and she didn't want to. Then we stayed all home. That was Wednesday night, Thursday the Germans were arrived. They were with the parachutes, they let them down with the parachutes and the Russians ran away. You know Wednesday night, that was all dark, that was so scary, you know. My ma ran away to a farmer, you know he used to be a handyman, with the little kids. I couldn't go to them because I needed to work with the soldiers...to give them food — the Russians. There was a lot of already wounded. And then, again 6 o'clock they said they'll come again the Germans with the planes they'll bombard again. And the kids were crying, one kid was crying and he said "I'm scared for the Iron bird. Ma, I'm scared." *Oy yente*. That was such a scariness this night, Wednesday night. The Germans surrounded our town. They came and the Russians ran away and left us without nothing. They couldn't do nothing and then the Germans came in. And right away what they gave them, they came in, that was June. And then September, yes they killed right away, you know, they gave the Ukrainian people, they told them that they'll build up, to give them independence — Ukraine back. And they gave them three days they should drop, right when they came in. They should drop they should do want the want, you know. Then they went in every Jewish house and they took things. They gave them [Ukrainians] freedom. And right away they saw that was bad, very bad. Right away, first we need to wear white things, not the yellow star, at the arms.

SL: An armband?

CS: Armband, yes.

SL: You didn't wear a yellow one?

CS: Later on, the yellow — first armbands. And then in September beginning, they took 450 people, men, from our town and they said they taking them work. And this was a lie. They grabbed, they run in every house. They grabbed somebody from the men and then when they took my father and my brother-in-law. And before they killed them they told them to write notes that they are working in very good conditions. And people believed maybe they were working because these notes came in before they killed them. Later, in springtime they found the graves, they saw under the town that they killed.

SL: That was the last time you saw you father and your brothers? When they took them away?

CS: Not the brothers just my father and my brother-in-law.

SL: Your brother-in-law.

CS: Yes. And my other brother lived in a different town. In this town, in Kolk — my sister, the married one too, she lived with him together. When they came to take him, she didn't let them take him, you know. Ukrainian people what she knew, she said, "First kill me and then you go and take my brother." They beat her up, you know. And she didn't let them. They didn't took him then. She didn't let them go in. She knew the guys, she told "When you want, kill me first, and then you'll take my brother." Then they left and meanwhile my brother ran away from the house, through another door. Then, again they begin to take, you to put at you, you should pay. Give clothing, silver, gold — every time they send. If you didn't give they beat up people. They put us to work. Then they make [sounds like: torth] you know, this is from straw. And my pa they had to the Jewish people construct the thing, that's to heat, like coal to make like coals from the straw, with the ground with more you know such a packs to make. To these were to send us and then the factories — they sent to the factories and they didn't pay them money. And then, no, this was no ghetto yet.

SL: They were still taking you for slave labor?

CS: Labor, yes. Not slave labor camps, they didn't send us to camps. That was enough, you know in the sawmills to work, they took away the mill right away. You know, to work for them. That was going, people. That was bad. They didn't have what to eat, nothing. They took everything away. Then they

gave out the yellow stars they should wear. Then they need to wear the yellow stars. They used to ask people to beat them up. And all the Polish people, the Ukrainian, helped the Germans. A couple was good; you know they was scared for themselves. Because they said if they will find the Jewish person in their house, they would kill them too.

CS: And then in 1941 they came in; 1942, they killed us all. They made the ghetto; in advance they made the ghetto. They divided the ghetto into parts, one from one side of the railroad that divided the town and the other one on the other side. That was Wednesday.

SL: Did they build walls? Surround it.

CS: No, no, no, surrounded with the Ukrainian people with the guns, with machine guns surrounded, you couldn't ran away you couldn't do nothing. They took all the Jewish people together and they put them in one place. In one street, they put in the houses a lot of people. In the other side of town they done the same thing, they put the people together.

SL: Did you have to leave your house?

CS: Yes. They put it in one street.

SL: Someplace else?

CS: Yes, they took all the Jewish people and put it in one street. How much they packed them in, like packed herring, you know. They packed them in one house. That was just for three days. That's all. And my brother-in-law, I told you one, he used to work in the forest, he used to buy up forests by the Dukes Polish Dukes before the war. He knew everything about the food, in the forest. And then people used to buy the forest and sent, you know export for the food, the trees. Then the Germans put him that he should work in the forest because he knew everything about this. And He found the partisans. He knew where the partisans are. The partisans that's a couple of people who had left the Russian army, in the underground, you know, they should fight against the Germans in the back, and that was a big blow to the Germans, too, the partisans. This Thursday he went on the road, he was with my nephew and with my niece, in the wood and he was asking people coming from the town, you know

the farmer, “What new in the town?” And they said that everything is quiet. And he said, “You know, the kids will for Saturday, we will be home. Let us go home. And we went home on a Thursday, and Friday morning this was all surrounded with the Ukrainian and the Polish people with their machine guns. You couldn't run away from there, or rather you couldn't help yourself. I was already run away this night with my brother, the younger one.

SL: You ran away--

CS: -We knew something will happen with the ghetto-

SL: Before the ghetto was surrounded?

CS: When the ghetto, no, when first Wednesday it wasn't surrounded, Wednesday. No, Thursday morning, in the night, Thursday night they surrounded the ghetto. Nobody should run away. Because, you know, I told you we had forests and it young trees. Where we were from there, a lot of people run, young people run away.

Then my brother-in-law took — and they began to run, he knew where the partisans are. He wanted to take his family and run, like my mother, and my sister. Then a guy asked him:

“What should we do? Why are you running?” and he wanted to explain: “Help yourself! There in the wood, there is partisans.” Because they told him when this was bad you should know they put some markers down, you should run there. Meanwhile, this minute what they beat them up the soldier, the Ukrainian guy came back, turned back and he wanted to jump up at the fence, and he was the first one to be killed at the fence.

SL: Your brother-in-law?

CS: My brother-in-law. And my nephew didn't see, he was seven years old — that his father [was] killed, they all rushed back to the ghetto. He didn't see it and he thought his father is alive. Now, his older sister knew. She was eleven years old, and she didn't want to hide herself. She said she'll go where everybody's going. And then a neighbor run in and she took them, her three boys and my nephew, and she put them in, this wasn't a basement, this was like you see in the movies, in the house, in the

kitchen, there is an opening and there's a little cellar, like where you put potatoes in, you keep for wintertime. And then she put the kids there in and she put the potatoes on top in the kitchen. Nobody should know. They were running and they were sitting there and they were running in every house and took every Jew out from the house. They took them up. Their faces were so swollen, red. They knew they were going to kill them. What was the thing? They yelled, "*Shema Israel*." They took them down. They shot them all, this Friday night. That was two weeks before Rosh Hashanah.

SL: They killed the entire Jewish population of the town?

CS: Yes. Of our town, not the people that ran away in the woods, you know

SL: Yeah. But this was the event of having the people move into a ghetto situation and being surrounded and they killed them then-

CS: -That they should have them all together-

SL: -within a few days.

CS: Not a few days, on the same night they killed them.

SL: So there was no-

CS: The graves were already ready! Three days, the blood was boiling. Three days in the grave. This was a guy, [name inaudible] was a cousin too, he was a blacksmith. He was such a strong fellow, told you so. They shot off his head, off his body. Then the Gentile people told his body was, they were standing and laughing! You know, to them this was funny, kill the Jews. His body was running around the town without the head five hours, most energy from this, yes. And a lot of people, they just were wounded and they fainted when they fell in the grave; that's a massive grave. That was boiling like this. [cries]

SL: You had run away into the woods.

CS: It wasn't easy. This was such a hard thing. We didn't know where to run or where to go. Winter was coming. We knew the guy who helped the people, Slovic was his name. He helped a lot of Jewish people, hundred and hundreds of people. He found out where the partisans are. He took them to himself. He put his life in danger. You know, no, he helped. This was not just him, but was a couple

people, and then they went to the partisans, the people, found out where the partisans are. This was a struggle. They didn't want to take the women; they didn't want to take children. When a woman was pregnant, she has a child, she put it wintertime out, the child should get frozen, you know, because they couldn't have any children there.

SL: Who did you manage to escape to the woods with?

CS: With my brother.

SL: Just with your one brother?

CS: Yes, because we were together.

SL: You couldn't get your mother and your sisters to leave with you that night?

CS: No, from work we ran away.

SL: You left right from work.

CS: Yes, we couldn't do it. And the struggle was terrible. Wintertime, barefoot, the legs got frozen, you know. You didn't have where to hide. You didn't have where to go. The hunger. I don't know what kind of miracle, how people get alive. The survival the will to live, that is stronger than anything else.

SL: So this was in September of 1942?

CS: Forty-two, yes.

SL: And you ran into the woods with your brother?

CS: Yes.

SL: Which brother was this?

CS: My younger brother. And there where he got tuberculosis, from the cold and from the hunger. He was a good eater, you know liked to eat; no food and he catch the colds wintertime, naked, that was nothing what to dress. When you hide, you hide in one night this place, one night in the barns, one night in another place, because you were scared they'll come, they'll kill you here, they'll kill you there. Life wasn't worth a penny then and you know a little salt or something, they gave you up. This guy was

good to you. Then he were scared for the neighbor, the neighbor will give up, and then they'll kill his family.

SL: Did you meet up the partisans right after you got into the woods?

CS: No, no, I wasn't with the partisans-

SL: So you were on your own with your brother?

CS: I was on my own-no.

SL: Then you were own your own, with your brother in the woods?

CS: He was sick.

SL: Did you just keep running? Or did you stay in one place for a certain amount of time?

CS: No. We stayed for a couple weeks in one place and then another place. Summertime in the woods by yourselves, you know, blueberries or the guy, Slovak came, brought bread what we could. Nights, we used to steal from the farmers, from the gardens, you know. And the worst thing, when my brother got sick, and I was sick. First I got sick with meningitis and malaria and I told him that I'm dying. Then he begin to cry. He said that "Who, will you leave me, then I'll die, too," and I thought that I'm the one that will die and that was opposite, you know, that's he got. And he had wanted to live so much. He used to cry, say, "God, why do you take me away? I didn't know about life, nothing yet. I'm so young." He was nineteen years old when he died. That's the worst thing, even now, [cries] I wake up in the middle of the night and I begin to cry because I was with him until the liberation. We went through hell, both of us. To sleep together in the woods and later that God should place such a trick at me and take him away. That's a terrible thing. That's what I think. I cannot forgive nobody for this to take him away. And then I found my nephew in 1944. We was liberated, the Russians came, and then I found out that my nephew is alive. And all three of us— I didn't knew where to go. I was barefoot, without a shirt, without nothing, and my brother was terribly sick, and my nephew was eleven years old. [cries] To look at us people was coming. And when we came out, and you know what the Polish people said? "What, are you still alive?" That's what the greetings. And I knew where they have our things, you

know, in the village where they give away things. You know, they should keep. We were scared to go, when people came back from the woods and wanted to take the things, what we gave to hide to them. You know what they done? They killed the people. They didn't want to give away the things and they killed the people. Then it was no used to go over there. Then I went I took the train, I thought "I'll get my brother to a hospital, maybe they'll help him yet." That was Rovno [Rivne]. And when I was at the train, then I met my [future] husband, you know and he said, "Where are you going?" because seldom you can find a Jewish then. And I told him that I didn't know what to do, "I've got my sister's child, and my brother is dying. I need to get him to hospital." And he said, "Do you want company?" And I said, "What do you mean, company?"

And for me, life didn't have no meaning, no nothing. Because I knew that this brother will die and everybody is killed, then life wasn't worth to me nothing. I prayed to God, I wanted to go onto a subway and kill myself. I didn't want to live anymore. But on account of my sister's child, I said, "For him, I need to live." And the three kids what was, our neighbor's children, you know. And they begin to say, "We need you. You'll be our mother now." A that was a guy, he was fifteen, sixteen years old already. He's now in Israel. He used to go in the night, take the machine gun. And I used to say: "Avram, where are you going?" He said, "Don't worry, I'll come back." He used to go in the night, in the woods, to the Ukrainian were, that that's you called them *Banderites* they was against the Jewish people too. They wanted they should have independent state, Ukraine. They killed the Russian people, what they occupied now, in 1944. And they killed the Jewish people. He knew what people was bad. People go killed the Jewish people. He used to go in the woods. He used to go in a village and take his machine gun and kill them all. He used to kill five, six people a night. This people that killed us. He took revenge, you know. He used to come in the wood and yell: "I'm here! I'll take my revenge!" This fellow-what he done! He's now in Israel. He took so much revenge at the people what they was bad. What they killed the Jewish people. Now how much would you do? You could do so much. The Russians took them are lots of kids what people gave away to the Polish people — they

should keep them. And later on, they didn't want to give back the children, you know. They adopted them, they didn't want back, lots of people were there. Lots of Jewish kids what they don't know even they were Jewish kids. Then, this was our girl, twelve years old. And she was by a farmer, you know. Inside she knew that she is Jewish. But she didn't wanted to go. She was scared that again it will happen, the same thing. Then, a couple guys from the partisans, they came from my town, they dressed themselves like Russian and covered there. They took a sled it was the wintertime. They went into the village over there, they took the girl and they said, "We are from the Russian army. We need to have the girl." They bind her, then they put her on the sled. They brought her then to my house. And she was shaking. And I begin to talk to her: "Don't worry and I know." now she is in Israel too. She didn't want to come because they was scared.

SL: We're running out of tape so I'll stop.

CS: That enough.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 1 (no Side 2)

TAPE 3, SIDE 1

SL: Mrs. Stundel, the last time we talked we got up to the point where you met your husband in December of 1944. Now, at this point your nephew was with you, correct?

CS: At this point my nephew was with me and my brother was in the hospital. I put my brother in the hospital. Then a month later I got married.

SL: Did you have any kind of a ceremony when you got married or was it a religious ceremony at all? Or did you do it between yourselves really?

CS: That wasn't a religious ceremony, no. That's was no rabbi. Because in the Jewish religion, who knows how to read the Bible and everything — education— he can perform the ceremony. And then on a Thursday night, it was, with thirty of the people who were living there, in a little town.

SL: Where did you get married?

CS: Kiwerce.

SL: What was the date?

CS: December 5, 1944. And after this— my brother was in the hospital then — and then I brought him back. And we used to live how many people — for ten people, one room. An old guy with his daughter, with his son, with four grandchildren and I and my nephew, my husband, and my brother and we used to sleep with boards, you know that was all in one room and a little kitchen. And we used to live like that until 1945. Then some people moved away then I took another room, a bigger room for my family.

SL: Where you were living. Was part of the area that had been liberated by the Russians?

CS: By the Russians.

SL: So as Jews you were not in danger as such, as before?

CS: We were in danger, too.

SL: Why is that?

CS: From the nationalist Ukrainian people. They used to call them *Banderites*. They wanted it clean like Hitler wanted a clean Germany. They wanted clean— Ukrainian people. And they were endangering the lives of the Jewish people and of the Russian people. In the daytime they used to work, in the night they used to kill people. There was a lot, a lot of them, and nobody knew who it was next to you. They used to be in the woods like the partisans — later you call it partisans hiding places— they used to be there. And that was going on terrible. When we left, they told us later the Russia took the people and sent them far to Siberia. And he settled down, his own people from Russia in this part because they couldn't get rid of them. That was endangering the lives of the Jewish people, mostly too because like after somebody, they gave to the villagers to hide some things, clothes, furniture — they wanted to take it back, and when you went in the village to take it back by the same people, they killed you. They didn't want to give back, and they killed you for this. And lots of people got killed and Germans used to come with the planes, too, yet. They used to drop bombs, and a lot of the people what they survived, Jewish people from the woods, they got killed there. This was still going on like a war.

SL: How were you managing to get food? Did you have any money or anything?

CS: Food, you know then the villagers used to bring up bolder cheese, potatoes, vodka, chickens. We used to buy like on a black market, it used to be. Because by the Russians you cannot do, these things and we survived.

SL: Would you trade certain goods in order to get the food?

CS: Yes.

SL: What types of things would you trade?

CS: We'd trade like, they used to make vodka, I don't know what you call it here.

SL: It's the same.

CS: The same thing, vodka and the Russian people, you know without this they cannot live. They used to give us their clothes, sell— the soldiers — and the villagers used to buy their clothes. That's how marketing began. [laughs] Exchange things.

SL: Did you have any work at all during the day? What would you do during the day while you were living in this room?

CS: That was enough work to do to keep clean. That so many people in one room you are supposed to keep yourself clean. Cook and bake everything — you didn't go to a bakery to buy. You done everything, the noodles and bread and everything by yourself. Then the Russian people took yet forced labor — forced work. They forced you to go to work.

SL: What types of jobs were they forcing you to do?

CS: All kinds, hard work. My husband was hiding. He was scared they would send him to die. They don't catch him then they pushed me out. The snow even to shovel off from the railroad from the tracks and when it came unload wheat, you know all sacks with wheat, we used to do it, the woman. You couldn't say no. They took you with force. They came in every house and they took somebody.

SL: Were you able to keep up any of your Jewish religious life? Did you celebrate any holidays or something like that?

CS: Oh yes we bake matzos ourselves, we didn't have any *shechot* to kill the chickens then. There used to be a Gentile fellow he used to knock down their heads [laughs]. And sure this wasn't too long, then we was traveling, just this one winter, what we suffered until 1945. Then In 1945 people were very close, one with there used to be a bakery. The Russians, they opened up a bakery, there used to be a store. You could get people clothes, you could buy from the Polish people, what they had from the Jewish people, then they sold the things back. Food was enough, not like here you live. No, basic food what you need: meat, potatoes, flour — you had it — eggs, butter, milk.

SL: Then, how long did you remain in this little village?

- CS: Little? That's not a village, that's a town really, a train used to come. Since 1944, since the Russians came, until 1945, until the war finished and the Russian got very mad at us, why we running away from there.
- SL: You did leave then?
- CS: Oh sure. They said, "Why?" We gave them a reason that we think that somebody maybe is alive from the family. We're going to look. And we said to them, "Anyway, you'll come there too!" [laughs]
- SL: Was that the reason that you left them or why did you leave that town?
- CS: Who wants to stay where all the graves are just? To remind because the anti-Semitism was big. After Hitler, that was worse than before. Because Hitler left a spark — he ignited a spark what worsened the anti-Semitism that was before the war. And nobody wanted to stay there. This was no future for the Jewish people. We wanted to be, they wanted to go to find some other Jew, to be together with the Jewish people, not to be between strangers. They were strangers there. We knew, we learned later the truth — they wasn't our friends.
- SL: How did you learn that?
- CS: How they acted toward us. When I came up from the woods with my brother, they saw me, and people that I know, what my girlfriends, you know, Gentile. They ask me a question, "Are you still alive?" That was the welcome that they gave me. You could feel it.
- SL: And even in towns where you weren't known but it...
- CS: Oh, it was terrible. When we was traveling, that was terrible. They was after us. The Jewish people ewe couldn't, I mean like five families. First it was we rented boxcars you know *Shaloms*, they used to call them. People was running, they didn't know where to go who was going. And we, from our town about five, six families took one boxcar we paid money for this.
- SL: Who did you pay the money too? Russians?
- CS: Not to the Russians, to the railroad, you know. There was Polish people ready we went to Poland from there. We was traveling Where people was going, they took us, where what we didn't knew by

ourselves. They took us deep into Poland and we came. That is something that is hard to explain. How hard it was to travel with little children, no food, you know. And every town we stopped, a couple hours. Run for bread, to buy a something and to be scared to say that we are Jewish. Because Poland was worse, the [Polish] they called themselves. You know, they killed Jewish, what was left. They went in a hospital they killed all the Jewish people who was in the hospital. We used to sleep between the tracks, when we started. We didn't have any boxcar to rent the boxes we used to sleep between the tracks — the train was going towards us. Again, we rented a boxcar. Where are we going? They asked us "Where to do you want to go?" We didn't knew where we going. And then they came to Lodz. That's a Polish big town. And over there, one guy, he was hiding something under his topcoat. Where we moved we was talking between us Jewish and he was at us. He wanted to kills us, because we didn't have to somebody for protection. We was so scared, we didn't knew what to do. Every move what we made, he was after us. Then we jumped at another train, and that is how we escaped him. Then from there, we heard that Beuthen [Bytom], that was a German town and then Polish. That's over there people, you know there was already a Jewish organization then we went over there and we settled there.

SL: How did you get the money together to rent the box cars?

CS: What some people took back things; you know they sold the things. Not much money, it didn't cost too much. Because you know then that was big house that didn't cost so much money. We took with us flour; we should have what to cook something. When the train stopped we used to go out and make up a fire to have something to eat — a potato, something took cook. And from there we came to Poland, Beuthen, in June morning we came there.

SL: June of 1945.

CS: Five, yes.

SL: What did the countryside look like at the time? Could you tell there had been a war?

CS: Oh, sure we knew.

SL: In what ways?

CS: In what ways, first thing, the houses was ruined from the bombs. People that the stores was destroyed, everything. People was selling everything, you know. They didn't have what to eat. The hunger was big you know. And you could see at the people, you could that's after a war. Everything was ruins. You could see that. And mostly we knew we didn't have nobody. All our loved ones was dead.

SL: Did you make any attempt to try to find out what happened?

CS: I knew that my people are dead — they killed. Some people, you know, they didn't knew. They thought maybe this person is alive or they was alive. Every town what we came we signed our names.

SL: Where did you sign your names?

CS: That was already Jewish organizations that's begin too where we signed their names. Or the train went through and they used to yell, "Please tell if this and this is alive. Maybe this and this from this town am alive." Everybody left names, you know.

SL: Did you ever sign your name on a wall?

CS: Before the war in middle of the war?

SL: No, after the war. When you went to a town would you sign your name on a wall?

CS: No. We left the names with the officers where the Jewish people were. And left there we left the names. Because then people knew where to go. And then we begin to organize little by little, then when we came to Beuthen. Some children they didn't have where to stay. Until they take them away to Israel or some other places. I used to take them in, because I loved kids. And my nephew was with me, my brother was dead already then. And I used to keep the kids for a couple of days, a couple, a week or something. Not for money, for nothing, just I felt that's my kids too, you know.

SL: These were all orphaned kids?

CS: Orphaned kids. And there was a woman with two children — she wasn't Jewish-she hide the two boys about five year olds. And when they wanted to take away the boys from her she said "No. I'll go. I gave

my life for them. I hide them. When they would find me they would kill me together.” She used to be a maid by a doctor from Warsaw and she didn’t want to give them to Israel with these children. I know yes she didn’t want to give nobody the kids.

SL: I want to ask you. You got to Beuthen. Was that a Displaced person camp?

CS: No, no, no, everybody used to give us help. They went the German, they took away from the German people the houses they put us. The German people, you know a room or something. I had two rooms and a kitchen. Then I used to take in Jewish people that didn’t have where to go — they slept, I gave one room away to and they slept until they found something.

SL: Now again, how would you manage to get food? Were you still trying to black market trading?

CS: Well, my husband-yes, that’s how you survived. That was not work for Jewish people. Some begin already to have stores open a little stores. That was scary that was. Because my husband used to go away and I used to be left alone.

SL: What was your husband doing?

CS: The black market too. Not a big, just to survive you know — to buy to sell just to survive. And then a guy came in, closed the doors you know. He came in to ask about a pair of shoes but I refused to sell. And When they saw woman alone they used to kill the woman. Oh sure. He was so tall. He came and asked if I had a pair of shoes to sell. I said, “Yes.” And I didn’t see, he looked at them. Like somebody would close my eyes and he stole the shoes. When I would say something when I would see he could kill me for this. A lot went into the houses when a Jewish woman was alone — they killed her. Or even, not just a woman — man, woman — they saw. The Germans used to say, “Come on I have a diamond to sell.” They used to go, they used to trick him and take him and kill and take away the money. Some was nice. Not all of them was bad. I used to have a woman, she used come and clean you know because I was sick some were not no. I was happy that they’re doing the work for me, not I for them! [laughs]

SL: Did you at this time, make any contact with your family in the United States?

CS: No. I couldn't, no. This was still I didn't knew even what and when until I came to Germany.

SL: Did you go right to Fernwald?

CS: No. First people, used to live the town where I used to be, Beuthen and we didn't knew how. We used to with the boxcars to rent so many ten boxcars something and how I told you they took all them as *Shaloms* then a lot of people left, like Mrs. Porter, I saw there the first time after the war, I met her. Her son was but eight months old then and one more family from my town. And then I went to a doctor there and I went into the him, my leg was very bad because what the Germans hit me over the leg and this was all pus and like that. And I came into this doctor and [tape shuts off, restarts] I heard a familiar voice and I thought, "My God, who is that?" Then she went out and she heard my voice and that was my best girlfriend's mother, alive. And when she met we began to cry so much and she told me her daughter, Gala is alive — my girl friend from school, from the first grade. Then she came to see me, the daughter, they used to live in Lodz.

That's how people met — sometimes in the streets. And then everybody was leaving, where are they going, they didn't knew. Then this was a lot of Jewish people from Kenz, Katowice from all over. They went to get the boxcars on train and we going too. You couldn't go, like Polish Jews, they wouldn't let you into Germany — a Polish Jew. Then we went like German Jews there, all German Jews.

SL: Why wouldn't they let Polish Jews into Germany?

CS: You know it was the borders were closed, this was still 1945. It was still right after the war. Like in Germany, the American people was, they didn't know how to settle us, what to do with us. They didn't knew where to place us, what. And we didn't knew where to go and what to do too. And then, we went to so many families who paid so much money for this. One supervisor, what he took us, he was a Polish officer. He said he'll guard the train and take us safely. When we came to Katowice there to register, everything and we give a look. They surrounded us, the Polish army — with guns like with Hitler again. And they begin to rob everything that we have to take away. We cried we were scared they would shoot us. That was a Saturday afternoon. We didn't knew what to do. Some people have a

lot of money already, what they make — what they bought and sold. And I was pregnant with my son, I was seven month pregnant. And then they gave a telegram to Moscow telling what they are doing to us there. And I think it was a Jewish Captain too. But lots of people, they took away all the money, what they had — the clothes, everything. And when it came to us, you know we was running away too. We paid somebody, a soldier. We was paid with some money. He run away to the tracks — he let us through. And we hide in a different train, we hide the train was standing in the railroad. We went in a train. It was I, my husband and another guy, a Jew. We was so scared we didn't know what was happening there. And then we was sitting a couple hours that was late in the night. And then a guy came with a flashlight. He said, "What are you doing in here? Where are you going?" We said we didn't know where we are going. He said, "You run away from there?" We said, "Yes." He said, "Okay, I will go and see come with me to my house and you'll stay and I'll go over there and see what goes on and then I will come and tell you, that good that it happened like that. Because it was a foolish thing of us to go with him, that could be a Nazi that could be anybody. And then, I fell down with all my suitcases, from the top of the train, when you go down the steps. I don't know how I survived. And he took us to his house and right away they left me alone. They went. I was so scared I was sitting and shaking. I didn't knew what going that took again in a couple of hours until they came back and everything quiet down. And we went to the train what's supposed to take us. That was screams, yelling, crying. You know, people they pushed themselves on the train. Sixty people in one boxcar. And then they begin, somebody I don't know, want to wrap somebody the train, the back or something. Again soldiers, or it Russian or Polish I do [not] remember. And they begin to shoot us, of us. Yes. Until it quiet down that was so many like the ghetto when they killed us exactly like in the War. And I don't know what kind of miracle that we went out from there alive. And sixty people leg to leg, head to head and they pushing. And I begged them not to push me too much. Nobody knew that I'm expecting a baby. They said, "Look, at you, she's acting like she would be pregnant!" [laughs]

SL: And even in your seventh month, you weren't showing?

CS: It was already the eight month, no, I was very skinny, yes and nobody knew that I'm [pregnant].

Matter of a fact in a German town — I forgot the name — one German guy you know, I went to take a shower, our train stopped, Leipzig it was and I went to take a shower. He gave me some soap and he gave me a comb. Because you couldn't take any showers nothing. And he wanted to make a baby with me! [laughs] This was terrible. I didn't know how to put the showers to make. Then he came and said, "I'll make you the shower, I'll show you how." He was very nice to me.

SL: Then did you finally.

CS: But the monitor, we traveled with a monitor this train.

SL: You traveled [sounds like *vador*]

CS: But all morning we traveled in the boxcar and that was already beginning of December. This was cold, not heat on the train. We used to run down to buy some bread, exchange something to have food, because the monitor in the train was very hard at us.

SL: Was it December of 1945?

CS: Yes. And then we came to the American occupied territory. They didn't let us in right away. Now they brought chocolate to sell, it was already open and they brought us twenty [sounds like: pickles] Then they brought us to Munich, we came then from Munich, we reorder everybody separate and they send us to Fernwald. We came there. My God! They took me right away the hospital for a checkup because I was coughing. I was very sick from the mode of traveling, barefoot without shoes on done up in the tracks and I was very sick and right away they took me. Everybody they gave out the tool to live. People who already had the rooms over there in the, how to say it, you know they brought us in a room, they said to the three girls that this family will staying with you. This wasn't a room you know. They divided the people, everybody.

SL: How did they transport you around?

CS: From where?

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SL: Well, you said they took you to Munich and they took to Fernwald.

CS: With a truck.

SL: Trucks

CS: Yes and over there, already there was a Jewish kitchen and there was already people, all Jewish people. You felt more safe then to be in the carts and everything.

SL: When was it that you arrived in Fernwald?

CS: 1945 in December 1945.

SL: Okay, I'd like to turn the tape over.

END OF TAPE 3, SIDE 1

TAPE 3, SIDE 2

SL: When you arrived in Fernwald was your nephew with you?

CS: No.

SL: What happened to him?

CS: When I was in Beuthen then they took all the orphanages. They took them, they wanted to smuggle them away to Israel. And I was sick then with my leg I couldn't walk nothing. And without my permission my nephew went and he registered to go too. And when he came and told me I cried, I wouldn't let him go that was something going on. And he said, "Listen, then I'll survive, I'll go away from here. Because everyone wanted to go away from this cursed place from what the ground was all soaked with Jewish blood. Then I could help you too." Then we stayed in one place who could help. He used to run around in Beuthen, you know he was a child from the war he has his papers. And some wanted to kill him from the Germans, from the people that saw such a child running around. And then I said, "How could I give the one survivor what I have from my family? How can I let him go?" I cried, I couldn't go. He said, "You wouldn't be in," he said "listen, some mothers are begging to give their children away, they should take them away from here and you wouldn't let me go?" And then they took — I don't remember how many children — they took them from the underground the people this. And I told the people this, "No, they couldn't take him to Israel." And I didn't hear nothing about him until I came to Fernwald. Then I met a person, I asked where he was. "Maybe you heard such a children." A friend of my husband from the same town he said "Matter of fact I know where they are even, in [inaudible, German]." It was a German youth, where the German youth was prepared to be SS, you know. There where they are the children and I didn't knew. I was already in nine months pregnancy. And I told them, "Please take me over there." He said, "That's the hard way." You know with the train, it wasn't settled yet nothing." I said, "I didn't care what would happen, I must to see my nephew." And that was enough, we left Thursday and we came Friday before lighting the candles. And then when I came in I met again a woman, what I was together with her in Beuthen

what she went, she was there in the same place. And we cried very much and when the kids saw me. That was three children what their mother sent them away too. We used to live together when I got married in one room when we used to live. And the little boy, five years old, he saw me, he run to me, he hugged me, he didn't know what to say, he said, "Cyla, take [sounds like: a half away] to your home." They cried when they saw like they'd see their mother and then that was about sixty over there and I saw that's a good place for them. That would be better than to be with me in camp. I told them "Okay" they gave them nice clothes. Some peopled wanted to adopt them to send them to United State. But they didn't want, they made up their mind of going to Israel. And that was already they needed go to, you know through *Haganah*. Then a sister and a brother, they got sick with measles and they was quarantined and they couldn't go. And that's where my nephew goes. Until they send them to a different place and my son was born in January. And he came for the *bris* and I told him he was running ten miles, winter time, not to miss the *bris* and then I would let him go back. Then they send him in a different *kibbutz* and he got sick too. And I said, "You stay where I stay, what will be with me will be with you." And then he stayed with us.

SL: In Fernwald.

CL: Uh huh.

SL: Okay. I want to ask you some things about living there, in Fernwald. Could you describe the camp, what it looked like physically, the buildings?

CS: The building, I think the army used to live there. In one room, they pushed in, that was like eleven people, we used to live. That was beds all around the walls. And it wasn't no heating system. We needed to have ovens like to heat the room. That was a hard life. That wasn't easy. One thing that was plays that was entertainment shows. They gave us every evening a different show. This was a kitchen everybody cook for themselves. Single people maybe they took the food out from there. People, they lived together like a family. They cared for one another. Me, the boys where I used to live, there used to be three brothers they wouldn't let me [go out] in the night, I shouldn't fall down when I was

pregnant. They used to take me at the sled all over. They used to care. That's like a relation, like a family this was. Again this scared again too. Because they killed a couple of Jewish people, the Germans. That wasn't easy to live in the camp. Then the American MP was after us too, like we would be the bad ones and the Germans the good ones.

SL: Why would they be after you?

CS: When you black marketing, because you couldn't live any different, you supposed to like you bought from the Germans, you sold to the Germans. On time we waked up, the camp was surrounded with the MP. They wouldn't let us go out. Even, they wouldn't let me go out to bring some milk for my son. Like we would be enemies or something — they killed a guy in one town he didn't knew on— in a different camp from my town, he didn't know what goes on and he went to mail a letter and they shot him. Then they killed a Jewish guy, that was in 1946, the beginning. In spring and she was pregnant, expecting a baby, it was his baby due. And the guy went to buy something and Germans killed him. Again, they surrounded our camp. "Why?" they told us, "We make with what, with nothing, with bare hands." Not far away was a town, Wülfershausen, the name. And they thought "We'll make a riot over there." That was the funeral for this guy. And they wouldn't let us out from the gate. And people wanted when the funeral was, to some after the gate, not just into the gate from the camp. And they took like the war — they took the knives, the bayonets — they put on the rifles and they begin to pinch, every night, People they wounded. Then, we went back that's how it was, how the MP was to us.

SL: Do you recall any acts of kindness? Where there people who treated you in a kind way? Who felt sympathetic or compassionate?

CS: Not, you know the German people their reply was they didn't knew what goes on. I used to have a German lady, she used to come and help me. What inside in her heart, nobody knew, I paid her for this. No, she helped me. She washed for me. I didn't have no place else to wash, nothing. Twice a week she used to come in. And they would let in, you know they didn't want German people should

come in. And I used to tell them: "Why not? When I am sick, I cannot do the work." She was very nice to me. I used to go away over there to stay a couple days. Harsh inside, they felt toward us? We don't know. And the camp used to buy cattle, bring it into the camp and we should have meat. You know we tried to survive and learned so much, not to depend on the American people, what they used to send to the Red Cross because until it came it was nothing. People took inside for themselves and then when it came in it was nothing for us left. We needed to have the black market, without this we couldn't survive.

SL: Were there some people who made more money than others?

CS: Yes. People what they wasn't scared, they used to go to into Berlin and to different and to make a big business, some people. I used to be scared, I wouldn't have my husband. They said who will be at list at the black market list they wouldn't let to go to United States. And then when I came, right away from the United States there was a guy, I think he was from Milwaukee and I told him that I have an uncle. And he took my pictures, he took the name and then I gave it to the papers too. And then, in summer there came a letter form my uncle.

SL: Summer of what year?

CS: Ninety-fourty six and I thought my papers everything went away already to go to Israel. I even forgot that I applied to look for my uncle. And then my uncle said I should come there. No, he couldn't bring me their because of the quota wasn't here. No quota. Just, he thought I'm single, he didn't know I'm married because when I wrote him the letter I wrote my maiden name he should knew who this is. And I wrote who I am, whose daughter I am and everything. Then he thought and he wanted to send his son, he just came from the War and he could go back and bring me like his bride. Then I wrote him a letter that I'm married and have a child already. And then I registered to the *aliyahs* and we was waiting for what will happen. And the life in camp was like this every day. You went to work, you took the children, that was all around wooded area and we paid a lot attention to the kids, you know. All the

love that was left, all the time we put in with the children. I don't know this was too good either. [tape shuts off, restarts]

Where I used to live they assigned a room to me there used to be three girls. And I was like a mother to them. There wasn't much I could younger you see then I.,I married them off, all three of them.

[laughs] They took me; I should talk to the boys or the men. And all three of them got married. Now one lives in Detroit, I'm in touch with her. And the other was three brothers, they all in Canada, in Montreal. They got very rich. And one woman is back in New Jersey — what she helped me a lot with my son to raise. And she had a son, eleven years old which he survived too. And this was close, the people as very close over there.

SL: Was it a happy life there?

CS: Yes. You didn't think, you knew everything sad you know this was scary, the nights was scary the Germans shouldn't come up or something. Not still that was weddings going on. People got married because all the young generation. They got married and shows and entertainment they gave a lot. This was close, like a close family. About 5000 people was in this camp. It was like a very close family with us.

SL: So you decided that you would register to go to the United States rather than Israel because of your uncle?

CS: Because of my uncle. Because I thought, "I'll come, I have my family." My cousin begin to write letters to me and my cousin what he was in the War. He wanted I should come here. Then I knew I'll have a family, I'll have somebody here. Now I regret it not Israel, regret that I came here. I didn't go to Israel. The future, our future was in Israel, not here. But I wanted to see my relative. And in 1949 we came, they took us with a plane because the woman what was expecting babies they didn't let go with the ships. We came to New York.

SL: Can I interrupt you, because I want to ask you a little bit about the trip itself. When, in 1949 did you finally leave Fernwald?

CS: In June month I arrived. No, it wasn't easy, again. I need to travel from Fernwald to Munich everyday to the counsel for interviews. And they checked that you no Nazi. And everybody was scared because my heart was bad and there was scared the lungs — the checked — they said you have a little thing, something they wouldn't let you through. And then I used to catch what I could with not a car, with trucks. I used to travel 30 miles or 50 miles was from Fernwald to Munich. And I got accidents. That was a guy what he was driving the truck and he lost control and I was sitting near him with my son, he was three and a half years old and I nearly got killed. We went over and I was scared they wouldn't let me go. I couldn't breathe — I broke some ribs. And I couldn't for six weeks and I was scared that would be no. Thanks to God everything was okay and then we left on a Sunday 12th of June 1949. We left.

SL: Were there still many people left in the camp?

CS: On yes. When we left the camp, what we used to live other people, they transferred from different camps and they brought them there. And we came to New York June 13.

SL: And you told me you took that trip by airplane.

CS: Yes.

SL: Which is quite unusual.

CS: Oh that wasn't like other planes, a jet or something. It was an Air Force plan, from the Air Force. It was the hard wooden seats and everything. I was sitting and holding my son at my left and I was scared to move. I thought when I move bad then that will go down. Then that was a rabbi oh, such a religious Jew and he wanted to see how the plane goes. And he went to the door and he opened the door and all the wind blew at us. One woman nearly fainted. I don't know what kind of miracle that he was alive. And then the pilot took big ropes and they tied the door through. That was over Paris, I think it was. And then I do remember where we stopped, twice we stopped to refuel. And then all night it was going through the ocean. I was so scared I prayed to God not to suppose to be an accident, not in the ocean I shouldn't fell down in the water. [laughs] That was funny for hours we traveled.

SL: Most people on the plan had never been on one before

CS: Mostly all of them everybody, all of them.

SL: Was everyone scared in the same way?

CS: You know, they was scared and I remember when I was young girl in school, two pilots got killed when they won some... And I was thinking [inaudible] about these two guys, the Polish guys what they got killed. And that I was scared, I didn't know what happened, how many accidents are here with the planes. And one guy told me "Why are you scared, [sounds like: we won't water, we'll go down, that's three left.]" That was very scary. I was very scared. I was scared to move, I didn't move all the time.

SL: You didn't get up at all?

CS: I was so scared that all Jewish people all the Jewish religious people wouldn't travel because a day before we went the Gentile people had left and the Jewish people didn't want to travel on a Saturday and we was standing all night and praying. And when we came to New York, everybody's own family came to wait for them. And to me, nobody came out and I cried so much. My husband begin to cry and I was cried and my son was after a sickness he got scarlet fever. And they took us with a bus to HIAS [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society] and he was crying he wanted a drink and I couldn't get it. It was terrible experience, then. Then, when they brought us to HIAS they took the men separate and the woman with the children separate. And they put us in a room, a dark room — no window, no nothing. This was so hot, we was sweating.

SL: You were pregnant at this time, right?

CS: In the ninth month.

SL: The ninth month!

CS: And then, I don't know how my cousin-he used to work in New York, he found out that I came, and a couple days later and he came to me in the middle of the night and he waked me up. It was the first reunion from my relatives that I saw. That was something. He looked like me, you know, they thought that's my brother. He didn't have by himself, nothing. He was going to school he just came from the

War. And what he have he borrowed by his girlfriend. He bought for my son a little sweatshirt, for my husband, a tie. He didn't know what to do. He was very nice to me. And then, we stayed in HIAS and week. And I told them they should send me to Milwaukee where my uncle is. And they wanted to send me, no my uncle should help me. And I told them that my uncle couldn't help. I knew he wasn't rich, he should help, I told them, "I came to the HIAS and I want the HIAS should help me." And it was a big struggle. I told them not I wouldn't leave New York.

SL: What did you do when you were in New York for these days?

CS: This was nothing what to do.

SL: Didn't walk around?

CS: Walk around outside yes, and I met some people what they left before me from our camp and they helped me a lot. You know because I was very depressed because when I came I thought it would be all different. That was a strange country, strange people, the language, you know. Some people talk Jewish and some thought "The Greenhorns" we knew that, that's not before in the First World War, people came what they didn't knew nothing. And the people came from the Second World War, they was educated people. They couldn't understand this. They told us words, things what we knew before, you know, and they tried to teach us manners. And we knew better than them the manners. That was something new to us. How people thought about us, how they thought about us.

SL: These were just people that you would meet on the street?

CS: Uh huh. One guy, a taxi driver, was so nice when I didn't knew where my cousin, I forgot his address, I wanted to find him. I knew he lives in Brooklyn. He took us from Manhattan to Brooklyn, [laughs] and I had just two dollars, my husband gave him the two dollars, he said, "Anyway you need to go back, he'll take us back for the two dollars too." [laughs] How could we go back? Some people was nice, you know.

SL: What were your impressions of the city itself, physical appearance?

CS: Too much noise. That was New York and for no money, I would stay in New York. Like in Castle Garden, it was too much for us. We came, our nerves was shattered, everything. We needed a more quieter place. And I was glad when they send me to Chicago and from Chicago my cousin was waiting there for me.

SL: How did you make the trip from New York to Chicago?

CS: With a train.

SL: And HIAS paid for that?

CS: No. My cousin sent me money, ninety dollars, he sent for the trip I should come from Chicago, had a cousin. And from all the people, I picked him up, and I told my husband, "Go over and ask if this is Norton Gahr because I couldn't walk already, my legs are puffed up and it was too much of a trip for me. Then my husband went to him, said, "Are you Norton?" He said, "How do you know it?" He said, "My wife told me I should go to you. From all the people she picked you out." He said, "Yes." [laughs] And when I came, they took me to Kenosha, where my uncle used to live. I had an uncle in Kenosha.

SL: What was his name?

CS: Ben Gahr. Yes. When he saw me, did he begin to cry! And I cried. And my aunt was scared, I shouldn't tell him because he had a bad heart. I shouldn't tell them. And anyway, my other cousin told me — what he came from the war, David, "Please, Cyla, don't tell nothing to them. They couldn't understand I was in the War, better keep it to yourself, because people couldn't understand what you went through. They wouldn't believe you." Like some woman I met, they said, "We went through a lot, too, in the War. The American woman, you know, from here. And we said, "What did you went through?" "We didn't have any meat. We needed to have chickens, just." That was theirs. They went through a lot. Maybe they lost some children in the war too, I felt bad. And then I came the 13 of June to the United State and the 13 of July my daughter was born in a month.

SL: Where was she born?

CS: In Mt. Sinai hospital.

SL: Here in Milwaukee?

CS: Yes, in Milwaukee. And when I came to the hospital, nobody's talking, the Doctor, what he was. He said, "I know Jewish like you know English." And I came alone. I was sitting in the fifth floor and I thought I would jump down and that was it, finished. It is terrible to be alone.

SL: You said you came to Kenosha and saw your cousins there. Then how did you get to Milwaukee?

CS: That, my uncle they both they made a living. It was older people already, then I had my uncle in Milwaukee. And then Just the aunt prepared, we had dinner, this was on a Friday, and they took us to Milwaukee, to the other uncle. Here they had went already to Jewish Welfare, Children's Service. And she arranged for me the hospital, the Mt. Sinai hospital and a social worker for me because they knew they couldn't afford to take care of me. I came there and I stayed until Tuesday. Tuesday that was no place to go. You couldn't get any apartment any living for no money. That was very hard in the 1949 to get a place where to stay. Then I found a woman, she had a place, she used to live with five rooms. She rented me one room for fifteen dollars a week and I used to clean for here. She was very nice to me.

SL: Where was this in Milwaukee?

CS: In Tenth and Wright and I stayed there until my baby was born, my daughter. In meantime, I rented a place before the baby was born. I rented a place for sixty dollars a month, four rooms, yes that was nice then. And later, they wanted to give them more money. They said, "She's pregnant, she'll have another child." And he said I wouldn't feed the child, she will weigh the child and that's okay. He was a very nice guy.

SL: Where was this place?

CS: At Tenth and Lloyd, some people was nice, you know, they tried to give some clothes. My old clothes got lost. All luggage got lost. I came with nothing and I was waiting. Because my papers want that I should go to New Orleans. Yes.

SL: Why?

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SL: Sure, they wouldn't send you where you wanted to go. No, when I came to New York that's why I told them I don't want to go to New Orleans, I want to go to Milwaukee where my uncle lives. That's why my luggage went away some place else.

SL: You never got it back?

CS: No, no. I never got it back.

SL: I would like to turn the tape over.

END OF TAPE 3, SIDE 2

TAPE 4, SIDE 1

SL: I'd like to ask you a little bit about the help you received from the Jewish community in Milwaukee. You said that you went to the Jewish Family and Children's Service and they arranged the hospital room for you but what else did they do for you?

CS: They paid the rent for me because my husband couldn't go right away to work until the baby was born. And they gave eighteen dollars a week to live we should have for food and they paid for the room, the fifteen dollars a week for this one month. I wasn't too demanding because, you know, still they wasn't obligated to do it. Some people was demanding, and I was thankful what they got. When the baby was born they brought somethings what I need, milk, bread, diapers. And then my husband stayed with a month until I came with him myself and they found for him a job.

SL: What kind of job?

CS: Carpenter work because never was this no he was very handy with things. That's how he begin to work. They bought him tools. They gave him the job. And I never wanted, then they should help me back. I was satisfied how much he made to live. He was working very hard, you know. When he finished the job he'd go, people used to give him little jobs to repair windows, any job he'll take. He'll never say no if he doesn't know how to do it. Matter of fact, one time when we came, right away he begin to take little jobs and I was waiting all day he should come home. He didn't come home. That was before the baby was born in July. And I cried, I called my uncle "Where is my husband?" That a strange town I didn't know what happened. And then I found out he was in the hospital, he collapsed by the work was so hot he collapsed. And I'm not rich and I'm thankful to God that I could give my children a home, education. That is my prime thing what I wanted to give them an education. And live decent, to have a roof over my head. [laughs]

SL: Did you feel that you had problems that a new immigrant would face?

CS: Yes.

SL: The language problem?

CS: Yes, that was the language problem, when I went to buy something. Like I used to speak then about six, seven languages. I've forgotten now. And I went into a bakery to buy a bread or something and when I want to express something, there was a young girl, she laughed, you know, and I got very upset. I asked her with my broken English how many languages she speaks. She said "One." And I told her, "Then why do you laugh when you speak one language?" Or like, there used to be a little boy, a neighbor, used to beat up always my son, a Gentile, next door. And I didn't know what to do. I should teach him something, but I wasn't allowed, and I told another friend's son — he was older. I told him, "You take him and beat him up for Billy, [sounds like: nothing do it]" He done it. Then [the neighbor's] mother called the police. She called them to me, the police. I couldn't express my son was all beaten. And then I talked, it was good, this one policeman used to talk Polish. I talked to him in Polish and explained what this is and he gave Hell the other woman, why she said. That was the problem. No, I learned with the kids when my son went and begin to go to Hebrew school and kindergarten. I didn't have no time with the little children to go to school, then I learned with them together. That's how I learned. I write and read English. My accent in English is not good because I never went into school, I understand the hardest words that's now.

SL: Did you run into any anti-Semitism when you first came to Milwaukee?

CS: No. Just one guy, told me, that he said, "In Europe they made concentration camps, they make ghettos. Here, God forbid something would happen like that," that's a Gentile fellow said it, "they'll kill you over the streets."

SL: When you first came?

CS: When I came, yes, first no, still people, want try to be nice. Every Sunday, we used to go to the lake park right here, with the kids. We used to be very close, the newcomers, one with the other. Now, some got very rich, some they have problem. The kids grew up. Everybody had their own problem, very busy with themselves. It's not such a close one like it used to be when we came to this country.

SL: How did you meet one another when you first got here?

CS: You know we used to live at one street, [laughs] all the newcomers used to live. And when I came here I met Mrs. Porter, that's from my hometown.

SL: You never knew then Mrs. Porter before you came here?

CS: No. And then I met some other people from not far from my town. And until now I have a couple very close friends, you know what we came the same time, and we are like sisters. They are all my adopted sisters. "God couldn't be so bad like take away my brothers and sisters," I said, "and He gave me some other ones." Then another guy here from my town is, and he's like a brother to me, too. You know, we're close. From my town, the three people were very close, that's like my family and I'm like their family.

SL: Do you recall any special acts of kindness when you first came here, that people showed to you, somebody helped you in a special way?

CS: Yes, not in a special way, you know, I used to like older people. I used to learn— some people used to laugh at me, the younger people. Why I am with older people, I liked to spend time. I learned a lot from the older people. I liked older, I respected older people. I miss my mother and that's I think, why I love older people. I like to help them. I used to help them a lot. I didn't have by myself and I used to help people what I saw they need help. And they used to help me too. And until now there's a doctor, now he's now doctor, and — one of the roads we used to live on, his mother and he used to go to school to Madison. I used to help her so much. And he saw me to come for Sundays, weekdays, weekends and she didn't have no food. She was a widow. And my husband used to tell her, "Don't worry, what is in the refrigerator — takes. And you'll have for Alex." Now he's a Doctor, she's dead already. And when I go to him or my husband or my friends, he wouldn't take no penny. And I tell him, he's a doctor of dermatology I tell him, "Please!" He used to play with the kids, lay down on the floor with daughter. "You take [do] so much, you take it from me." He said, "Cyla, my mother would turn in the grave. Then I would do it."

SL: What is his name?

- CS: Alexander Bergman. He's one, where he seems like a brother with Ksiel. And some people was nice. Like my landlord. He was nice to me, you know. They tried to teach me English too, you know. Tell me word. And then another woman, they was nice. She showed kindness the older people; they showed kindness — yes. I cannot say they was mean. No, that used to hurt they called us the greenhorns. [sounds like: *Zayda*] the Green. [laughs]
- SL: Why did that hurt you?
- CS: You know, because I think they was jealous of us because we came with education, we knew. And they thought we'll come, we'll cry, we'll beg. And we have too much pride for this. No, I learned a lot from the older people and I respect the older people, you know.
- SL: Were most of the people that you became friendly with in those first years Jewish people?
- CS: Yes. All Jewish people.
- SL: Your landlord was Jewish?
- CS: Yes — all Jewish people again. Then in 1953 I became friends a neighbor we had, she wasn't Jewish. She was six children, poor woman; I helped her with the kids. They say, "Until now, without you, we couldn't survive." [laughs] They used to come in. I am not a racist that is my thing I love all people. No, I wouldn't let her say nothing they should judge a Jewish, say something about a Jewish people then I getting very aggravated and I like to live with all kinds of people in peace.
- SL: Did you become naturalized, a natural citizen, as soon as you could?
- CS: Yes.
- SL: When was that? Do you remember?
- CS: About five years after this, in 1954 I became. By myself, everything, the questions, I took me a book and I used to learn myself the questions, the answers and everything. Then a teacher came to see maybe she can help and she told me, "You know better than I the questions!" [laughs]
- SL: Did you feel that it was an important thing for you to want to become a citizen?

CS: Everybody became, I wanted to become a citizen — to belong to a country. Because Poland wasn't my country anymore and I wanted to belong, sure I wanted to be a citizen.

SL: I would like to ask you about your children. I know a little bit about them because we talked before and also I know now when they were born and everything but if you could give me their names, their full names and again, their birthdates.

CS: Okay, I'll do it. My son was born in Germany in 1946, January 27 and my daughter was born in Milwaukee July 13, 1949.

SL: And what are their names?

CS: My son is named after my father and my husband's father: Ksiel Wolf and my daughter's name is Golden Rifka after my mother, his mother.

SL: Do you speak English at home with your children, did you as they were growing up?

CS: Yes. I tried, because I wanted to learn English and I used to talk. And talk Jewish too, a lots of Jewish — a lot of Jewish. I used to read a lot English. In the night, when I had time, I used to read. With the children, like my son when we came they said, "What will you do, you don't know any English." He was three and a half years old. And he said, "Don't worry," to the woman he said, "I'll learn English better then you." [laughs] Now he understand Jewish not he cannot speak, that very hard. And my daughter was born here, she speaks beautiful Jewish and she talks to my husband, she talks just in Jewish.

SL: What is your husband's name?

CS: Abraham.

SL: And do you know his date of birth and where he was born?

CS: I know where he was born; in Vladimir-Volynsk that is was not far from us. His date of birth, I think he doesn't know it by himself. [laughs]

SL: Do you know what year he was born in?

CS: No, I wrote down 1910. No, he's older about a thirteen or fifteen years he's older then I.

SL: You told me that he did have a family that he lost during the war.

CS: Yes.

SL: How many children did he have?

CS: He had two children. He had a daughter and a son.

SL: Do you know how old they were?

CS: His daughter was but thirteen, fourteen years old and his son, I don't know. He was hiding, he was in the in the ghetto in Vladimir-Volynsk and that was ghetto they took out everybody. They was running and one thing taking them out, you know, to the graves. He was hiding in the hospital and somebody, they opened a board and made a little hole over there and he crawled in with his daughter there to hide. A woman was in the other bed, over there and the Germans came to take out — she couldn't go out, you know. And they said, "Is somebody here, is somebody here?" She didn't answer. And they came with the dogs in and his daughter's heart was pounding, she thought the dogs would smell them out, right away over there. By some miracle happened they didn't go over to this part where they was hiding. And they took out the woman, they grabbed her and *shlept* her out from there. And in the night he run away with his poor daughter to a village, from one village they travel to the other. And she didn't look like a Jewish. She had blonde hair and blue eyes and she used to go. He used to be in the woods and she used to go to beg some of the villagers' bread and bring it to him. In wintertime they used hide where they keeping the cattle over there...in the barns. In the straw, they used to crawl in the biggest sub-zero weather, until they killed his daughter. He survived.

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

CS: Everything mostly, because I always told them not to forget.

SL: You told them from the time you thought they were old enough to understand?

CS: Yes, because my daughter had experience, she went the first time, when she went to kindergarten, she was there and the teacher asked they should raise their hands who had aunt, uncle, grandpa, grandmother, every child raise their hands and she couldn't do it. And she came home, she cried very

much. First she was too young I should tell her these things and then she said, I asked her “Why are you crying, what happened?” And she said, “Mama, everybody raise their hands and where is my grandma and grandpa and my uncle and aunts? And I couldn’t raise it.” She know that I don’t have nobody and she cried terrible. And then, I had a lady live down stairs, she was Welsh, very nice people and she ran upstairs and she said, “What happened? Why is Gloria,” they gave her a nickname, Gloria, “why is Gloria crying?” And I told her, “You know, they ask at school and she couldn’t answer this. She couldn’t raise her hand.” And this was a Gentile woman, she told, “From now on, don’t cry. I’ll be your grandma and grandpa will be your grandpa too and call me *Nain*” — in Welsh grandma that means *Nain* — “call me *Nain* and grandpa and you’ll be my big [grand] daughter to me,” she said. She had six daughters by herself and she lost a son in Japan when it was the War. What she used to do for her grandchildren, that she used to make for my children. That used to come a holiday, Hanukkah she used to buy presents for my kids. Like for Christmas for a year she used to sew beautiful dresses for her grandchildren, for mine. The first time after years that a birthday came, my birthday, I found a present and a card. She used to bake potatoes or make pies what. They was wonderful people. The Gentile people was nice that’s what fact, I have to tell her about this.

SL: What were there names?

CS: Mrs. Mittedorf and Mr. Mittedorf.

SL: Are they still living?

CS: No, their dead both. When she died, you know, I attended the funeral, like my mother would die.

Because she looked a little like my mother was she was a slim little woman. And she said maybe she had Jewish blood, she had such love for the Jewish people. [laughs] She was wonderful.

SL: In comparison to other families, do you see your children try to live their lives and do things to make up for things that you never could have?

CS: When they was small I was scared, you know, to send them to camps or send them. I was very unhappy yet to send them away from me. I kept them too much under my strings. I gave them too

much love that's not so good and when they wanted to go to camp I used to say, "God forbid!" Maybe, go to camp they can hurt themselves they can run or something. I was too overprotective. I know my faults, you know.

SL: Why were you overprotective?

CS: I don't know. I was scared. That was left from the War because that's all but my life I existed just for the children, my existence was. Too much the protector.

SL: Do you think now still that your family is much closer than other families that you see?

CS: Very close family because I taught always my children that we don't have nobody just, I told my son, "You have your sister and your sister has you." I'm not so young, I'm getting older and our nephew in Canada. And all three of them, they are like sisters and brothers. They very respect my nephew, they love him like brother and he is like a brother to them. And I taught things when they was small they should keep together. And I, in my part when they left for San Francisco. In 1968, my son got married, and they went to San Francisco. The marriage didn't work out now he didn't come back. Then my daughter went for vacation, she didn't want to come back. That was a big shock for me. I cried because like, they wanted to get cut off from under my strings, not to be always so much always over-protective. I didn't say to my daughter I don't want to know you, I kept close touch. I used to write letters day and night, used to send packages. I just told her not to waste her life on nothing. That was then, the generation gap, they didn't knew the war in Vietnam, they didn't knew, you know, they was fighting against that. And some other mother wouldn't want to know. They left; I wouldn't want to know about them, they want it like this. Let them live like that want to. I didn't do it. I stayed with them by bad and good, I didn't leave them. They needed help, I gave them the help and they know it, what I done. They love me very much, I love them. I respect their feelings, they respect mine. They told me this, "Don't be a mother, be a friend." And when I say something, you know, I'm glad that my daughter's married and her mother in law tells me, "You teach your daughter very, that's something clever what you taught her." You know, they're very good kids, no .they have their own life. I

supposed to understand I need to have my life, that's what they tell me. No, still they are my life.

[laughs]

SL: Now you mentioned that your nephew was in Canada. How did he get there?

CS: And that's from Germany, when we was in the DP camp again. They registered, the Canadian government, the Jewish Congress, Thousand children to take from orphanages. Again, he didn't listen to me. He went and he registered to go to Canada. Again, I told him, "I wouldn't let you go. Stay, stick with me." He told me the same thing, "When I'll go away, you couldn't go to United States. Then I'll be in Canada, then I'll come, I will take you there. Let one of us go." Then I listened, that was like that. He went there and after he went to Canada, they took all orphanages, then in a couple weeks I got my papers to go to United States, that took more then a couple weeks until and then he wrote to me letters, a family from Glace Bay, they didn't adopt, they just took him in until sixteen years old. He went to school and then he went to Montreal from there.

SL: Now, is he still living in Canada?

CS: -Nova Scotia, was, in Nova Scotia. Yes, he still lives in Canada.

SL: What does he do?

CS: He's a designer by clothes. First, he begin to work like a helping boy, everything and he worked up. When God created goodness in people, all the goodness he gave to this guy. Not just that he's my nephew, no. He's something, one in a million. That's such a nice one.

SL: What's his name?

CS: And he's like my son, Jackie, he's like a son to me. Today he called me. He calls me every week what.

SL: Do you see him often?

CS: Every year. He's my older sister's son. Every year he comes to me or sometimes I go to Canada. He went through a lot. He survived by himself.

SL: You told me that he feels very strongly towards Canada.

CS: Yes, he loves Canada; he has his friends over there. He's over there thirty-two years already. I wanted him he should come here, then I thought maybe that wouldn't be a good idea because all his friends are over there. We have a reunion two years ago in San Francisco. He came with me, with my husband to see the children. And he wouldn't do it for nobody [else] because he scared to fly. [laughs] Yes.

SL: I wanted to ask you a question about—

CS: The kids?

SL: There's has been a different in feeling between the Eastern European Jews and the Western European Jews, many of the Westerner Jews felt the Easterners weren't as educated or stuck together more in the *shtetls* and that they were more unsophisticated. Did you ever feel that as an Eastern European Jew you were looked down upon by other Jews who were Westerners?

CS: I didn't mind it, you know. I thought let them think what they want and I think I know by myself, that I have so much education like they have. Maybe some have more. I wouldn't say no other people what I was. And when they look down, I thought that's stupid for them, they looking down on somebody. My Ma used to teach me, "When you say one 'good morning' then you'll have a hand to all good year; be nice to people." And I try to do it, like my Mama teach me. And then, when I moved to this place, where I live now, twenty-years ago I met the Twerskis, you know. And that's like my other home over there. They like adopted me as their daughter. They took me in their family under their wings. You go in the *shul* to them. You don't feel like a stranger, you feel like this is your second home. And the same thing with the Rabbi, he's passed away, no his five [children], and his son the Rabbi, Rabbi Michael, you know. I feel like that's my family, there very older family, older kids. I'm very like with them and I like them too. I try to help their mother in what way I can because I was thinking, when my mother would be alive, wouldn't I do the same thing for my mother? I would do the same thing for my mother. When she needs somebody to sleep over there, I'll go, shopping, I'll go. She just called me not to advise something. I love them. Everybody needs to have somebody. They that's my family now.

Cyla Stundel: Oral History Transcript

www.wisconsinhistory.org/HolocaustSurvivors/Stundel.asp

SL: I want to turn the tape over before we do anything else.

CS: Yeah, okay. [tape ends and starts again in the middle of the sentence]

SL: Can you tell me a little about that? How you joined in or what the club is like?

CS: Now I stop, because you see we used to come and everybody has a group, like from Poland. They keep together, the people...

END OF TAPE 4, SIDE 1

TAPE 4, SIDE 2

SL: I would like you to tell me a little about the New American club. What type of club it is and how you joined them and what you do.

CS: When we came, you know, we opened the New American Club we used to belong to the [inaudible] that used to be and they do a lots of good things for Israel — the New American Club.

SL: What type of people belong to it?

CS: Older new American what they came here.

SL: Are they mainly Polish survivors?

CS: Yes. Polish and Czechoslovakia not too many and from our part, we're from Poland too, that means the Ukrainian. And the Polish, the Poles they keep themselves together. That's why I don't like to go too much, we don't go there too much because they make such a groups. Like, I belong to the ORT, the Pioneer Woman, to my Temple; I'm Vice-President from the sisterhood. I like to go where I like to go and to do what I like to do.

SL: So, you're not as active a member in the New American Club?

CS: No. I like it more in this once.

SL: How many people do you know or could you estimate how many people belong to the New American club?

CS: Oh, about two hundred people I think, maybe less, something like that.

SL: Would that be about the same amount as it was in the beginning?

CS: No.

SL: Have more people joined or did people move away?

CS: Lots of people moved away. I think at the same thing what from the beginning more or less. I never knew exactly how many belong. They come, they playing cards, they very active too, for Israel. To buy among the Magen David [Adom], for blood, how do you call it?

SL: Yeah, the Jewish Red Cross.

CS: Yes.

SL: What kind of contact do you have with American born Jews?

CS: Oh, I have lots of contact with them. They are my friends. I have a lot. When I come to the Temple there are lots of people that are they are real. They love me, I love them. They're all my adopted daughters because they are young. [laughs] Young people coming to the *shul*. So I have contact with people what they came long ago, with people what they was born [here]. I have some girlfriends that was born here and we live very nicely between us, you know.

SL: Do you think that the American-born Jews friends that you have try to understand your Holocaust experiences? Do you talk with them about it at all?

CS: Not all of them like to hear it. Oh, sometimes I'll sit and talk to them. Some people want to forget and I could never forget it. They know already. They don't want to hear too much. You know, they like, people when you come in you should smile, "When you cry, your cry by yourself, when you smile the whole world smiles with you." Then I learn not always. Now they have some other problems, sometimes we don't feel good and we talk about the kids, about the upbringing, how it was hard to upbring them. And I am very interested in politics. [laughs]

SL: What type of interest do you have in politics?

CS: Oh, about Israel [inaudible] and about United States and politics, they should the right man be elected. They should be good for our country that means to Israel.

SL: Have you had any experience in telling non-Jewish friends about your Holocaust experiences?

CS: Yes.

SL: What do you think their reactions were towards it?

CS: Their reaction was they feel very bad. They cannot understand, you know. Once, in the hospital I was, there was a German lady. She said, "That's a lie that cannot be. They didn't kill six million Jews, we making this up." And then I showed her my pictures and said, "Then give me back my brothers, and sisters my parents and their children." That's the reaction. Some people, they cannot believe that

such a thing, in the twentieth century should happen, such a thing, such a horrible thing. And I, my opinion is, that can happen again, God forbid, something, a war, because they need to have something to blame somebody. And who shouldn't they blame when not the Jewish people? Like now, they letting to organize the Nazis again. They don't do nothing and that's how it began in Poland in 1933, 4, 5, you know the same thing. Little groups, little groups and somebody is behind the little groups or gives them the money to do these things. There are not, some higher sources are but maybe the Arabs, who knows? Even in the United States the Klu Klux Klan, somebody is behind them. But he's in the tower.

SL: Now, your son was married for a time and your daughter is married now. Is she married to a Jewish man?

CS: Yes.

SL: Did you son marry a Jewish woman?

CS: Yes.

SL: How do you think you would have felt if they wanted to marry a Gentile?

CS: I would feel very bad if they now [inter]married. Because I teached them, that everybody's equal. Then they used to go out, my kids used to have a lots of Gentile friends. Matter of fact, my daughter went out a lot with non-Jewish boys. I couldn't tell her because when I would say something they used to tell me, "You teached that everybody's equal."

I would stand by them. I wouldn't dishonor them or something. I would stand by them. Because when I was young, maybe my parents would be like me, I wouldn't be better than them. I would be born in this generation; I would do the same thing.

SL: Now you told me that you belonged to quite a bit of Jewish woman's organizations.

CS: Yes.

SL: Do you belong to any other organizations that aren't specifically Jewish in nature?

CS: No, fortunately no.

SL: No political clubs or anything?

CS: No. Because I'm still deep inside, [laughs] I wasn't before so much religious, like when I'm getting older, I'm getting more religious, more scared for God.[laughs] I would like to belong, I don't think you are supposed to drive a car and I never took the time to learn to drive a car to belong. I would like to belong to the Democratic Party, you know, take part of this. I was thinking about that. That's never too late, the children tell me. [laughs]

SL: About driving?

CS: Yes and to take during the kids.

SL: Well let's talk a little bit about your religious life.

CS: If you like.

SL: Certainly, you talked about being involved with the *shul*. Which synagogue do you belong to?

CS: To our Orthodox synagogue.

SL: What is it called?

CS: Temple Beth Jehudah.

SL: How often do you go there?

CS: I go mostly every week. I go Saturday for the prayers and sometimes when I feel down, I'll run it. I'll go to the alter and I'll cry out my heart before there, you know. That's why I say it's like my second home when I feel depressed I'll go in.

SL: What types of rituals do you observe in your own house, in the Jewish sense?

CS: All the holidays, I observe. *Shabbat* I observe, Friday supposed to be the house I make it look clean to bring in the Sabbath. Light the candles and bring in the Sabbath, you know. You feel relaxed and all the holidays, I observe.

SL: Do you keep kosher?

CS: Yes, most of the time I also keep kosher. Sometimes it mixes up. [laughs]

SL: Did your children have a Jewish education, Hebrew school?

CS: Yes.

SL: Your son was Bar Mitzvahed?

CS: Yes, oh sure I have when my son was Bar Mitvah he went for eighteen months to Hebrew school, you know. I tried my best to give him what I could, you know. And I taught them by myself a lot about the Jewish History.

SL: How have your feeling changed about your religion since you went through the Holocaust experiences?

CS: You know sometimes I ask as question to God. Why did it happen? Why did he let it happen? And then, why am I the one to survive and [not] my brothers and sisters? Am I the better one then them? No, that's wasn't. They was more than I ever did. Why did he pick up I should survive? Then when I read the Bible, sometimes I cannot sleep, I'll take the Bible and read, And God said, "When you go away from my way, I'll hide my face from you. And I wouldn't hear your cries and your screams." I think maybe that's what made a lot of people...went away from him and that's why. No, then I ask a question: Why so many religious people was the first ones to suffer, you know? That's a thing nobody can answer, this question. Sure, I have, I ask questions about this in my mind, you know. Why did it happen? Why?

SL: Why do you think that religion plays such a part in your life even today?

CS: Because everybody needs to have something to stick to it, that gives them hope, that gives them how to express something that you belong to something. That's why I stick to my religion and because I gave so much for because I'm Jewish, again. My whole family died for this and I would die too, to be Jewish. I would never change and that's why I keep more. I was brought up like that, I cannot not. That I love my people, I love to be Jewish. I cannot change it.

SL: Can I ask you a little bit about your everyday life? Do you like to do reading?

CS: Yeah.

SL: What types of things do you like to read?

CS: All kinds of good books, you know.

SL: What language do you read in?

CS: In English. In Jewish and English. Yes, and Polish when I have Polish books I can get I have to read. I love to read.

SL: What newspapers and magazine do you get at here, in the house?

CS: I get the *Journal* and *Time* magazine and *Pioneer Woman Magazine*.

SL: Any Jewish?

CS: Yes, that's in Jewish and in English. The *Pioneer* even more, that's in Jewish and in English.

SL: Have you read any books on the Holocaust?

CS: Uh-huh.

SL: Which ones were they? Can you recall off-hand?

CS: People, what they went through. You know, like in the Warsaw ghetto— *Seven in a Bunker* and a lots of them I don't recall now. And I know that it too and I know everything, articles.

SL: What were your reactions to those books?

CS: I cannot read them too much I begin to cry because I went through this. Let this people, what didn't go through — let them read about the Holocaust. I know it.

SL: What was your reaction to the television series that they did on the Holocaust? Did you watch that?

CS: I watched. They didn't show not one percent what went on. I cried. I watched. I got sick from this. And they didn't show. Like, they took little children, they throw from the windows from the second floors. They killed them, and the mother was standing and looking. They didn't show one percent. They showed that they going so quietly to the grave! That was a lie. They screamed and if that God could hear the screams the *Shema Israel*, how they yelled. How the graves were soaked with blood. How everything was shaking. The Gentile people used to tell us how for three days they'd be the blood wasn't quiet.

SL: Did people become more interested in your experiences do you think, after that show was on television?

CS: They don't believe it. They think that everything, they cannot. I don't think that people can understand, they can believe that such a thing went through. And some Gentile people, a lot when I talk to them, they say they watched, they feel very guilty some; what happened. That they didn't know. Washington knew what goes on. They knew, they didn't do nothing. Roosevelt...they didn't do nothing. Nobody. They was standing, maybe they would make demonstrations, riot. They would go to Washington; the Jewish people like now that the Black people they went in 1967, the 70's. Maybe that was help, more survivors would be. The world was standing still. And they let the Jewish people, who cared what the Jew? And I wish they should be remembered what we went through. And they should take revenge. And they'll care. Nobody is supposed to forget the six million Jews and generation, generation, to come they should be remember because that's a true thing.

SL: Have you and your family travelled much in Wisconsin?

CS: No. You see, my husband was always busy, making a living. I didn't work.

SL: And you don't drive?

CS: I don't drive. Then, with one thing: we used to go to the park Sundays or sometime to Chicago or to Kenosha. So not too much until they grew up and then by themselves my daughter, when she was sixteen, she very afraid of car, she learned. My son, the same thing, when I wasn't around.

SL: Did you ever travel with them after that? Did they take you anywhere in the state?

CS: No, I didn't go with them.

SL: Have you been to Madison?

CS: Oh, yes. My daughter went to school to Madison. To college. And to Canada, I travelled with them. To New York, I traveled with them with the bus. [laughs] Yes!

SL: How much does what you have seen in Wisconsin remind you of your home in Europe?

CS: A lot.

SL: How so?

CS: Because the forests, the green hills, the lakes, you know. That reminds me still the place in your mind, Old Country. Still I remember, you know, because maybe I lost there all my loved ones that I miss them so much. I am more now United States than in the Old Country. No still, I would love to go once more to see it not to see it, like to see the Polish people, something, no to go to the graves over there.

SL: Had you ever gone back?

CS: No, no. And to build there a monument or something over the graves there. Who knows what they've done down there to the graves? Or they didn't build any buildings or something.

SL: How much happier do you think you would have been if you had lived in a city that had a bigger Jewish population?

CS: The same thing, when you find one friend you are a millionaire one real true friend, you don't need to have too many. Not when you find one.

SL: Have you felt that your Jewish life here was as rich as you could have anywhere else?

CS: You mean Europe?

SL: No, I meant other city in the United States.

CS: The same thing every city. I was in San Francisco I was in different cities now. Maybe in Canada, I like very much Montreal. There is a more Jewish-European life there, in Montreal. I like it there.

SL: Do you feel satisfied with the cultural aspects of Milwaukee? Do you find it has enough for you to do?

CS: Not too much. You want that's enough. No, our people and I by myself, I think we'll never be happy with anything. Because we went through, something is missing. We think, "We'll have this, when the kids will grow up. Maybe then we'll be happy." No something in our life is missing. They took it away from us and we never could be happy. That is a true thing. You cannot be happy. You cannot to take out, erase from your mind the things what you went through, that you lost everybody. Sometimes you think that you're born from a stone. That's not true. You didn't have no sisters and brothers, you didn't have no parents. You from a stone and that's all. This cannot be. I have all the visions from all my

- sisters and brother and I think, "Are they really? That's really true that I have sisters and brothers?"
- You feel very depressed and this and I think that all the newcomers, not just me. They'll never be happy because something is missing in us. But nobody can give it back.
- SL: How do you feel about living in Wisconsin with a large percentage of an ethnic German population in the state?
- CS: I don't have nothing to do with the German population. Wisconsin is a clean. That's a nice state and Milwaukee is a nice town, a clean town. I'm used to Milwaukee. You know, the kids tell me, "Mama, why don't you move to San Francisco or nearer us in a small town?" Then I need to begin a new life again, new friends. Here I have my friends, my surroundings. That would be hard for me. I like it here because I feel I belong now here after thirty years that I belong. That's not in this age to go and look for different to move.
- SL: Have you made any kind of effort to become acquainted with Wisconsin history? Have you read anything on the history of Wisconsin?
- CS: Yes, when my daughter used to go to school. I have yet all the papers what I used to help her. We used from the papers; we'd write articles and take, sure.
- SL: Do you feel a sense of community with the State and the people of the State?
- CS: Sure. I like to go to vote and for who I vote. I like to look around there if that's the right person I should pick and everything. That's my State that I need to be. I am a citizen I need to be a good citizen.
- [laughs]
- SL: Do you think you'd feel an obligation to Wisconsin or to Milwaukee for, in a sense, giving you a new start? Giving you a new life?
- CS: I am thankful. No, that was too late. They would let in before the war when peopled needed not later, it was too late for them to make up what they didn't done it before. The guilt, they carry the guilt. I think they carry the guilt. What they didn't do nothing and when the war was broke out. And lots of

Jewish people I think carry the guilt too. They didn't done enough. We needed mostly to help them, they should fight for us they shouldn't be so much blood for nothing.

SL: But how do you feel about what they did do for you? Are you thankful for that?

CS: Oh, sure. I am thankful they give us what they could. Like I told, anything was helpful and when they didn't want, nobody could make them to do it — and I think that the guilt again, they felt guilty. And they saw what they'd done, shown deadline and maybe. And I am very proud to have a State like we need our State, Israel. Nobody can tell us that you don't have a home. Like in Poland, in the schools they used to make fun of us and used to say, "Go to Palestine and raise onions over there!" Now they see that's the Jewish people are cultured people. They can do from a desert to make it to bloom. There not lazy people like they used to say that "They like just to make easy money." That we're hard working people. To deny they build things, they do things and I am very proud of this.

SL: Have your children remained in Wisconsin or have they gone?

CS: They didn't like Wisconsin, the didn't like Milwaukee because they said, they used to tell me when they was home, that it's a dead town for them.[laugh] They wanted to moved away, maybe to move away to have their independence, you know because maybe I would be too much love to show them. Like my son explained it once to me. "Mama," he said "The fisherman loves the ocean. That's his life that's everything. He goes to ocean, when a big wave comes, he gets scared. He runs away, back. That's with you. We love you. No, but you show too much love we getting scared. Too much of a protector, that's not good, we need to learn our mistakes at our own. To live our own life."

SL: What happened to your children as they grew up? What kind of schooling did they have and where have they gone?

CS: My son went to UWM in Milwaukee he finish his Masters degree in psychology and my daughter went here to Madison to college, then she went here to UWM and then in the middle she quit and she went to California. She didn't want to come back. And over there she went to State college and then she

didn't finish that college, she finished psychiatry technician she took on. And after she worked with retarded children for a year. Then she got married and then that's too much for her nerves to work with the retarded children. Then always she wanted to be a nurse. And she graduated. Having the baby was a big culture, took the baby with here. She had yet three month to go and I've very proud of both of my kids.

SL: So, your daughter is now a nurse?

CS: Uh-huh.

SL: And what is her married name?

CS: Lerman.

SL: What is her husband's name?

CS: Ed.

SL: And you said she has a baby?

CS: She had a little daughter now. She wanted to get pregnant, she couldn't before. When she went to school and then she got pregnant. She didn't want to quit school, that's why two months after the baby was born she graduated with all honors. She was the best. She's a brilliant mind and I am proud what it turned out, how it's bad the years what was the 1970's and I'm very proud and thankful to God that not with dope, not like other children. Maybe they took marijuana, I don't know.[laughs]
Everybody needs to have experience! No, they didn't go in heavy drugs or something and I'm very proud of them. And thankful to God everything turned out right.

SL: How old is your granddaughter?

CS: Eleven months.

SL: And what's her name?

CS: In Hebrew *Shomarit* and in English, Samara, *Shomarit* that means watchful.

SL: It's interesting. Do you know why your daughter would give the child a Hebrew name like?

CS: Because they're not religious both are modern. No still I think inside of them, you know they like, they pick up, they like the name watchful *Shomar* and that's why they picked out the name.

SL: What is your son doing now?

CS: My son is driving a bus there because he cannot get any job. He likes people and he drives a bus. He's not too happy now because that's not so easy, San Francisco. He now wants to go to take law. I tell him I'll help him how much I can but he wants to quit it. No, he's in politics. He's more socialist than me. [laughs] And I don't think the blame is at me, I think that I teached them that everybody's equal and the workers are supposed to have the same right. [laughs] Like when we argue about politics. Then he said, "You teached me this." And I told him that's no good. I went through everything. And when I come he wants just to talk with me politics. And I said, "I am old! I don't know anymore, nothing." [laughs] He doesn't believe it.

SL: I'm going to run out of tape.

END OF TAPE 4, SIDE 2

TAPE 5, SIDE 1 (no Side 2)

SL: I would like to know what your reaction was when the American Nazi party was threatening to march in Milwaukee.

CS: I left. I went through this, I went downtown one time, shopping and I saw the Nazi standing there with the swastikas on the arms and a woman came over to me, she wanted to give me literature. And then everything went before my eyes and I begin to fight with her. I told her, "You giving me this. What? You killed my sisters and brothers and six million Jews?" And I got so hysterical, I told them they'll have the same end what Eichmann had and Hitler. And even this day yet that everything and I wished and I told them that a different language and bad things. I cursed them and I they got, I think, scared. And my blood pressure went up. I went numb. People went through; they didn't pay even attention. They thought that I'm stupid to stand up against my rights and I didn't think that I was stupid to stand up. Later on I went in the store and I couldn't and I took the bus, I didn't want to go through back. They got scared maybe I'll make a riot, me! Six Nazis with like the troopers with the flags and the boots and the helmets like in the Old Country. The Nazis they was walking back and forth that thought that I'll make a riot. I came home. I cried. I called up my son and I told him. He said, "Mama, I'm proud of you, you done this and they would touch a hair of you! I would killed." And then until now I am so mad at myself. Why didn't I slap this woman over the face? I don't care and I'm scared. You know they shouldn't repeat, history shouldn't repeat itself. And my son had some experience when they went and my daughter to school with the Nazis too, even in these years.

SL: When was this?

CS: When they went to high school in Washington High School here, you know. Like she used to go, my daughter, with a guy. What his father was a Nazi in Germany, his father I mean, yes and young boys here. They didn't want to tell me everything. What they going through in school, not the anti-Semitism was yes, in the schools it was and it will be. You never can erase it.

SL: How satisfied do you feel with the American system of government?

CS: Now that everything falls to pieces, I don't know. The inflation, we need to have a president with more power with more something. He should look like a president, you know, to rule the country. Not to give to everybody the right...okay we have the Bill of Rights everybody can speak. No — when this is damaging the country, not to do it. They tried it best I think so. No. United States is the nicest country still. The nicest any country was in a lot of countries you have the more freedom. Then in other countries you couldn't talk, like now. You want to criticize the President you can do it. You want to criticize the Senate or the government, you can do it. Not in every country you can do it.

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

CS: They say like this, the Jewish people rule the house. What can I say? [laughs] Not everything goes to one thing, that's the people are not satisfied with the Jewish people; they don't like us. And it's not true, like they say, "That the Jewish people are the richest people in United States." They don't say how many rich are the other. Not just the Jews, stand up to them. I don't know somebody build such a hatred against Jewish people, that's a terrible thing. Why don't I say that so many other people are so rich take Ford, take other companies —Rockefellers, nobody says nothing. Just our people are too big in their eyes.

SL: What do you see are the most important issues facing America today?

CS: The crisis, like Iran. Such a small, they are scared of this, the crisis with the Soviet Union, you know. I am scared of war again because since history, that is always after thirty, forty years, then that's a war begins. Now, God forbid war, we'll be all wiped out, with atom bombs, with everything.

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

CS: A big extent. That's hidden, no, like I was watching on the show, you know that was Jack Paar or Johnny Carson. I don't remember, this was a big writer from England, long, I forgot his name. And they asked him it what Eichmann's practice, what he went through. And they asked him, "Or this can

happen again?" And he said, "That can happen again, because everyone has a little Eichmann inside," and I believe it.

SL: How secure do you feel in America? Do you foresee a situation that could arise again?

CS: You're not secure with anywhere live in, you scared. You keep the houses locked. You scared to let in somebody, you scared to walk in the night, walk in the light, even. You scared to go out in the night. Not just anti-Semitism, that's everything together. The fear's the worse thing for a person. The fear alone can kill you, you know. You are afraid to go out in the night, you are afraid in the daytime to open the door. I never went through such things like now, lately. Crying went up.

SL: How secure do you feel about the anti-Semitism? Do you see another Nazi rise?

CS: Yes, you can see it. Now it's quieted down you don't hear it too much. No, that works quietly. They work, you know how many times they broke windows? How many swastikas was at our Temple? How many swastikas was at Beth Israel Temple? Such a big Temple! I came one time there and through all the walls that was written the swastikas, windows broken. Sure. Because when something bad in the country, you know, the poor people right away, they get agitated a from other people. They blame right away the Jewish people.

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

CS: I feel that over there is not the same thing, you know they have some troops from Nazi groups. The same thing repeats now.

SL: Do you feel a hatred towards the Germans of today or the Germans?

CS: I cannot feel hatred to nobody. When they would at me and tell me, "This people killed you, do something, you can kill them." I couldn't do it. That not in my nature to kill somebody. Sure, I hate them that killed them.

SL: What do you think your children's feelings are towards Germans?

CS: The same like mine, you know. They love people. They say, not everybody's the same and this no, they have a lot of non-Jewish people friends. They work with them. They are for the black people.

They fought for them. My son, you couldn't say any word with black people, something wrong he would. A person's a person that's all kinds. No, my friend's son went over there — that's my son's best friend — he was in Germany. And he told me that he was scared every shadow he thought, that's a Nazi is after him, when he saw a shadow. He was scared over there.

SL: Do you receive any restitution from Germany?

CS: Yes.

SL: How often do you receive it?

CS: Every month.

SL: And how long have you been receiving it?

CS: I don't remember. Oh, about fifteen years, I think.

SL: Have you ever been to Israel?

CS: No.

SL: Would you like to go?

CS: Oh, I would love! I close my eyes and I see all the things from the Bible. I love to go. Some day — I hope so.

SL: Do you think it is easier for you to talk about your experiences now then it might have been about maybe five years ago or so?

CS: No, it's the same thing. The wound is there — the same thing. Sometimes my nephew comes and we begin to talk and both, we begin to cry, you know when we talked. Is it the same, no, the first year was more...I used to cry, scream in the night and cry very much. And my husband didn't mind the night. He wakes up, you know, he yells so much. Or to have dreams. I have dreams that they wanted to kill me, they want to kill my children. I don't have where to hide, I'm running — I don't know what to do. And the same thing with my husband — he thinks that they wanted to kill him. He runs and he begins to scream in the night. That's a terrible thing, I must to wake him up. The nightmares are still

- on. They come night by night sometimes. Sometimes they'll let you go and sometimes again, I see my family they're dead and everything.
- SL: You don't feel that this has let up at all in the years?
- CS: That's let up. Sure you're not like right the first thing. I thought I wouldn't live through this. No. Time that's heals just what's outside now-inside it's the same wound.
- SL: How do you feel about an increasing awareness in America about the Holocaust?
- CS: That was a good thing they show them a picture of the Holocaust. Not just for the Jewish people for the whole world should see what went on.
- SL: Do you think it's bad to bring up the past?
- CS: No, no, no. I think that it's a very good thing. You know people supposed to learn, I think they supposed to put it in the history, the American history about the Holocaust. It's too bad they didn't teach the kids in the schools about this. In twentieth century should be such a barbaric things? Who could believe? The German people, such a cultured people — they like music, they like everything - to kill children with the guns and throw them down in crematoriums and burning? Make from the fats to make soap and from the skin to make lamps? Who could have believe?
- SL: We've talked before, about the fact that the funding, some of the funding from the project that we are doing has come from the Federal government. They have given us a grant through Wisconsin Humanities Committee to undertake this project —
- CS: That's a nice thing -
- SL: How do you feel about the government participating in this?
- CS: Very nice because my kids wanted I should tape record. And I begin to cry, I couldn't. I begin to tell them and I couldn't finish. They wanted to know. I should write. And I didn't know where I should begin. With what shall I begin? And When I heard you doing this and I asked my kids, "What shall I do?" They said, "Mama, please do it for us. We want it. People should know, later in generations. They should know what you went through. What every Jew went through." And they killed them. And they

would finish with the Jewish people, they begin with the other people. They begin with the Poles with everything because they wouldn't have end just with the Jewish people. They killed a lot of Gypsies, the same thing, like the Jewish people. That was, he [Hitler] was a maniac He was crazy and all the world went with him. And he wouldn't do it to the Jewish people maybe Hitler maybe he would win the War, you know. His biggest mistake what he begin, who begins with the Jewish people has none, a bad hand. Napoleon begin, other people, Russia begin with the Jewish people they have a bad hand, the lose. They cannot win.

SL: Do you see that it is important for you to participate in this —

CS: Yes -

SL: - So that your children will know?

CS: Yes. The children and then the future generation in years to come, they should know what we went through. That's a true thing. That's not just written a book. Because sometimes I used to read a book that used to call *Kiddush Hashem* [*Kiddush Hashem an Epic of 1648* by Sholem Ash], that's about a family when the *Cossacks* came they killed her family. She was survived alone and the *Cossack* wanted to marry her and she said "Okay" then she told them "Shot me, I'm holy, that wouldn't kill me."

That was a true thing, you know. And I used to ask my mother a question, "Ma, how could she live? How could she? Your family was killed." I didn't knew that I would go through the same thing. I didn't believe that I'll survive, that I could live without my family. [cries]

SL: Well, I've come to the end of questions that I wanted to ask you. And I wanted to give you the opportunity now, if you felt there was anything else that you wanted to say, if I've left out anything that was important, please, you know

CS: No. That's, you see, that's not so much ink in this world, when a person wants to sit down. You just take the top a little by little, you same thing. To sit down and tell what you really went through all the time. That's hard to express. That's hard to say, that's hard to write. You cannot do it. That's so much

from everyday living from everyday hiding, from one place to run to the other. Where you slept and you where wouldn't be in the daytime, in the daytime you wouldn't be in the night, to run from one place or another, to look death in the eyes. That's hard to do it. It's hard to say. And I cannot believe that I went through these things, by myself. And what can we say? We was prosecuted to die and through a miracle we are alive. Then we walk in the rim like zombies, I think you call it zombies — like living death. That's what I think we are. Just shadows from people. What they supposed to die thirty years ago, in the war, thirty-five years ago and through a miracle, they sentence us to death. And through something some of us got alive. And Hitler said that when somebody will be alive from the Jewish people, they'll be half crazy. Maybe he was right. That's all. And I wish people should remember for the future generation and not forget what the Jewish people went through. They shouldn't let that it should happen again, such a thing. And we should die with dignity to protect our land, to the last one.

SL: I want to thank you very much for participating in this.

CS: Okay.

END OF TAPE 5, SIDE 1 (no Side 2)

END OF TRANSCRIPT