

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

RACHELA FRYDMAN

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Josey G. Fisher

Date: May 7, 1981

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Gratz College

Melrose Park, PA 19027

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RF - Rachela Frydman [interviewee]

JF - Josey G. Fisher [interviewer]

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Historical Endnotes by Dr. Michael Steinlauf

Tape one, side one:

JF: Mrs. Frydman, can you tell me where and when you were born, and a little bit about your family?

RF: Yes. I am born, I have to tell the year? Yeah, I could, I don't mind. I am born the 26th of November, 1914, in Zloczew. I will tell you how to write Zlocze [Zloczew]. Z-L-O-E, is, I will take and I will write down so it will be easy for me to spell. Z-L- Zloczew, C-Z-E. That's the way how it's written, Zloczew.

JF: Okay, in Poland.

RF: Poland. I have to mark down instead of Poland two Zloczews [1]. I am born in Zloczew, that's is, so big Wojewodztwo [laughs]. That's is like in the state, the state Łódź. Yes, I would say Łódź. It's, I don't know how to, it's the state Lodzkie [2].

JF: Fine.

RF: Would be better Lotzke by Łódź [3], because Łódź people know exactly where it is. The place where I am born I really don't remember so exactly because we moved to another town and the other town was Lututów [4].

JF: Mmm hmm.

RF: It's near the German border [5] where I am born. And there I went through the *Tarbut*¹ school.

JF: Which was what kind of school?

RF: Oh, Hebrew, that's was the modern. That's was the, the kind of school like Beth Jacob [6] was very religious school. And we went through the—it's a modern school, a modern Hebrew school like here, I think Schechter school, a kind of school like that. And, I, I really don't know what more you want to know. 'Cause it's too much.

JF: What kind of subjects did you study there?

RF: We studied, in the morning it was all subjects in Hebrew and in afternoon was the other subject like math, Polish, 'cause that's was the law in Poland [7]. And that's was a very known school in Poland, *Tarbut* schools.

JF: This was both boys and girls?

RF: Boys and girls, right, right.

JF: Can you tell me a little bit about your parents, and any brothers or sisters that you might have had?

¹Hebrew language schools, Zionist supported, with mandatory Polish language courses. Successful pedagogically but diplomas were not recognized by Ministry of Education.

RF: I come from a big family. We were five sisters and three brothers.

JF: And where were you in that family?

RF: I was like the sixth in the line.

JF: And what did your father do?

RF: My father was a merchant. It's was like a, with wood, how would you call, I really don't know. A broker, like they bought a piece of land, and I want to make sure that, in Poland a Jew was not allowed to buy woods like by himself. Every time he had a Polish partner [8] to that, they cut out a piece of land, like, and made from that, and they sent it later on the mill. And, for furnitures, for any kind of, it's was material for, oh, no, it one was not, we didn't have the kind of heat what we have here, right? So that was for burning and was for furniture, and for any kind of things what's they demand from wood, what they're doing from wood.

JF: Where was he from?

RF: My father was from, Łask [9]. That's is over city near Łódź. Łask.

JF: And what about your mother?

RF: My mother was born I think in Lututów. I gave the town [10]. And her parents had a store with materials. My father was a very educated man. He went through this time in a yeshiva, graduate a yeshiva. And he was a very, very intelligent person. And now, the whole influence on us children, really my mother was an angel, because she let, it come to the education, she let us everything to my father. And my father, they used to tell in my family, that's a, I don't know, you know, in Poland without a dowry, without a *naden* [Yiddish: dowry], you couldn't get married. That's when he will have to marry off his daughters, he for sure will not have a penny, because all his money he puts into the education from the children [11]. And, em, every Saturday, Friday night start, by it's Saturday, you know, Friday night was special day, a special day. We got to tell father what we went through in the school, and the day of Saturday we got to speak to him in Hebrew. He demanded from us. Even his father, and he wrote to him a letter, I remember, every time we were looking, what he would write, it was showing us off the letter. My grandfather start to him *avoo viudi di doi beresh kridmen* [12] because that's was my grandfather, was very good in Judaism. He was very good in the Torah [Heb.: Five Books of Moses] and in Tanach [Heb.: Scriptures, Bible, including Torah] and any kind of questions my father couldn't understand. When he was married, he, he turned every time, he told, "Oh, I have to make a note because I have to ask my father how I will think, what's solved in Tanach." And, they were really a very educated family in Judaism. Oh, but, although they were very observant Jews, very, still, he was close to the secular education, 'cause my father knew exactly good. He was very good in Russian, in German, in Polish, Hebrew, and Yiddish. So was nothing news to know the languages, although I don't know Russian, but I was very good in German, German, Polish.

JF: Did your family belong to a synagogue?

RF: Oh yes, who doesn't? Who didn't belong? Even the one people what they

didn't believe, they belonged to a synagogue. It was not a thing like that, that somebody didn't belong to a synagogue. Everybody belonged to the synagogue. My father was even there always with the rabbi. When the rabbi need, oh, like, many times people came with questions to the rabbis. Or, I don't know how it's called. If you know Hebrew, a *din Torah*, [13] a *din Torah* [Heb.: Religious court]. He was called by the rabbi to help him, to settle things.

JF: And what about the *kehillah* [14] [Heb.: Jewish community]? Was there a *kehillah*?

RF: That's is a *kehillah*, right. My father was a *Mizrachi*² [15]. He was not an Orthodox. He thought that the rabbis, the Orthodox rabbis, they are a little bit too much. They want too much, like, he was a Zionist. *Mizrachi* was a religious Zionist. And my father was very much for Israel. And, the rabbis were against. So he was every time fighting with the rabbis, although the local rabbi was his greatest friend. And even in the synagogue, you asked the synagogue, he got the place near the rabbi. The *mizrach shtetl* [Yiddish: sect] , it's called. That's was the *kehillah*. The *ke-* by us the *kehillah* was, all the Jews belonged to the *kehillah*. Oh, but he never, never wanted to be, I don't know, it's so many names what's I never hear, *kiradozer* [a trustee, a 'big wheel']. He never wanted to be a member. Like, he was a member from the *kehillah*, oh, but to do things there what's they, I, I don't know how to explain it. A *dozer*, he never wanted to be. Just, he was very close with the rabbi although they, every time were in great disagreement. I remember when one time my father came home, and he told us the rabbi told him that he would like, my oldest sister for a daughter-in-law. He told he would never, never, if the daughter would like it, yes. But he by himself, he told it, he is much against, because they are very, very Orthodox, and we were not raised Orthodox. We were raised really Zionists, although the customs, the religion for us in our home because my mother, may she rest in peace, we were not allowed to eat like, food³, after meat. When my father explained to her, that children are allowed to eat at the three hours, she was arguing, it's six hours we should wait [16]. But she never demand from us to be dressed like the very, very religious with the long sleeves, with this. No, we were free. And, if company came to our home, we were allowed to invite our boyfriends. And my father was sitting with them and talking and asking. And we were not raised strict Orthodox. We were raised Zionists.

JF: Did you have any contact with non-Jews in your town?

RF: Oh, yes, because my father's business demanded. And that's was a great part also that we were sent in Hebrew schools, because to be raised with Gentiles and to go in the public school, that would be very wrong for his children. Every time he told them for that's he sends us to Hebrew school. Yes, I was surrounded with Gentiles.

JF: Where you lived also? Where your home was located?

²Religious faction of political World Zionist movement.

³She must mean dairy food.

RF: In this town what I mentioned, yes. Yes.

JF: Did you have any friends who you played with in the neighborhood?

RF: Oh, yes, we played. Of our friends, we got Jewish friends, the close friends. Just we got our neighbors, and we played with them. Because across from us was living the principal from the school was the only school in the town [17], public school. And I remember every time they were very, my parents even were very friendly with them. And just friends, really close friends, we got Jews. That's maybe, maybe was also the reason that's, their parents would not like, that we would be so close, just in the home we played with them. All the time in war they didn't help us. And I didn't live there, either.

JF: Did you have any experiences with antisemitism in your growing up years?

RF: I would tell a lie if I would tell that I don't have many experience with them. The first time, I remember my father came home, because my father was like the when he bought, I don't know how it's called, a *foremba*, a piece of woods, like, when he bought, they built right a home there. And there he lived with one from the people what was working with him. That was a Gentile. And one time, we didn't know, I was a child. I didn't know. My father was this time allowed to have a revolver. He was allowed, because in the woods there was many times that's, they met people which, they don't like Jews. They hate Jews, not they don't like Jews. And one time my father ca-, and he left the home every Monday morning. And, he came home every Friday. Saturday, Saturday, Sunday he wasn't home. One time my father didn't come home. And we didn't know why. So my oldest brother went there, and he there he find out that his house was surrounded with Poles. And they told the Jew doesn't have place there. And, just the friends, the Polish friends, defend him, one what he lived with him. Because, they want him to get out from there. This I remember first time.

JF: So, Poles defended him?

RF: Yes. Even the Po-, because one Pole lived with him in the same, in the same apartment. Because my father had there an apartment, and we lived there also every summer. We went there to my father. Just one time the house was surrounded and they told us they will kill him. And this Pole, he defended him, because he got a gun, very plain. And they were afraid. And in town, is, I lived through two pogroms.

JF: Can you describe them to me?

RF: I was very young at the time [18]. Just I remember it's, we got a neighbor also, because I told I was raised between⁴ Gentiles. They knocked out in the whole town, like, the windows. And they robbed what they could. And you know was market places, so they robbed all the market place. And I, I walked out. I was a child. I didn't know this, I shouldn't go out. And I saw like a Jewish man with blood all over his face, and he

⁴She means 'among'.

was running, and, later we find out that's, was killed two Jews in this days. Although they defend themselves. Just still they were more because was not many Jews there in the town. And many times like in Christmas time, we never was allowed to go out. My mother put down the window shades. She didn't let us look out. Because here I don't see, maybe a neighbor what's is there, where a whole procession goes around in town, in the small town. And this time we were not allowed, because every time they told us the Jews killed Jesus. And, Passover was also for us a very hard time.

JF: Did the local police or authorities have any control over these incidents?

RF: They didn't see never, nothing. They never looked out for, for to defend the Jews.

JF: And you said that the Jews did try to defend themselves?

RF: Oh yes. They tried. Every time they tried. If not, they would be killed. And I think the greatest anti-Semites were the intelligentsia in Poland. They were behind everything.

JF: Why do you say that?

RF: Because like in our town—this was a very small town what's I'm describing—there was just one and only drug store. And we knew exactly that he was behind the pogrom. Everybody knew. The Poles told us later that he was behind it, that he organized the farmers from the villages.

JF: The druggist?

RF: Yes. That's he. And also I would like to talk about just the church was also very much behind.

JF: Do you know anything about this?

RF: We knew about that they got the people. They got the people in the churches, right? They had the people, and they were talking to them. And they could quiet down everything if they want.

JF: You mean the priests were involved?

RF: Not official, just behind, yes. Yes⁵. The church was very much because Poland is Catholic town, Catholic country. Just that I went through two pogroms in Poland. I remember that one time our windows were defended. The windows just, the glass. And when I asked later, when I was older, why the next neighbor did it, my father told me that she told that's nobody could, that's later we will not put so good glass in the windows, for that she was defending. Although in the whole street, where a Jew lived was the windows knocked out. She was ours a neighbor. Just, we went through many things. And, you know, I did, I just didn't live through how it was in the schools, because like I mentioned, I was in the Hebrew schools. Just when I want to go to, *gymnasium* called like here the middle school, we got, went through one year, I think the seventh grade or the, the seventh grade in public school, so I was for a short time in this

⁵Anti-Jewish boycotts and other actions were organized in Poland in the 1930s by the National Democratic Party, with Church support.

school [19], and I feel there like a stranger. 'Cause, the universities were well-known that's was, of, for, how much, hundred students with just one Jew? A thousand, one Jew? They didn't, the Jews were not accepted [20]. Mostly our friends were educated abroad.

JF: What was your experience in this *gymnasium* that you were in?

RF: No, I wasn't in, in Hebrew.

JF: You said-

RF: I just was in that one...

JF: One year.

RF: One, they were very unfriendly. Although I special was very good treated because my Polish was very good. I was raised between [among] Poles [21]. And I don't know why, I got a few times in my life, even in the war, they told me that I am not Jewish for my looks. I got blonde hair and my Polish was excellent, and maybe for that. Because like here you would right recognize who's a foreigner because he has an accent, right? And they with the Jews was the same story. And I never had the accent because I was raised between Poles. So I really, I by myself was, I got not too bad. But by so many things were anti-, antisemitism was very great.

JF: Do you know if anybody in your family served in the national army in Poland?

RF: Oh yes, they all come to. But what do you mean by national army?

JF: In the army.

RF: Everyone had to serve. I got even one of my cousins, he was an officer in the Polish army and he used to tell us stories about the army where they served. Sure they served. Immediately in my family, to be honest, the Jews tried their best not to go, but they have to do it. My brother left Poland to Israel in 1925 when he was 17, so he was too young, so he didn't serve. The youngest brother was 12 years old when the war broke out. Just in the family, yeah I had many of them what they were in the army.

JF: Your father?

RF: I would not like to speak about my father, because he was criticized that he was the only one what, my father, that was the time when the Russian was in Poland, and he was the only one what's, he didn't serve in the army because, they bailed him out, very plain. But all his brothers were in the army.

JF: Who bailed him out? How, how could. . .?

RF: The parents.

JF: The parents could bail them out.

RF: Yes. Bribes was a very common thing.

JF: And through what channel could that occur? Through the *kehillah*? Through the...

RF: No, no.

JF: Through a city organization?

RF: Through the government...

JF: Directly through the Polish government⁶ [22]?

RF: Yes. Like my husband, let him rest in peace, he was old enough in the army. And he told me every time stories how he was arrested after the war, because also through bribery he was not in the army. And later he worked in an office when they discovered some officer Polish what's he took money from certain people not to go to the army. And they looked around for these people, and he was arrested too. Oh, but he was working later in an office in the army. Many Jews, they didn't want to go, the religious Jews because of *traifah* [Heb.: Unkosher food].[23] They don't want to go for antisemitism because they didn't speak Polish. I think also they, mostly they weren't in the army.

JF: You said you had a cousin who had relayed many experiences about the army to you. Do you remember any of those?

RF: Yes. He was criticized every time although he was in Polish very good. Like he was not accepted like in the officers; they got clubs there. He was not accepted there. And, he was a graduate from Warsaw University, and he was not accepted to any clubs. In Poland was well-known, though, that they were anti-Semites. They were great anti-Semites. Although I, I was raised between them, and, what I told I got many times experience even by the Germans, who told me that I'm not Jewish. Even the Russian told me that I was, I was not. I don't know why. I have even here a friend she tells me that I don't look Jewish, which I, I couldn't see this. I look like every second Jew [24] in the street.

JF: Can you tell me about the 1930s in Poland? Were you still living in the same town that you had grown up in?

RF: End of '30s, no. I was in Piotrków Trybunański [25].

JF: Okay.

RF: It's a very big name.

JF: P-L-O-

RF: P-R-K- it's in Polish was written like this, Piotrków and Tryb.

JF: P-L-O-T-R-K-O-W

RF: Right. Tryb.

JF: T-R-Y-H?

RF: B. That's in short. I don't want to use the whole name.

JF: B. T-R-Y-B. Okay. And, what were you doing in this town at this time?

RF: In this town I was working. I was working for, two years. Two years and was also in a Hebrew school.

JF: What were you doing in Hebrew school?

RF: Helping out the teachers.

JF: Were you still living with your family at this time?

⁶That would have been Russian officials. There was no Polish government before 1918.

RF: Yes. Yes.

JF: Your whole family.

RF: My whole family was there. Right. I don't remember if my older sister was married at this time. My older sister was married already at this time, at this time, the rest of the family, and my oldest brother was already in Israel. What I told, in 1925 he went to Israel.

JF: You mentioned that your family was Zionist.

RF: Oh yes.

JF: Did anybody else in the family try to leave for Israel when your brother left?

RF: He left in 1925, my oldest brother.

JF: Anybody else besides your brother?

RF: We were too young. We were too young this time. It's, I remember, in home was very much, my parents were upset when my brother left. It's was, he was just 17, the oldest one.

JF: Were you yourself involved in Zionist organizations?

RF: Yes, I belonged to *HaShomer Hatzair*⁷ [26]. For years and years I belonged to *HaShomer Hatzair*. Not just me. Oh, mine two older sisters, yes, two older sisters, they both, only one year older. We belonged to the Zionist organization. We were really raised Zionist.

JF: Can you tell us anything else about these years while you were teaching, were helping the teachers in the Hebrew school? This was in the early '30s?

RF: Yes, yes. This was in the early '30s. It also was a Tarbut school. It was well organized and was high standards. Who graduated Tarbut school, was accepted to any *Gymnasium*. It was much better like the public school system, and the Beth Jacob schools they were very much behind us, very much behind [27]. And, we like I told before, a half day was in Hebrew and a half day was in Polish subjects.

JF: Were you aware of what was happening in Germany?

RF: We heard about the stories in Germany. This was '33. With that coming, people start coming from Germany, because in Germany was many people, Polish, they couldn't, people couldn't find work in Poland. And Poland is like with the border with the Germany. And, they start coming back, and also the papers told us. My home was, it's right, I would like to remark this. My father was very much behind in our, he worked with our board of education, and he demanded that we should taught a little bit Yiddish. Why he wanted Yiddish? Because he told the papers, we got a few Polish papers⁸ like the *Jewish Exponent* here. I have voiced an opinion of the others about the Jewish, problems, but he wants us to read original what's going on. And my father had to buy

⁷Zionist socialist pioneering youth movement, to the left of Mizrachi.

⁸Presumably refers to Polish-language press for Jews, some daily, some weekly.

the paper at the *Moment*⁹. It's was the name of the paper.

JF: This was a Yiddish...

RF: A Yiddish paper.

JF: Paper.

RF: A Yiddish Zionist religious paper [28]. And he want us to read all the articles what's going on, the Jewish problems in the world. And I remember that in the sixth grade, or in seventh, I don't remember what grade, the teacher got to explain to us the difference between Hebrew and Yiddish. Because the alphabet is the same, just like the *seghol*. "*Eh*" is an *ayin*. "*Ah*" is an *aleph*. And *qamatz* is an *aleph* [29]. In this way we learned, and I am very good Yiddish for that. 'Cause we got to read the paper. My father demanded reading the paper.

JF: Was it through this newspaper that you learned...

RF: Yes, through all week, not just through the *Moment*.

JF: what was going on?

RF: We got *Kurir Polski*.¹⁰ This was in Polish. A few Jewish papers in Polish. And in our home because I was the sixth one over my, my older sisters and brothers was reading the papers. Our home was every time a few papers around. And then old papers, they were telling what's is going on in the universities. What's is going on about antisemitism, what's is going on about the Germany, that the Germans blames everything the Jews. That the Jews, they don't have work and they don't have everything because the Jews took away everything. So we, through the papers, we also knew. In our home was going on discussions.

JF: Now the Jews who came back to Poland you mentioned...

RF: Yes. Yes.

JF: Were these German Jews or Polish Jews?

RF: They were Polish Jews, but they were living for years in Germany.

JF: I see. And did they tell you personally what was happening?

RF: Oh yes. We got our neighbors in Piotrków. We got them and they told them stories what's going on this antisemitism is on the rise, although Hitler was from Austria. He was not a German. He was from Austria. But that's, they are, that's all Jews would be, they should leave Germany, because if not they would be expelled like they were later.

JF: Did you have any...

RF: In 1939¹¹ they were expelled from Germany [30]. They all, all these Jews, they were not born in Germany.

JF: Did you have any feeling that maybe you should be leaving Poland?

RF: Oh, that's, I would not like to blame my father, but when we heard the

⁹Published in Warsaw 1910-39, one of two pillars of the Yiddish daily press.

¹⁰A Polish daily published in Warsaw.

¹¹Beginning in October 1938 Jews with Polish citizenship were expelled from Germany.

stories what's going on, my father used to explain to us that they will send us for work. They will not kill Jews. They will send us for work. And to leave Poland, we couldn't afford to do this. That's just, a few Jews left, oh, but that's was the very, very rich ones who could afford to leave. And another thing, who would take us? Who would take us? Where would we have the money to bribe everyone? Because in Europe, this bribing, it's the first thing. For money you could get in every place. Oh, but we didn't have the money to do this. Although I would tell, proportionally, I come from a well-to-do family. Just nobody, because so much money to have for a whole family to live was impossible.

JF: Did you notice any changes in the non-Jews in your town after Hitler came to power?

RF: They were helping.

JF: In what way they were helping?

RF: It's, many Jews made places to hide themselves. They told will not, will not take long, maybe they will not kill Jews. Maybe they could later come out from the hiding places. The first thing they, they showed the places where the Jews were hiding, hidden. I know, I got one of my uncles. He was also hidden in a place. And when I was working later for the Germans, his clothes came there.

Tape one, side two:

JF: This is tape one, side two of an interview with Mrs. Rachela Frydman.

RF: I could tell you just one thing. That's, why I am telling that's, the Pol-, I was never afraid for¹² a German. In the beginning, 'cause he didn't recognize me. I was afraid for the Pole. We got, in Piotrków Trybunalski [31], a mill, a flour mill. And there were workers, which my father brought them from the time what they were working for him in the first place in the woods there, and so they knew me exactly very well, like I grew up. And I was not afraid to walk out—you didn't ask me about the ghetto—where was the hunger big and I was not afraid to walk out from the ghetto and to go a few kilometers to these workers. And they gave me every time something, food, I mean food for the family. And I never was on my way afraid for a German. I was afraid that a Pole could, I could meet a Pole and he would right away put his hand on me. They were called, *shmaltsovniks*, the *Polaks* were.

JF: What does that mean?

RF: Well, what this mean I really didn't thought. I didn't thought about what's mean. Just how I could understand. You know what *shmalts*¹³ is? *Shmalts*. They, for something, you know, they, if the German gave him one, for one pound of sugar, he could discover a whole hiding where Jews were hidden.

JF: Can you repeat the word?

RF: *Shmaltsovnik*. That's, for them we were afraid. Because, I went a few times out from the ghetto. I went even out of the ghetto, he was later, not later, yes, it's right, later. I'm right. My brother-in-law was arrested and thrown to the, I don't know for what, they met him for sure outside the ghetto. I don't remember exactly what's was the thing. And we bought him out. And I went through the whole town till there with money to bribe to the German officer to let him out. And I the whole way I was not afraid for the Germans, just for the Poles. Because they recognized me. They could recognize me.

JF: Let's back up for a minute. You were speaking of the ghetto. What happened in your town just before the occupation? Before the war started?

RF: It's was really a short time. I was a few years in Piotrków. And, like I mentioned already, I was helping the Hebrew schools. And my sister, she worked. She was a graduate from the Hebrew college. I had just two years Hebrew college when I came here. She was a graduate and she was working in Łódź for a teacher also in Hebrew. The one what she is today in Israel. She is still today a teacher. She is a teacher for retarded children. And, we all were, just the youngest two were not working. The oldest was married. And, we got, we got a beautiful place. I told the mill. We got

¹²Must mean afraid of.

¹³*Shmalts* - grease, fat. *Shmaltsovnik* - a blackmailer whose palms Jews had to grease to survive.

the, this was a flour mill there. And my father there, everybody was busy with the business. In 1939...

JF: Your father was running the flour mill?

RF: Yeah, not by himself. It's was a very big business. He was with two brothers from my mother, and also a sister. It's was like, here it's called a company. But they worked together. The whole family was in one place working in this business.

JF: And this was in 1939?

RF: Yeah. Till 1939.

JF: Until 1939.

RF: Right. Till 1939. The name was *Bar Shuv Yanka*. Anyway, I went and visited the place after, two years ago I was there. It's still there, the place. Was still there. The Ger-, the Poles took over. It's called today *Shpoolka*¹⁴ [32]. And...

JF: What happened then in 1939?

RF: In 1939, right in November, Poland went very fast. The Germans took very fast. We were settled in the ghetto [33].

JF: Where was the ghetto?

RF: In the town.

JF: In the town.

RF: In the town.

JF: Was the whole town made into a ghetto...

RF: No...

JF: Or part of it?

RF: The poorest part. The poorest place from town was the ghetto.

JF: And how many Jews do you think were put into this ghetto?

RF: I was told this time that is there 100,000 Jews [34]. The place was a few blocks like to describe. They put us in an apartment with three, four families. We were three, let me count, we were, the Eizners, it was four families. It's was an apartment from, two, and a small kitchen.

JF: Your father's mill was confiscated?

RF: Oh, it's was there. They took over right away. They took everything over. The Germans took over, not just my father's, all the business in town they took over. And we were put in the ghetto.

JF: Do you remember how you were put in the ghetto? Do you remember how it was like when the Germans came in to the town?

RF: They came in really with, right with killing and murdering. And you could hear shooting around and screaming around. You could imagine when they took 100,000 Jews and put them in a very small place, in a very small, in a very run-down place. We were not allowed to leave the houses. We were not allowed to go. It was not

¹⁴Meaning partnership, probably some collective enterprise in Communist Poland.

a place where to buy something, because they didn't have it. They rationed everything, and even it was rationing, they didn't give you nothing.

JF: Do you know what the rations were?

RF: I don't remember, really, but they were very small. It was very hard to live on that. Just, like I told you before, I used to go to our workers and they used to give me things like a little bit flour or little bit, and they helped me in the beginning. Just that's was everything that's, I was never sure I will come back, when you walked out from the ghetto. I remember also very well that they took us out in a place. They told to come out the young girls to come out in marketplace. This was called, what's was *Plac Trybunalski* [Pol. Trybunalski Square]. And there, when we came out, they, we got to come out, they were run around like wild beasts in the houses and throwing us out, the young ones, that they need people for work. So, between, I was a very lucky one. They choose this time 10 or 15 young girls and I was one between them. I was really, you know, I'm not tall. I'm little. And I was very thin. And I was also between them. And, we thought that they, because we hear that they are shooting, they are killing. In meantime they took us for work. What's was the work? I got, for, *Putzfrau* [Ger. cleaning work], cleaning ladies, for the German officers. Because they took a big house, a big building, and there was a school. And the school was this time I think new painted, so everything was like that's left, so we got to clean out because they made there the offices. And later we were the lucky ones, because we got every day after the work a piece of bread for that. They escorted us from the ghetto to the ghetto like we would, we thieves or some thing. And we were not allowed to wait to buy something. One thing I just remember at this work, I was very afraid every day. And my father told me not to be afraid, that nothing will happen. He was very supportive the whole time. And I walked in. The first cleaned up office, where was already in this building where we were working, there was S.S. man there. He took over two rooms or three rooms, and he went out when we, and we, everything, every day we were, standing outside and the officers came out whom he wanted to come in for the cleaning. So he choose me. And he was a very tall, all the S.S., they were very tall and very brutal and very—. And, when I walked in, and that's was my first or second time, I don't remember even, and he got his gun in his hand and he, "This way," he told me that's I was stealing with him cigarettes. And I told, "I never was smoking cigarettes." And I was not afraid. This time I decided let him do what he want, anyway he could do with me what's he want. And I told, "I never was smoking cigarettes. How you could tell me that I was stealing cigarettes?" And at all when, police takes us home, they are searching us. And if I've got cigarettes he would find by me. 'Cause in German I was very fluent. So I, I told him that's, I don't, I don't have, and I don't smoke. So he told, "You took home for your father." I told, "I have a father. But I never touched your cigarettes." He, like, I, could I take this? In this way he got a package of cigarettes. He opens the cigarettes, and he showed me it's missing two. I told, "You don't have an idea how much cigarettes is in the package."

‘Cause I never got in my hand, I know. ‘Cause my father was smoking cigarettes. Just, you know, he got his own machine what’s he made by himself. I described him. So he, anyway, he went with his gun back and forth. And he got another girl, but she was the cook, a Polish girl, in the other room. So she came walking in and she told, “That’s another girl took,” she saved me this time. If not, he would kill me. It’s not a question about. So I told, “I never, I never saw cigarettes.” That’s was my really first touch from them, and I was wondering years and years later that I was not scared at all. I didn’t care. Maybe was the only thing I didn’t care, because I saw what’s going on in the street, whom they want they were killing, who passed by. The one which he took us from the place, and if he met a group of Jews what’s they were going to work, he just shoot in the crowd.

JF: What happened to the girl who was accused of taking the cigarettes?

RF: That’s was his girlfriend. The other told this, ‘cause I find later out that she want to get rid of the other girl. And she was Polish, so I didn’t care what she did there. Just that’s was my really first close experience with him. After that, maybe took place, I don’t know how long, I just couldn’t, I saw just in the streets one time I saw a big *kadz* [Pol.: vat or tub], like a, you know what’s a *ka*-, like a, I don’t know how describe it, a big *kadz* with water. When they took us from work, to work, you know, and we were walking. A Jewish man, he was a big merchant. He left a store in town, a very fine man. He put him in this water, in the *kadz*, and they were throwing him in and out, in and out.

JF: Like a pool?

RF: Yeah. In, it’s not a pool.

JF: A fountain?

RF: No, it’s a barrel.

JF: A barrel.

RF: Right.

JF: A barrel of water.

RF: Right. A barrel of water. Right. A barrel of water. And they put him in and out, in and out, till he like, but he got go under this water. Later just threw him away. I don’t know he was alive later after this story. The Poles were helping, showing, you know, with the finger who was a rich Jew, who was not a rich Jew. Who got killed and who will not. And they did it. They killed and the shooting was going on regularly in the whole town. Later...

JF: When you say the shooting was going on, was this random shooting, or were they gathering up groups of the Jews?

RF: It’s was both. It’s was both. Jews were passing by, because a Jew by himself didn’t walk out, just when they were guarded from work. Because in Piotrków, was a factory from glass, *szklana* [Pol: glass] [35] and was from, I think from China was the other place. And there Jews got to go every day from work. And just when they

were in a good mood, they were shooting in the crowd. We didn't have, like we lived together a few families. And was not, they rationed us even with the water, they rationed us with everything. It's not anything what they were not rationing us. And, in later, broke out typhus in town. In town, in the ghetto, because of hunger and because of dirt and of everything.

JF: What happened when the typhus broke out?

RF: The houses were surrounded and the people were taken out, and they never came back. Who could hide a place? Who could hide himself? And my family was my mother, my sister and I. We also got sick. I will tell, oh yeah, I didn't tell before a story because you are asking about Judaism. In my home, in mine apartment, in my parents' apartment, my sister was a teacher. I was not a graduate this time. I was still— 'cause see we were a big family, so, I was working for the time in the Hebrew school after *Gymnasium*. My sister was already a graduate, and her girlfriend, they made classes in the school, children, they knew. I would like to tell, we were a known family in place. So they knew that's was there a graduate, and let's see, what, I was working school. So we organized the Jewish children that we will learn with them the customs of tradition and learn Hebrew in this time.

JF: This is in the ghetto?

RF: This is in the ghetto. It was so dangerous like to, to, somebody will just point a finger in us, it's was over for family. Although we did it. We got great reason, that's our children. You know, I was in the classes with the children. I loved them very dearly. And I, we organized two classes in the morning and two in the afternoon. And my sister, her girlfriend, Dor-, Dora Weitislask, Dora, I don't remember even the name, and I, we were with these children.

JF: This was in your apartment?

RF: In the ghetto in our apartment. And we were very scared. And the parents, they couldn't pay us nothing. Oh, but everybody, you know, if they worked where, they got something, a little food, and they brought us food in homes, and we could support our parents, help support the parents. And that's was going on a whole year.

JF: This was 1939?

RF: No.

JF: Later?

RF: This was already in '40, '41. And we were very, this was in '40, I think, and in the beginning through '41. We were very scared. Just the parents were, if they were home, if they were not caught and sent for work, they were surrounding the house and watching us. And every time the children knew already, that's the parents they're outside, and the parents watching us, because we were afraid much. After the war I met a father from two children. And he told, "Tell me, did you know what's you did for our children? They were so happy till they were sent away, when they were taken away." I remember when I met him after the war, in 19-, that's was '46, I went back, and I met

one of the parents. We didn't know really. We really wanted them to learn about Judaism something. And my family comes from a family of teachers, and we were so happy to be with the children.

JF: How many children do you think you had in the classes?

RF: This time?

JF: Mmm hmm.

RF: I would not know, because not every day they were showing up. Because sometimes the S.S. was in the streets and running around and shooting Jews. There was, I think, anyway, between 30, 50, for sure.

JF: Mmm hmm. And what subjects were you able to teach them?

RF: Just Hebrew. Just about our tradition, about Israel.

JF: The language and the history?

RF: Not the language, just history, how we could go on language? We were teaching them about the Jews, and about that we have a country still, and that maybe someday somehow we will come there and we will be free people again. And we told them the story about the greatest from *Shlomo Hamelekh* and *David Hamelekh* [Heb: King Solomon and King David]. And stories just to keep them going, with the Jewish stories, with the happy Jewish stories. And we were sitting, I remember, on the floor and playing with a ball, and showing them that we have, that's the *Bet Hamikdosh* [Heb: the Temple], and how the Jews was dancing there. And with the ball, I remember how my sister showed them how the ball is bouncing, the way the Jews were dancing in *Bet Hamikdosh* dance. We didn't have time for math, or, or, something from language. Just we told them about the greatness about the Jews, and the father met me, and he told me, "You didn't know. You didn't understand what you did this time for the children." That I remember in the ghetto. Later we were surrounded. Every time they made us a little bit smaller. The ghetto was made smaller and smaller, you know.

JF: You mean, streets were taken away from the ghetto?

RF: Right. Right. And we were surrounded mostly by the Ukrainian. The Ukrainian they were a big force.

JF: Wait. You were surrounded by Ukrainians?

RF: Right. The ghetto was every time surrounded by Ukrainians.[36] The S.S. was just a few showing up. Just I would like to talk, if you want, and you don't mind about the, about the typhus, when the typhus started. So how I told, people just died in the beds and died, if they could hide them. Like I mentioned before, we had, we had connection, our family had connections because we got business in town and anyway, we got a permission to get in the hospital, I, my sister, my mother, we went to hospital, because no Jews went to a hospital.

JF: Was this hospital inside the ghetto or outside?

RF: It's was inside the ghetto because was before, it's not was a Jewish hospital. Just it was a hospital. And not one, was two hospitals. That's was just a, now

how it called? *Zufall* [Ger: chance], a, in German I think another word in English. It just was because they were located there. So they still kept the hospital there.

JF: So, during the time of the ghetto these hospitals were still functioning...

RF: Yes.

JF: For...

RF: Not for Jews.

JF: For the Poles.

RF: Yeah. Yeah. For the town.

JF: So the Poles would have to come into the ghetto to go into these hospitals.

RF: Right. People or they sent. I don't know how was going on really. Just, still for bribe, for money. The director in the hospital was an old friend from my father.

JF: A non-Jew or a Jew?

RF: A non-Jew.

JF: A non-Jew.

RF: Non-Jew. My father didn't go to him, 'cause he was afraid to go out. Just my brother-in-law went. And he told that we have typhus in home, and this hospital was special designated for typhus and other sicknesses because the Poles went there sick. Because I don't know if it's an epidemic in town, it goes around, and they took my mother, me, and my sister. And the nurses were nuns. They liked me very much, the nuns. They took care of me.

JF: Did they know that you were Jewish?

RF: Yes. Yes. Because I asked them. You know, typhus is connected with great temperature, high temperature. And that's was not just typhus, was, crack fever. How it's called? You know, with the little spots on the body you get from typhus¹⁵. [37] You should know this, but that's was the way. And I had also how it's called a *Gehirnentzündung*¹⁶ from the, from the high temperature went on my head. How it's called? *Gehirnentzündung*, how my brains, went on my brains. So in my, in my sickness, they, the, nun was sitting with me. I didn't know. She told me later. And I was screaming in mine, "Think what's will happen to all of us," and, "Where is my mother?" And I called the name of my sisters. Later when the temperature went down, she asked me. She was very good to me, this nurse, because when I was in ghetto in great hunger [voice shaking] she even brought me a little food. She told me, "Oh, I would like to go to," oh, how it's called, the place where the nuns living?

JF: In convent?

RF: In a convent. "Oh, I would like to go to here." And she will hide me for the war. So, I refused. I told her I wouldn't go without my family. If I would go, if you could hide my whole family, I would go. She talked to me very nicely, and she talked and talked that I will be taught many things. And I knew all the Polish prayers. Yes,

¹⁵Refers to spotted typhus, transmitted by lice, which raged through ghettos and camps.

¹⁶Encephalitis, brain fever.

why she asked me that? I asked her, “Why you are asking me? Why didn’t ask my sister?” She told me that, when I got the great temperature, I was telling the Polish prayer. So I told her, I just knew the Polish prayer because I was raised between Polish children, and then I know all the prayers. And I told her. Just I never make the cross. Just I told her. And she told, “You know, would be very easy. You are very fluent in Polish. You know all the prayers. We will give you just a few information, and you could be with us, and you will be safe.” And I refused. And with the time she was a very, really, she was taking care, ‘cause I couldn’t walk and I could nothing. I couldn’t move. And when the police, when the S.S. approached the hospital and came in, she was right at my bed [crying] and the cross was on my bed to tell like I am not Jewish, you know, that they would not touch me. ‘Cause they were running around and asking, oh, it’s not the Jews in the hospital. My mother died there.

JF: She died of typhus?

RF: Yeah. I never knew about when she died.

JF: This was about what year?

RF: I really am not sure. It’s was ‘41, I think. ‘41.

JF: You said you didn’t know...

RF: That my mother died?

JF: That...

RF: Tha-, in this time, because I was very sick. At this time also we got, they buried my mother in the Jewish cemetery because, also because of bribery. If they were going out and you could bribe, money could do everything. I visited my mother’s grave. My other sister died. Not the one which she was with us.

JF: Not the one who was in the hospital.

RF: Not the one which was in the hospital. She is alive. Just, an older sister. You know, she got sick, and we couldn’t get her to the hospital already.

JF: She had...

RF: It was impossible.

JF: She had typhus also and was still at home?

RF: Yeah. We didn’t know in the beginning when they took us. We didn’t know that she is. Nobody knew, because she was around, and she was good. Oh, but she was already. And she died. And she was buried, which was a great thing, I’m talking, she was buried, this was a great thing that she was buried in the cemetery!

JF: Was the cemetery within the ghetto limits?

RF: No, no. It was a few kilometers on in the town. Behind the town.

JF: And how, how could you bury her? Was—the Germans permitted the Jews?

RF: No, no, no. They went, and, because, on the cemetery was, the attendant was a Pole, right? And for money he made graves. And they, smuggled out that one, and they buried her. How we, I know, you will ask me how I know where they are buried,

because I was in the graves. And I from ghetto I went, and I came out in the hospital. When I came out from hospital, I came home and I found even this time, even in the ghetto, we got flowers.

JF: How?

RF: The flowers came from friends and from Poles, 'cause we were raised. I am raised between Poles. Oh, they were great anti-Semites. Every anti-Semite has a Jew what's he liked him. And we were raised together there. And I remember this nun told me, "It's something special you got lilacs." I hate lilacs today. We got lilacs in the hospital. And, my mo-, when I came home I found out that my mother had died. And this nurse there, she told me, "Child, you know what? If you could," because the-, they, the ghetto, the hospital, I mentioned, was in the ghetto. "You could bring a few things later, if you will meet, and we will make money and we will buy for you something." So, I took my, a little bit in jewelry, a little bit my mother's furs, and we, and I left with her. She was very good to me.

JF: You left with her.

RF: With the nurse, right, with the nun. She sold a few things, and even after the war she gave me back I want of the furs.

JF: Where did you go with her? You left the hospital.

RF: Yeah. I went home, and that's was in the ghetto.

JF: Mmm hmm.

RF: So I took a few valuables, and I went to her, and I even left it with her in case, because from the homes they took everything. Want they, no, want they, they was a announcement that the Jews have to bring all the furs¹⁷. Let me show you something. I will show you [walks away; voice fades; tape turns off then on] He's in my father's hat. It's was a fur hat. And my father's coat. 'Cause her husband, that's I would like you to observe what I wrote. That's a prayer I wrote about him.

JF: This is a picture of your sister.

RF: My sister.

JF: And her son.

RF: Her son. She was not living in the town where us. Just her father, her father. Her son ran away to Russia. Many Jews ran to Russia. And he left her with us. And that is her four-year-old little boy. So, she want to send him a picture.

JF: She wanted to send her older son a picture?

RF: No, her husband.

JF: Her husband.

RF: Her husband.

JF: And this is the photograph that was taken of them in the early...

RF: ...in the ghetto.

¹⁷Furs were requisitioned, Dec. 1941 - Jan. 1942.

JF: ...part of the ghetto.

RF: Right.

JF: And they're wearing coats with fur collars.

RF: Fur. No. It's false. Just covered with material.

JF: The whole coat were furs?

RF: Mmm hmm [affirmative].

JF: And the cloth over it is hiding the fact that it's a fur coat?

RF: Mmm [affirmative]. Because we got to deliver all the fur. He is, in my father's, in the grand, in his grandfather's fur he is dressed. And the hat.

JF: Is the hat fur also?

RF: Fur. Yes. That's we made a picture because he was not allowed. That's, and this picture I later had from her husband, her husband I don't know he's alive today. I remember my brother-in-law's, 'course, that's a different story. Anyway, that's, I got from him. That was sent to Russia.

JF: Now these coats, this was part of what you gave the nurse?

RF: And later I gave it to her. Right.

JF: The nurse?

RF: My mother's fur coat I gave. And, the one what I was wearing, it was also hers. 'Cause she got a few. It was covered with fur, and with that I went to concentration camp where they took from me away there.

JF: You had one left that you, that was taken from you.

RF: Yeah, because was covered over, hers, also hers, she got two. She didn't have one.

JF: And the nurse that took these was a nun, was the nun.

RF: A nun. A nun. A nun.

JF: Yes. And this other photograph that you're showing me...

RF: That's is my, that's is a photograph. I made it from, you know, I got it when he was born. That's the same child. That's the same child. When he was born this photograph is made by 45 years. I got it in Israel. This was already blank. I paid \$100 for that's to make it. You know, they made it from the picture what's they. It was already really, they reconstructed the picture. That's is the same child. That's him.

JF: I see.

RF: That's my oldest sister. And that's my youngest sister.

JF: I see. So the nun was able to take these furs...

RF: Yeah, because she was in the ghetto, and every...

JF: [unclear]

RF: [unclear] I risked [unclear] my life, right. And I went every day to her and she gave me every time something. And I told her that I don't want from her nothing, just she could sell it in...

Tape two, side one:

JF: This is tape two, side one, of an interview with Mrs. Rachela Frydman with Josey Fisher. You were telling me what happened to the nun who had hidden.

RF: She was very great to me. She was very good, even in time like I mentioned before. The ghetto was made smaller and smaller. They send away people. They never return.

JF: There were transports out of the ghetto?

RF: Yes. I don't know where they took them. That's, we didn't know never. And they took us, and later was very small the ghetto, just the good luck was that I was located right across from this hospital what I mentioned.

JF: Now you were...

RF: The right side of street was already free from Jews. The left side still I was, was a part of the ghetto. So she used to come around to bring me a little something under her, under the clothes and, she used to bring food a little.

JF: So at this point you were living in this apartment with your father.

RF: No, where, my father was not there already.

JF: Where was your father?

RF: I don't know. I told you I will mix up a little.

JF: That's okay.

RF: No, no, no. My father was, I cannot remember if my father was still there. Yes, my father was there still. Josh. My grandfather. That was I mixed. That's what I told you the story about the grandson.

JF: That's okay.

RF: Em...

JF: Your sister?

RF: She was this time alive. About her I didn't know already nothing.

JF: Now this...

RF: Where she went I didn't know. This time I didn't have any idea where she was.

JF: This, your younger sister you didn't know where she was. The older sister is the one that you had taught with?

RF: No, that's is the oldest.

JF: Oh.

RF: The middle one what she is in Israel.

JF: The one that you taught with.

RF: Yeah. I will show you.

JF: While you were in the ghetto, did you know very much about the functioning of the Jewish Council?

RF: [Sighs; pause] I would not like to talk to.

JF: Yes.

RF: They, I would not like it.

JF: You would not like to talk about that.

RF: No. They were no good.

JF: They were no good. All right.

RF: They were working with the Germans. They were delivering, you have on, I don't want this.

JF: Okay. We can talk about something else. Can you tell me about religious life in the ghetto? Was there any services that were permitted to be held?

RF: That's, forget about. Was not any permission. But my father was praying every day. My father was in his *tallis* and *tefillin* [Heb: prayer shawl and phylacteries] every day till the last minute till they took him on the *Umschlagplatz* [gathering point]. They were praying in the home.

JF: Were people able to get together for *minyans* [Heb: a quorum for Torah reading]?

RF: They did, but they, they, they did up in and great, great, like in Yom Kippur they did, and in Rosh Hashanah they did. Oh, it was very dangerous. It was very dangerous. And if they were discovered, they were all killed. This was very dangerous. Was existing a Jewish *kehillah* in, in, in ghetto.

JF: I'm sorry, I can't...

RF: Was existing a *kehillah* in Piotrków just...

JF: The *kehillah* continued into the ghetto.

RF: Yeah, but they were, okay let us go by. Let us go by this. It's pain.

JF: Is there anything else that you feel that you can tell us about those years?

RF: Yeah, I remember when they took us to work. The second place after I was a cleaning lady this time it was, called...

JF: This is after you had typhus and were better again?

RF: You know I, I, really couldn't, I don't remember. I just, it was before or later. I was working on the *Fehlstalle*.

JF: Which is what?

RF: The *Fehlstalle*, this was a German place where they gathered all Jewish things. They, [pause] I am really a little bit mixed up.

JF: That's okay.

RF: I told that's the ghetto was, every time it's smaller and smaller.

JF: Yes.

RF: And we were put. I just wanted to tell, because I don't really remember with the time how it went.

JF: That's all right.

RF: We were taken every day for work...

JF: Yes. [beeping in background]

RF: In the ghetto. Is it a signal from your, no, I thought I hear a signal something.

JF: No.

RF: Oh, my nerves are jumping a little bit.

JF: That's okay.

RF: Um, and now I remember. When we were put in the ghetto, right, all you were not allowed to take with you, just that what you could carry in your hands. You walked out from your home, and that's what you feel that you will need the most, the thing what you will need for tomorrow you could take. That what you could carry in hand. And later they cleaned out all the Jewish homes, where I was working in this place.

JF: This is where they kept all the things that they had confiscated?

RF: Yes. Oh, they were so, they were so efficient. That's they were working, they knew thing we got to put in one place. They, the more used in another place, and a things that what they want to sell in a third. They are very efficient, the Germans. And, one day I was working with, I don't remember how many women were working. Was a big building. And a girl was that was, if I could remember, in December. In Poland December is very cold. It's, like, the girl found a pair of stocking and she put on the stocking 'cause she was barefoot. She put on the stockings and the German saw it. And right away he, they, called us outside and we were standing in the line. He took her out, and he told because she was stealing, she was, she should took her own stocking from her home and put it on. He killed her right in out in front of us. And on top of this he took out another, that she will never steal again, the other one, and he shot her. And they sent us back. So when we came back, they took, they send me, I was working with the, you know, the clothes. So I was sorting, the good one, the new one, went to Germany, we was told. The other one was sold right on the Polish market. The third one, they told us was the considered not usable or something. That's for the poor people, for the Polish. Okay, and we were working. That's when afterwards when they took us out, they shoot the two girls because she was taking the pair of stockings. She was barefoot. And I'm sure this was hers. Because I was putting together my parents' things. I remember very well. I recognized everything [weeping].

JF: The other girl that they shot was not involved at all?

RF: No, just for fun, just to show us what they could do. They shot one or two. I don't remember. I just remember the one thing. When they sent us back, not every time we went back to the same sort of work. I was back between crystal things, between china and crystal and I was so shocked. Because that I was sorting that, and everything fell down in pieces and I was standing. I didn't move. And I don't know why. He could kill me there. He could tell that that's was just doing just special. Just I didn't know, just, and I couldn't carry. I don't know. It was too many pieces, or I was just so shooked up that I didn't carry still to put it here. It fell down in pieces. And

everybody told me, “You know, you have a really *mazel* [Heb: luck] that he didn’t kill you.” And I just looked around and was standing. And I don’t know why I was so, I didn’t care. He could do what he wants. This I remember in ghetto. Later, every day we have other news, how many people were killed in town, who was killed in town, ‘cause we know the people and everything. So, and every day, how I told, we, the ghetto was made smaller and smaller and, and still wasn’t enough people. You know, it was 100,000 Jews in town. So they, we heard in the night that we are surrounded, so many and so many thousand Ukrainian. They were cruel. They were cruel like S.S., the Ukrainians.

JF: The Ukrainians were as cruel as the S.S.?

RF: They were maybe sometimes in a way more because they could save, and they didn’t. If you were looking to the right, and he told you to the left, and you was confused, and he killed you, or he gave you right over your head to see you move in your place.

JF: Could you get any kind of news from any of the other ghettos? Any other parts of Poland while you were there?

RF: Uh, in a way. In a way. We hear bits, and the Warsaw ghetto is hunger and it’s people dying every day. And we heard about other towns like Łódź¹⁸, which was not far from our town. It belonged to the Third Reich, Germany included it to the Third Reich, to the, Germany. There we heard that’s nobody coming out, that they’re all killed.[38] And that’s, I, it’s was already, I think ‘42, I moved out. That’s was ‘42, I think. We were surrounded. Right, and I was still with my father. Yes. My father was this time, this sister and her son. My sister was with her husband, the one that’s in Israel. He was an electrical engineer. I couldn’t remember. Just I think I was told that they are separated, because they took him, because the underground, the Polish, not the Jewish underground, worked. That’s, we didn’t have light, like in the ghetto, that they were cutting off the town from, not just we, that’s the whole town is cut off from the light, and it’s darkness all over. So, somebody told me the story because I didn’t see my sister, the one it was in Israel. We were separated. Many times, like, they made in the ghetto between something, so we couldn’t know what’s going on there. They made a, they confused us that’s we shouldn’t know nothing what’s going on. Although, you know, people were going around and telling stories. And when the light was out in the whole town, yeah, and the water was cut off. So, now, that, I still don’t remember how it was. Yeah, they came and took out people. And I was in the synagogue. [39] All of a sudden I was in the synagogue. How I came to the synagogue? Yes, I know how. They told us they’re already loading people, taking away, and whom they need they left. And whom they, I don’t know. I was in the synagogue. And in this synagogue they didn’t let you out. They didn’t let you out even for the toilet or for something. Just there you were.

JF: How many people were in the synagogue?

¹⁸Łódź was located in the western part of Poland which Germans annexed to the Reich. However, Łódź was the last ghetto to be liquidated, in October, 1944.

RF: I don't know. Full. You couldn't put a needle between. And all of a sudden I look around and I saw my brother-in-law. That's is the husband for the sister which is in Israel. And he was also Yosef, but we called in Polish Yushe. Called, "Yushe, [unclear] Why I am here?" He told, "You don't know? Yesterday they were," how it's called, "they're sending away, loading the Jews from the street. And taking up enough the trains, where they were loading the people, so the rest was put in this synagogue," and like, I'm standing and talking to him, and still was ghetto. There was still ghetto. They were taking from the side streets, you know, all around. I called him Yushic, "What's you are doing here? Where you, where is Miro?" "I don't know. They took me." And while I was standing talking to him, came in an S.S. man. Course we knew exactly, we knew Jews come together for better or good, they are talking. All of a sudden it was so quiet like everybody would died. An S.S. man walked in. "Who is," his name was Yushic Sczharnavyetski, was a real Polish name, what's he was. "Sczharnavyetski. They are looking for you, Sczharnavyetski." And I was standing with him. And he told, "Okay. Now they came. I am the first to go out." And he kissed me and told goodbye, 'cause we didn't know for what he was called out. He was sure that somebody was talked that he maybe did something. I don't know. Anyway, he was called out, just for that, 'cause he was engineer, electric engineer. And he worked before the war for the government. Somebody told, "That's the only one to repair the water and the electricity in the town would be Yushic Sczharnavyetski." So they called him out, and they led him back to the ghetto. I don't know about this. Just I know that they called him and, okay. And late in the night, I remember my stomach was, and I just couldn't sleep, you will excuse me, making waste where I am standing. So I have to get down like that. That, no, I still want to go back where my father was and I could-, my mind. Oh, I thought like that. They will shoot me, I will walk out from the synagogue and I, and there's stays a Ukrainian. And I told him, "I would like just one thing. Let me go to the toilet. I just want." And I was wearing a diamond ring of my mother's, 'cause when we walked out from home, they gave us everybody to hide something, you know, in case you could save your life. You know, I was not wearing a diamonds for year and year, although I should, because it saved my life. I don't wear earrings because they just tore out from my ears. I promised never in life again to wear that. And my husband got to convince me to wear a diamond ring. Because he told, he explained me, that the diamond ring saved me this time. Because I don't want any jewelry.

JF: You won't wear earrings because.

RF: Oh.

JF: The Germans tore.

RF: Oh yes, they tore. They didn't take. They tore just out, and I was bleeding all over. And I still today I got great problems with my ears from that, 'cause they hit.

JF: This was still in the ghetto when they took your...

RF: No, that's was when I was taking to, I should not mention now. I am mixing a little bit up, 'cause I'm talking about the jewelry. Just I walked out, and I told him, "Let me just go to the toilet", 'cause I was not far from the synagogue and I knew every place. Across from the synagogue still Jews were not taken for *Aussiedlung* [resettlement], for sending away, not to Treblinka, we didn't know at this time where. And across the street was living one of my aunts, when I was already. So I gave him the ring. I told him, "Please, let." He told me that it's glass. I told him, "It's not glass."

JF: So you gave him your mother's diamond.

RF: I gave him the ring. For that I was convinced that I should wear. I gave him the ring, just in a moment. You know, in moments like that something is like a light comes in your head. I told him, "You know what, let me run across the street. There my aunt is living." And he looked around on both sides into the room that's nobody comes around. And I ran. And this time I walked in. My aunt was not there. Were people there, 'cause they, they were already gone. Nobody was there from them. Just were maybe about 100 people in this house. I remember a man approached me and told to me, "You have something?" "I don't know, I. That's what's I'm coming from synagogue." And he gave me a pajama.

JF: A pajama?

RF: A pajama he gave me he got from this house there. 'Cause he knew that we are, tomorrow we are walking out from here. I didn't know where I am. In the synagogue already. Right in the morning the *Umschlagplatz*, where it's called, where they, send them away. And hearing that, still so much in hope, that maybe you will go back from the ghetto.

JF: You then stayed in your aunt's house overnight. You didn't go back.

RF: Yes. She was not there. Were people there. I'm talking about young boy approached me with the pajamas.

JF: Yes.

RF: Because he thought maybe that will help me for a piece of bread or something. He got so many things what's he took out from the closets from the people there. And that was my aunt's house.

JF: And when were the people from the synagogue taken to the...

RF: Right in the morning.

JF: In the morning.

RF: We saw. We saw. We saw them. Just, and I, I didn't tell before the story what saved me also beside the diamond. I went into the toilet, I remember, because I went. And the minute when I sit down I saw, you know, an *Arbeits* card, which means who was working, a card, who was working, he still was alive. He still.

JF: A work permit.

RF: A work permit, right. And it was from a man. A man's or woman's card, what was the difference, let me take this. Next day we were in the line also to go out of

the *Umschlagplatz*. And there was making like they did it this way. Here was, here was sitting our partner from our business, on head of the table. Here was an S.S. man on one side and an S.S. man on the other side. He was the pr-, but that's I didn't want talk about, the *kehillah*, he was president from the *kehillah*, our partner. He was a very religious man. He didn't, walked in before he was not, he was not eating, before he was not praying. But this time he was with the S.S. But that's, I won't, only this part. He was sitting there, and he was like a *shpaiyermate* [phonetic], you know, was, he, the tape is on?

JF: Yes.

RF: I don't want.

JF: It's okay. You can describe it to me perhaps.

RF: I don't want to do that, 'cause the Jewish Police was also next, and I don't want to talk about it. 'Cause maybe they saved a life, maybe saved someone's life. Anyway, here was police standing on the other side. And here was the place where we got to walk through with our cards.

JF: With your cards?

RF: Yes.

JF: With the work cards?

RF: Who has the work permits was allowed to go back in the ghetto.

JF: I see.

RF: So I was holding my card. A man's card I was holding. And I figured out. You know what's, "You dirty Jews." Please, you have on, I don't, I will not talk.

JF: Oh.

RF: I don't want to have, [tape goes off then on]

JF: They, when you showed them the card...

RF: I showed the card and was a man's picture on the card.

JF: But they permitted you to go through anyway.

RF: Yes. But I was holding this way the card, you see. I showed the card and here was the picture and I was holding like this.

JF: You put your fingers over the picture.

RF: Yes. Put my fingers if they would be not so over, they didn't really, they knew exactly it's not me, not my name, but they let me go, they let me go, and when I came...

JF: So you went back into the ghetto now.

RF: I went into the ghetto. And I met my sister. And later we were taken out many times, out and in, the *Umschlagplatz* from the ghetto, and we were hiding ourselves, and I never run with my sister together. I never went 'cause I was afraid and take, what, that we made up that she should be in another corner, and I in another. That if, maybe, this corner will be safe, then this not, let us not be together. Just, after that in the evening, we came together. And, I omit. Now I omit how we went, how my home

went on the *Umschlagplatz*. I haven't told like how my father was lost.

JF: Oh, this, your father was taken to the *Umschlagplatz*?

RF: I was there also.

JF: You were with him.

RF: And this sister with the child was there.

JF: The four of you.

RF: I mixed a little bit, I told what's happened later.

JF: That's okay. That's okay. So, this was about when? Do you remember when your father was with you?

RF: Yes. I remember. '42.

JF: This was in '42.

RF: Yeah. That's I would like, if, you don't, you don't know Yiddish at all? I would read very slowly. Because I gave here the account of it. That's is the day.

JF: Let's. Can we wait? And you can read that all at one time. Can you tell me right now, then we'll get back to this? Tell me what happened, in English, if you can.

RF: Yeah. I don't remember where my sister was this time, the man-, the one in Israel. I don't remember where she was.

JF: This is the one who was married to the electrician?

RF: Yeah. He died in ghetto. She is married to an Israeli. She is married. She got married in Israel after the war. He died, anyway, in Buchenwald, my brother-in-law.

JF: So you were with, you were...

RF: Not her. With her I was.

JF: Your older sister.

RF: Not the other sister.

JF: Your oldest sister.

RF: Yeah. The oldest.

JF: And her..

RF: Child.

JF: Her son...

RF: Mmm hmm [affirmative].

JF: And your father.

RF: We walked out from our home, we walked out. They chased us out from our home, and they took us on the *Umschlagplatz*. Now, how would you call them? The place where they gathered all the Jews and they, they...

JF: The train platform?

RF: Yeah.

JF: Yes.

RF: The platform, all of them. But they couldn't put all in the same time. And there was, no, I have to tell a one details I got about the Jewish police. Of, and I got, this

time I had my own *Arbeits* card. They, no, what's I told the card, working.

JF: You had your own work permit?

RF: Yeah. I had mine. She has hers. We all had.

JF: This is before the inc-

RF: This is from the ghe-, the liquidation of the ghetto I am telling now. And they liquidate already.

JF: This is the total liquidation of the ghetto now.

RF: Right. Right.

JF: So this is after the...

RF: We were really till the last minute there 'cause we were every time, we could manage ourselves to, to, you know, you have to be very, to know how to, like I told I was not with my sister. She was in a different place. Because I never wanted to leave my father.

JF: So this is 1942?

RF: 1942.

JF: And the entire ghetto at this point was to be liquidated.

RF: Mmm hmm [affirmative].

JF: Okay.

RF: We were all there. They chased us out, they bring in the S.S. They were screaming, killing in the way many people. And, this was made like that's the place where the trains were standing in this direction, I remember. We came on in this direction, like we were sitting here. Between us and between the rest of the place where they, they, they made, how it's called? It seems so hard to describe. Not, the, the ground was taken away, was made a divider like between us, where the people were sitting, and between the main big place where the people were coming down here, yeah? Right. It was, many people went right to the trains. And I don't remember all we were the first or the last. We were sitting here. In between us in this place was, *Graben* [Ger: ditch, trench].

JF: It was dug out?

RF: Dugged out. Yeah. Was a very big place, dugged out the ground. And was like a divider between.

JF: Yes.

RF: And here were walking people straight to the trains. Well, we were sitting around there. I don't know why they did it, how, or, I couldn't remind. Just we were the first walking out. And between the walking outs and the houses till the place were killed many hundreds of people were killed this time. And I was sitting there with my father and my sister and the little boy. And, he didn't know what's is going on, a child. And he was holding fast my hand and held the mother's. And he was talking and, I was playing with him. I loved, he was good. I was playing with him. He just, he just, he was very, sad is not the word. He saw that we are, you know, how we are all confused. And my

father was sitting like all Jews and praying, and, talking to us, not to be afraid, that for sure we are going from work. And, he kepted us going, you know, my father. And the child was holding me so fast by the hand. He was holding me. And he asked me, "What is going on? Why are people screaming? Why are people shouting? Why it's so?" And he turned to his mother and asked, "Why, why you are so upset, Mommy?" And, there was running around the Jewish police. Was a very bad day, because the, the, the last day of the ghetto was not one day, just took a few days. You know, they, they took us out in order. This street today, this street tomorrow, street by street. And, the Jewish police was running around, and screaming that so many Jews was lost, so many Jews. And one, he know me. And he told me, "I know exactly that you and your sister had the cards. Why you are," Yes, and the other side. I am mixing. In the other side of the place what I told that they dugged out a place and here was sending people, there was old people what they got the, um, cards, the working cards. 'Cause we were work-, people were working.

JF: They separated the people...

RF: ...right. Right.

JF: ...who had the working cards.

RF: Working cards.

JF: And what was to happen to those people?

RF: They, they, that's what I want to tell how happened. And I got a card like this, and my sister got. So, one, Numberg was his name I think. He came running. He told, "What you are sitting here and screaming? So many people were [unclear], send away. Why you are not going with your cards to the group with these people?" And I just looked up at him. I was holding the child and playing with him. And he was so annoyed with me, so my father just told me, "My child, [crying] this effort must be made. She will go with her child, and I will go with them. And you save yourself." Nobody but you can save yourself. And he pushed me, this policeman pushed me, right in this, uh...

JF: In the pit?

RF: He pu-, yes, he pushed me there, because he wants me to go over there the good side, he meant a good thing that I should go. And, I don't know what's happened to me, just, I passes out. And I woke up, maybe took a few seconds, the whole story, was already, that was the last few words what my father talked to me. He told me, "You save yourself. And I'm going with my children." And I woke up, he was already, my father was not there, nobody was there. And on this side were standing the people with the cards holding the hand high, so I just dropped out my, I just came out from this...

JF: The pit.

RF: Yeah, I came just out. It's not a pit, really, how it's called. Long, you know, was going.

JF: A trench?

RF: Yeah, but, my, better a tren-, yeah, it's a long, long was, because was like

over the whole place around. I came out from this trench and I walked with these people what they got the cards. And, there they loaded us on trucks, and there I went to the first mine, that's was called, Skarzysko-Kamienna [40]. I had here a picture I brought from Poland. That's was a *Arbeits Lager*.

JF: This was a work camp?

RF: Yeah, a work camp. And there I went to the work camp. Because, here you have pictures from the ghettos. If you want to make, just I would like you, you would show me what kind, and I will make for you in the library the photocopies.

JF: Okay. Can you, can you spell the name of the work camp for us?

RF: Yeah. I told. I don't have my glasses, you know.

JF: That's okay.

RF: Probably a thousand Jews were killed till I went. I saw killed thousands of thousand Jews, just I am talking fast.

JF: How—do you have any idea how many Jews were with you out of this entire ghetto population? How many Jews lived out of that 100,000 that were originally there?

RF: What you mean? How many, eh...

JF: How many of you were taken to the work camp? Do you have any idea?

RF: I would never know, because they loaded us on, oh, yeah, I am at one thing what I would like you to have.

JF: Sure. Go back. Go ahead.

RF: Yeah, because I am mixing up a little bit.

JF: That's all right.

RF: Yeah, I know, because...

JF: You're worth it.

RF: No, with her telling I remind me.

JF: That's okay.

RF: So, I just want to tell this. I were never afraid to die. For sure not. Because I was already in a, you know what's a *Guvriys*¹⁹ is, you should know it. It's a Hebrew word, the *Guvriys*. I have the, what they're putting in the carriage where the dead people are carried to the cemetery.

¹⁹*Guf, Gufah, Geveeah* - a corpse (Hebrew).

Tape two, side two:

JF: This is tape two, side two, of an interview with Mrs. Rachela Frydman. You were telling me about the...

RF: No, I just want to tell an episode from the ghetto.

JF: Yes.

RF: This time my father was already. I didn't have him anymore. Just I met my sister in the ghetto.

JF: This was after your father had been deported?

RF: Yeah, already, yeah. I didn't have nobody. And every day they again look for people, 'cause I didn't have a working card, I told, I mentioned before the working card what I lost. I lost where my working card.

JF: One of your sisters, then, was still in the ghetto with you?

RF: Yeah, I don't know. That's was what I told, her husband was with the electric engineer.

JF: Ahh. The one sister that remained was the one...

RF: ...yes. And I don't know...

JF: ...whose husband was the electrician.

RF: ...how she got, how she got saved through the ghetto. Because that's was already, yeah, the last part of the Jews what they were left in Piotrków, the last few Jews there. In between them were also many illegal, like I was illegal, 'cause I didn't have my card. I don't know why I lost. I had a card. I didn't have. Was between all the commotion from the, from the, from the place where they loaded the Jews and everything and I left my father. I was just, and that's what's I was, and I didn't have nothing. So they were still checking who has the working cards. So this time we are also made up with my, I was living with my sister, her husband. I wouldn't know, I left much out because I don't want to go back. I was married. I didn't have my husband already also. I lost my husband also. I don't know where my husband was. My husband probably, they told me he was taken to—in Poland where he was lost in Cracow.

JF: You were married during the time you were in the ghetto?

RF: I was engaged.

JF: You were engaged.

RF: Before the war. And I was married in the ghetto. My father wanted to see me married.

JF: So, how long was your husband with you in the ghetto?

RF: I don't remember this. I couldn't tell this either. I don't remember exactly because I was still in the ghetto when he was taken. He was, they took him for work to Cracow to the salt...

JF: Salt mines?

RF: Mines, yeah. And nobody...

JF: He never came back?

RF: Never.

JF: What was his name, Mrs. Frydman?

RF: Shlamit, Shlomo.

JF: His last name?

RF: Tishinsveit.

JF: Thank you.

RF: But you know that I never told this story. I seldom told the story about. I don't know why. My husband is alive, and I told this story, so I never told this story about mine. 'Cause I was married. I have to tell everything. I could tell much more. If you will... [tape goes off then on]

JF: What kept you alive during this time?

RF: It's just the only thing, to see the Germans go down the drain. Because, that's was the only reason what's I am maybe here today. Because I thought, if I will not see this, and I was in great hunger, and in great despair, and everything, just every time when I thought, when will come the day when I will see them running away? And, and in April, it's now how many years?

JF: Now, wait, let—tell me the name of the work camp...

RF: Oh yeah.

JF: That you were taken to.

RF: I will show. I have to write down. It's so a big name.

JF: That's okay.

RF: It's, no, it's, you know, the Polish, Skarzysko. This is my story.

JF: Yes.

RF: And I will show you. S-, I will, I will, S-K-A-R-Z-Y-S-K-O, Skarzysko.

JF: Mmm hmm.

RF: A, oh, forgive me, Kamienna.

JF: A dash?

RF: A dash, Kamienna, K-A-M-I-E-N-another N-A, Kamienna.

JF: And how were you taken to the work camp?

RF: Oh, this, I finished this time the story. You remember when from the place where they were loading the Jews and I got the card.

JF: No, yes, I mean, were you...

RF: It was there.

JF: Taken by a train?

RF: No, by a truck.

JF: A truck. Okay. And...

RF: What, no, I am confused. I am confused. [pause] Uh, when I came out from this trench, right, I don't remember where I was. Just, uh, yeah, let me, let me be this way because I don't want talk about...

JF: Yes.

RF: How happened. It's on? If not, I will tell you personally. You could, stop this for a moment just I will just [tape goes off then on]. We were told, let him rest in peace, my cousin saved me. One of my cousins saved me also. I was a few times saved, 'cause for that I believe in my mother. My mother told us, so I have to be, uh, that they will not take me. One, and that for that I believe so highly, and when I have a dream about my parents, I know that nothing will happen to me. And this time my mother came to me and told me again, 'cause we were tossing in bed and not sleeping. This time I didn't have a husband. I was with my sister also. I was living with my sister. So all of a sudden my cousin came up and he told me, "Listen, you are on the list." 'Cause they were, from time to time they were taking out people. He told, "You are on the list, and I will hide you."

JF: Mmm hmm.

RF: And I got this, just he told he needed something for hiding, for bribing somebody, he needs something. He didn't have it. So we got still, you know how the, all Jews used to wear the golden watches with the chains?

JF: Yes.

RF: We got hidden in the ghetto my father's this. So we gave him that, that's if he could save my sister only, you could save, and it's, what's mean that? He gave it and he got the keys from, no, how it's called, the place where they, what's I told where they are, transporting the dead one, the hearsie?

JF: A hearse.

RF: Yeah.

JF: A hearse.

RF: In the ghetto and in Poland was in every town was from the *kehillah* this. This was a special place where the hearse was. What's was the hearse? There was a wooden...

JF: A wagon?

RF: Right, a wagon, and they got a horse for it and that's was it. So, in the night he came back and he told me to go with him, and he will hide me because if not, and the next day I am on the line, because I am on the list. And he got the keys for this place and he put me in this hearse inside. And I came there, when I slide in, all of a sudden I looked around and two other girls they were in there. Somebody also did this for them. For that's I am not afraid for the hearse also not. We were lying there for two days, I think, I was two days there. He brought me water, he brought, this time we got food, because in the ghetto still we could manage with something. He brought me a piece of bread, and water, and he told me to lie just quiet because the police is going back and forth and they are looking. This time, that's was, this time, I think, that this time they took me, the police took me to get me to Skarzysko, because they didn't have enough women.

JF: Mmm hmm.

RF: And that's was, day time, you know, the place was very, you could look through the, how it's called, the

JF: The slats?

RF: Yeah.

JF: In the wagon.

RF: We could look through and see what's going on. I saw an S.S. man. My brother-in-law what's I talked about him before, I saw him standing outside because we was right across mine apartment which we lived in with the sister. And I saw an S.S. man stands with a revolver in his hand, and he tells that he will kill him, if he will not, if he will tell him where I am. Somebody told that he knows. He didn't know. We lived this time this. We didn't told a brother or sister never where we are going.

JF: Mmm hmm.

RF: Because just for, they don't know, they don't know. And this cousin took me there. And I saw the policeman stand-, the S.S. man standing with his revolver. I tolded the two girls, "I'm walking out. He has my sister there, a wife. And I'm by myself. Why he has to be killed?" I walk out. They were crying and begging me not to do this, because they were afraid that the minute when I will walk out, they will go in looking for others not hidden or not 'cause who could think in a hearse to be hidden? Nobody could think about this. Even the S.S. man would not think that's has some a little girl in a hearse. Anyway, I came out, very quietly, and I stood in front, and then I told to the S.S. man. He didn't know. I am the only one what I knew about. Just he didn't. And I didn't told him where I was. I was hidden and that's is it. I didn't told where, he didn't ask me. And this time they too-, and the police was standing around beside the S.S. man. They took me to the, to this, uh, no, not a car, a truck. I was loaded on this truck and sent to Skarzysko.

JF: I see.

RF: And I never again, I saw my sister, from this time I saw my sister after the war. We didn't know about each others. She was in another concentration camp and I was in another.

JF: She was taken to another concentration camp after that.

RF: Yeah. Later. They still was maybe six months still in the ghetto. And I, I walked out by myself.

JF: Do you have any idea when this was that you were taken out of the ghetto?

RF: Still this was the *rok* [Pol: year] '42.

JF: Still '42.

RF: The *rok*, Polish, I am mixing not up Polish and Yiddish. Um, that's was '42. Yes. I came to Skarzysko '42 and if I don't mistaking, what's I am talking about? I am mixing. I am mixing. My husband was alive. He saw me. I saw him. I think I saw

him this time. That he was outside looking where they were taking me.

JF: You think your husband was still alive when you left the camp?

RF: I think. I couldn't tell if for sure.

JF: Okay.

RF: Anyway, this time...

JF: What, what were the conditions like in the work camp? Where did you live? What kind of rations?

RF: It's on, right? It's on? I also have to omit something about our people. We came to the camp. I really want to know. I really want to remember something, to remind me something, how I got a coat, who g-, handed me the coat, because I was without a coat when they took me. I, for that's I think my husband was alive. Somebody gave me a coat.

JF: Somebody gave you a coat...

RF: Mine.

JF: When you were getting on...

RF: Mine.

JF: Your own coat.

RF: So it has to be, it has to be some from my family was there.

JF: When you were loaded onto the truck...

RF: Yeah.

JF: They gave you the coat.

RF: I don't remember. I don't. And I came there to, it was then, I think in March. It was very cold.

JF: March of 1942? [41]

RF: Mmm hmm [affirmative]. Yes. If I will mix the years it's not my fault.

JF: No.

RF: Some work. I would look over my papers I could find that, just it's I don't want to go back.

JF: That's okay.

RF: I came there, with, like I told, a few truckloads with women, still from the ghetto what's they trucks. They put us in barracks.

JF: What were the barracks like?

RF: Hmm. [Pause] Just, how it's called, a *Pritsche* [planks, plank bed]. You know, today I see the barracks, the bunks?

JF: Bunk beds.

RF: Like bunks from very plain wood, and a little bit straw was on that. And they gave us some kind of a covering thing. And then we got a lessons, a big lessons, also from our people. We got a lesson...

JF: A lesson?

RF: I mean a lecture. They lectured us.

JF: What did they tell you?

RF: That they will [unclear] us out because we came from home just. And there was already a bunk people working. And we will forget many good things. Okay. I don't want tell of the lecture what they gave us. And right next day they took us out in lines, and they took us to the factory, ammunition.

JF: An ammunition factory.

RF: Ammunition factory. It was right in Skarzysko.

JF: Was this factory outside the camp? Did you have to walk to this?

RF: Yeah. Mmm hmm [affirmative]. We were walking. How long distance was, I don't know. I just know, remember one thing, that's one time I was looking around there because we never, we were afraid to raise our head that somebody from the police would not see us and give us over our head. So the best way was keeping to yourself and keeping the head down. But one time I was very good to see where I am. And I just looked around and I saw the whole factory, was not one, was many, that's was the Polish ammunition factories in Skarzysko. They took over, the Germans, were hidden on their, they made ceilings like from trees, you know, green, because the planes were running back and forth. They were afraid for the enemy. So this time I just put my head up and I saw there that's there we are on the trees, that all factories was like on the trees.

JF: They would put trees over the roofs of the factories?

RF: Yeah, they made. That's was artificial there.

JF: Yes.

RF: Yeah, that's they hid the factories. Then we were taken every day out in the morning, six, and it's called an *Appell* [roll call]. It's was, to count us, and to give us our piece of bread, which was like the soil outside.

JF: Was like what?

RF: Like the soil.

JF: The soil.

RF: Outside, and they gave us a drink of hot water. And, in the factory, I think, we got also, what's you got there I don't remember, or we got some from—. We were working till the night, and when we came home we got stay already in a line. And there at home they gave us a little water, also with something swimming around in the water. I don't know whatever. Was good, this time, very good, because we were very hungry and very—and there we were working very hard. There's not a question about it, ten hours, twelve. This was not assigned a time, how many hours. How many do you need? And for finding one little thing on the work, you know, I was, I remember I let, I let hit myself very well over my head because I thought, if I will stay here at this work I will be not alive today. And, there was, S.S. was women. The women was worse from the men, thousand times worse from the men.

JF: Why?

RF: Because in man you could manage. You could manage sometimes to talk out him of something, because the Ge-, although I decided not to let them know that's I know German.

JF: Mmm.

RF: There I decided not to know about German, because was much better. What she talked, I am make believe I don't know what she's talking, 'cause I think that's my deaf ear. We have, and I make believe. So she gave me one time because she told me that's I know, she knows that's I know German. Because the way from where I'm coming, she knew that I know it's the German border. So, she knew exactly. Just, I don't know, I know just one thing to tell. The women was worse from the men. So she put me to a machine where was on a line. You know, it was—and there was running the, I was working for, *Hülsen für scharfe Patronen* [cases for live cartridges]. What's that's mean, for the, no, what it's called? They are shooting with, with...

JF: Bullets?

RF: Bullets. They're loading bullets. The top from the bullets.

JF: The cap?

RF: Yeah. The cap. This cap was running here, right? So was a...

JF: An assembly line.

RF: Assembly line. Was running so fast. Here was like maybe 1,000 or 2,000 lines where the assembly was running here. Right, where was the work. And that's was the how it's called, the covers from the...

JF: The caps on the...

RF: The caps. And if a cap gets so much something you got to take out. And here was running so fast. And we were hungry and cold and everything. And here was like maybe to 2,000, the—so, I saw that if I will sit one hour more for sure, for sure she will kill me right in place. She was very cruel. This is, Mirsch was her name, *Yimakh shemoi* [Yiddish; may the name be blotted out], her name. So I was sitting there, and I figured out like that if I will sit here one hour more she will right kill me. So I, I just very plain, I raised my head, and I thought, let her do what she wants anyway. Why I have to lose my, mine eyesight also, and she have to kill me later? I will not do nothing. So she walked over and she hit me right here, straight here.

JF: On the back of your neck?

RF: Yeah. Right here. She did, the men, she hit in front, and the women she hit here. Every time. That's was her specialty. So, uh, I didn't cry. I didn't know why. It didn't hurt me at all because I was so—it hurt me very much, just I, I was living. And she asked me why I am doing this. She saw that I am not working. I, I saw very, I told her very plain that's I just couldn't see nothing, that everything rose by me so fast by, if she could make it slower, the line, that's—. And she looked up at me and kicked me away from the place. And she told me, "Okay, I will give you another place." Why she did this I couldn't understand till today. And, later also. That's was the second time

when I helped everybody. I was every time in a dangerous place. She took me to stay there, you know where, three people were sitting at the machine, right? And there was coming down to a big case, a carton, the, no, the, what it's called, I told...

JF: The bullets?

RF: Not the bullets, the covers on the bullets were coming down there, and there she told me that I should every time check how much work is come down. So, I agreed with her, and I to get down, I will be already good work. So I got made up, I was later watching everything what's come there down, right? And I made that up with the girls, and she told me two machines I have to watch. So I made up with them that they had, because was impossible to work good, was impossible, just they have to say, like, in one, it was, here was standing, how it's called, like a little, also a little crate was standing from very good ones. The rest was running and I was covering up the top just with the good one, because she would kill all of us. We couldn't do the work there. And she was checking later. And when she checked she took just the top. So the top was every time made up very good. I was collecting by the very good one, putting them on top.

JF: And the underneath ones were not checked at all?

RF: Sure were not checked. And what's was then there was came back from the, the bullets were not good because they were, the soldiers was killed if they would use them. And they find out, just wait, if they find out, on the front, you know, where the war was going on, that the bullets are not good. But meantime they evacuated us, so she couldn't find us. Oh, but we couldn't do it. We couldn't work that way.

JF: Mmm hmm.

RF: I remember asked to go in toilets, she didn't allow this when we wanted, so I also picked up one time myself, and I run by myself. 'Cause I figured out what I will do here. And I ran. And she was standing in front of the toilet, and she hit me twice here. I...

JF: On the back of the neck again?

RF: Yeah. I suffer till today my hands. I have—they, the German doctors they agreed, that's mine nerve is 80%, I have with my arms to do till today. That is from that.

JF: A nerve was injured at the back of your neck that hurts, 'causes pain in your arms?

RF: Both arms, right.

JF: How long were you in this work camp?

RF: I was there, oh, but they shifted us with work, because they didn't trust us. Very plain. They saw that we are—we don't care already. We came to the point where we didn't cared about nothing. So they shifted us. Later I worked in another place.

JF: You were still in the same camp?

RF: In the same camp.

JF: Mmm hmm.

RF: And, yeah, I would like just to tell the greeting, when we came to this camp. No, no, I am wrong. I am wrong. Oh, that was Skarzysko. I am still in Skarzysko. There we worked till '44.

JF: About what month of '44?

RF: I don't remember. We were sent to Buchenwald this time.

JF: Was anybody ever able to escape, or did anyone try to escape...

RF: ...oh yes.

JF: ...from this work camp?

RF: Oh yes. They were killed. They were caught. I know even two people. One time we were very much hurt and I was also saved this time. It was a Pole, which my cousin what saved me, which I told before about him, he knew exactly this where I am located, and they send us from time to time money. He was on the Polish side. He was not in the ghetto. He was on the other side. And he sent us paper, he asked in a letter about we want to escape that he could make for us possible. But I told no. The two girls decided yes because he was [unclear] and I decided no. I told but I won't go to the Poles. I don't believe them. I lived with them, and I know exactly that they will not help me. So I decided no. So, one time the police, the S.S. caught the letters what's was sent to us. He was killed this time in Piotrków because they got all the documents. And because I answered no in my letter was, it was two passports. They caught them. The two girls were killed I think. And they left me. That's was, later it came that they were losing the war and, Russia, where I don't know this time was. Anyway he sent us in '44 to Ska-, to, to Buchenwald. That's was the end of Skarzysko in '42. When the army went, the Russian army, I think was, I took two, I could show you I got even in Gratz College from history here the highest prize and I'm so good in history and I forgot now the year.

JF: That's all right.

RF: When the German army was going back from Russia, then this time they took us to Buchenwald²⁰. They send us to Buchenwald. So we was not told where we are going.

JF: How did you go to Buchenwald from the camp?

RF: Again with the, with the, now how it's called?

JF: The trucks?

RF: Not trucks.

JF: Trains?

RF: Trains with the, what's that, cattle trains. The whole time they used cattle trains.

JF: Let me ask you, when you were in the work camp, were you aware of any kind of religious services that were going on among women?

²⁰In July, 1944, as the Russian Army advanced, the camp was liquidated and some of the prisoners were sent to Buchenwald.

RF: No, there was [unclear], and the other side were men. We never was together with the men, never, never, oh, but we know barracks across from us. And I lived in the same barrack with a rabbi's wife. But from where she was, I don't remember now. Even my, was shared with me, the *Pritsche* [wooden plank], the, she was a wife from the rabbi, Gyenya [Genia]. I would like to tell about her a story 'cause I met her after the war. She was a graduate from a school in Warsaw from *Handelschule*. That's is a business school. Oh, but she was a wife from a rabbi. She was very good to me. Because I was sick and I was nothing. She was a healthy woman more. And she came later to the place. I came, I was very young and I was [unclear] with the Germans. And from where she came, I don't remember. Just I remember one thing about her. And I met her after the war. She was working in a different place, also in this Skarzysko. I don't know how and where, she knew exactly when the holidays are. She kept count, and she was, she was, very religious. But she was a very good woman. And she told me, "You know what? Now is Passover coming." I didn't know it's Passover. "And you know what I decided? I decided to make *matzos*." And her name was Gyenya, I told, "Gyenya, you are crazy!" And we never, not never, some day we met, because she was on, and like when I was on the days, she was on the night. When I was on the night shift, she was on the day shift. I don't know from where she got flour. I don't know. And she was working in a very bad place. Oh but there were ovens, and believe or not, that she made four or five little *matzos* there. And, and she was drying them on the, on her, on the oven where she was working by alone.

JF: She worked near an oven?

RF: Yeah, near an oven. Near an oven she was working. I don't know what she was doing. And she didn't told me nothing.

JF: She didn't bake them in the oven?

RF: No!

JF: She tried...

RF: There was a iron in the, in the, so she dried them.

JF: She dried them.

RF: And she brought them home. She covered them nicely. That's I know later because I did something with that. And she put them under the straw there on the *Pritsche*. And I came home and I was young and restless. And I remember on *Erev Pesach*, she told me, you know what, we will have *matzah*. And I told, "Gyenya, you are crazy. Where you got the *matzah*?" "I baked them. And I have them." And I remember when she approached was everything little pieces, little nothing, 'cause she didn't told me. She was afraid to tell me. We were afraid every time to tell somebody what's we are doing.

JF: So the *matzah* had been hidden under the straw.

RF: Right. And I was sleeping on it.

JF: And you slept on it.

RF: And I didn't know.

JF: Ohhhh.

RF: She didn't know. And that's, the, she didn't want something more. This Gyenya's put something more, oh but I was so crying. She risked her life with this! And I, I crumpled it in nothing.

JF: Did you still have the service using the crumbs of the *matzah*?

RF: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

JF: Did she lead the service?

RF: No, but we just, she gave us, were were eating just a little crumbs because I, I, I spoiled everything.

JF: But did you say the prayers and?

RF: Oh yes, yeah, I knew them very well and she knew them very well and we knew this was *Pesach*. This time we knew it was *Pesach*.

JF: Was this just your barrack, or, how many women?

RF: No, we were afraid for people. In the barrack, in the room we told them that it's *Pesach*.

JF: How many...

RF: We were any time afraid for talking.

JF: About how many women, do you think, were able to share in this?

RF: I will tell you, in Skarzysko I don't remember. Just in, Buchenwald I remember, 600, we were in one room. And there I don't remember. Just I will tell you what's this Gyenya did all, because you are ask about the religious life, right?

JF: Yes.

RF: She was, she talked me in to steal something for her. Why? Because, you know, she was working near the oven, right? I was working with this, in crates, like, and the crates got handles on both sides. And the handles were from, from, no, from, a cotton like made.

JF: Like rope?

Tape three, side one:

JF: This is tape three, side one of an interview with Mrs. Rachela Frydman. Could you continue with the story about the strings from the handles?

RF: Oh, because you asked about the religious life.

JF: Yes.

RF: So, the story about Passover is over, right? About the *matzah*.

JF: No, first tell me about...

RF: The strings.

JF: The strings. Yes. No, we talked about the *matzah*, that's right. Tell me about the strings.

RF: The strings she talked me in to take out from the handles from the crates. There was a, no, how it's called...

JF: The...

RF: From what's the handles was made. It's was made like...

JF: The rope?

RF: No, it's not the rope. Was not the rope because was made like how we have sewing.

JF: The threads.

RF: The threads, like from threads was made.[42] So I brought her every Friday two threads from there, from the handles taken out. And, and she brought a little bit oil, because she was working near a oven, worked, and went and oiled everything. And a scrap of some kind of metal, and she was lighting every Friday, she was lighting for us the candles. Every Friday we got the candles.

JF: And these were all the women...

RF: In this barrack.

JF: In your barrack.

RF: Sure. We were just women. The men they were in a different direction from us. And we just stuck the light in the candles till happened that a father, and I told, a father and two sons were hanged on gallows. They made gallows, because they brought home, from also for mending for women the clothes, they brought pieces of string. And they got from somebody a needle, so was one time, oh somebody took a hand on them. We don't know exactly how it happened. But they found by them this thread. And we got, they took us out from the barracks and we went there. We got to see how they are hanging them. They made gallows with trees, with three ropes, and they hanged them all three. And that's was horror. Then we stopped candle light because she was afraid to put me in a danger like that, because I brought every Friday the [thread] for her. So the lighting of the candles star-, stopped. And about, I told the story about, I think the *Pesach* story was before this. I told already about the *matzah*, what we, how she baked *matzah* in camp, and I was sleeping on the *matzah*, and later *Erev Pesach* we

found out that we will have *Pesach*. We don't have *matzah*, so but she gave us everybody a little piece of this broken little pieces. And she made a blessing, and she told us there the story about that we came out in time from Pharoah, and we will come out from here, too. She was a very intelligent woman [unclear].

JF: What kept you going? Religion? As this story tells us. What else kept you going?

RF: Oh just the will to see them go down the drain. I don't think it's the religion, because about religion was a big question this time.

JF: You had a lot of questions?

RF: Yeah, we had very much to ask our, our God what He did. Because when I lost my father, I this time was very disappointed. 'Cause he was so, he was so a good man. He was so a righteous man. And this time I was a little bit, I told, in a way disappointed. Although I never could, I never could go away from religion, because that's was, I was raised like that. And the fact that I taught religion in the classes. Just, was many questions and many time, when my children ask me question in the classes, I was standing up and gave them a very, like a child asked me, "How could happen, Mrs. Frydman, that the Jews went through the Red Sea, and was dry, and when the Egyptian came, the water came back?" I got to explain him in a geographical terms that this was this time, when the water came, and this was the time. I couldn't explain in the way of *nisim* [Heb: miracles], 'cause I by myself didn't believe already this time in *nisim*. And I've had many questions in my classes, where I was standing, now not knowing what to tell them. Because I was not allowed to tell them mine way of thinking, and that the way how it's, they should learn.

JF: Can you tell...

RF: Oh, but I never went away from religion, never. I every time believed that there's something what's protect us. Still I was just, it was moments when I was very much down, especially when my father, when I lost my father.

JF: Can you tell me, then, how you left Skarzysko?

RF: They put out, the night before, I told the story how my friend was singing me a song about the train comes down and we will go, just in a very happy way she did it, 'cause the song is a happy song. And I told that my mother came to my par-, my, my father, just, father never talked about it. Just looked at me and looked and he didn't talk. Just my mother every time did the talking. And she told, "Don't be afraid, my child. You will be alive. Don't be afraid. Go straight, and nothing will happen to you." And the next day, and the time from day and night, because a whole day they were outside, the S.S, and preparing the way how they will load us up there. And when they were loading us on the cattle trains, we were just afraid that we are going to Auschwitz. Because they didn't—and we were not told. We just knew exactly we are born in Poland, knew the geography of Poland, that we are not far from the German border, because we have to pass Chenstohov [Yiddish, Pol: Czestochowa]. And the minute when

we passed Chenstohov, we were very happy because this time we thought, we are not going to Auschwitz. And I told the story about the sugar? I has to repeat it now. When we were loaded to already to the trains, and we were waiting, because they still were not prepared to take us. 'Cause they brought, this time was around the other camps, and they brought from every place this time, that's was the main point where they put us together. Somebody told that they heard a man running outside, because there were men's camps, also working camps. That some men work there runs outside and screaming, "Rachela Frydman, Rachela Frydman!" And my friend went to the door, and she stopped him, and she told that I am there inside. And he got a little bag in his hand, and she told that he should give her. And so he told, "No, I have here sugar, but I want to give it to her." That was my mother's cousin, what's I met in Skarzysko. And he brought us pieces of sugar, and she took because all the people were start screaming there. They were all hungry. They all was cold and hungry. We didn't was had this time maybe, what today is, they didn't give us nothing. And they give this in sugar, so she took and she divided and she left for us. We were six girls keeping together, and that kept us going. She didn't give us even to me she didn't give me one time. She gave me just a little piece to take in my mouth. Because she was sure that if I will get the whole piece, I will eat it and later, also many times, you know what's they saved for me, all the girls? The, how it's called, the cru-, from bread the hard, round...

JF: The crust.

RF: The crust. Every time when they came to work, they got the crust for me because I was the one what's they thought that I will not make it. And they thought they have to keep me alive. And they didn't eat because, they—how much they had—a li-, next to nothing! Oh, but the crust, they were keeping for me, every time, and the sugar also. She gave herself from time to time a little piece. She was holding it special, because she was afraid that the woman will grab from her all, because they were hungry, no, but she gave to everybody a little piece. And, but to me also she gave a little, and every few hours she gave us a little piece. And that kept us going till Buchenwald. We found out when we, they were loading out us, which was in Buchenwald, right, they brought us straight to Buchenwald. There we start to be a number. From this time was not any names. My number was 1142, which means a very young number. We were right in the beginning because people got by 10,000 and, higher numbers. I was 1142. From there they had send us the same day.

JF: How long were you in Buchenwald?

RF: A few hours, just because Buchenwald is a concentration camp just for men.

JF: I see.

RF: And we were brought, we didn't know for what, oh but we were brought for work. So they send us to 16 *Ausserkommando* [satellite camp], Buchenwald. Skar-, what I told, Leipzig-Schönefeld.[43] You wrote down this.

JF: Yes.

RF: Leipzig-Schönefeld. There we worked just in the...

JF: This was how far from Buchenwald?

RF: A few hours, a few hours to Buchenwald this was. And I even don't remember with what they took us there, on the train...

JF: And this was all...

RF: Or was a ship, or...

JF: This was a concentration camp?

RF: Oh yeah, that's is a concentration camp. And we were 16 *Ausserkommando* from on the Buchenwald. I was in Buchenwald.

JF: This was considered part of Buchenwald?

RF: Oh yes. They are all over they got. They couldn't keep in Buchenwald so many people. They got *Ausserkommandos*. So we were already the 16, which means before us came other people which they took to there to the *Ausserkommandos*. And there I described like we were, oh yes, from there they took us right in the shower rooms. Shower rooms they were giving us. They disrobed us. We were naked, and they took a, looked over our bodies, so we didn't hide something or we didn't brought some kind of sickness, I guess they were looking for all over. And they took us to the shower room. The shower room was very big rooms. This was prepared. We thought this is the gas chambers. Really. When we walked in, everybody told goodbye and we, we kissed each other, and we cried and then we went in. Because we didn't know what. We saw just it's steam there inside. They let running hot water and cold water. Hot water and cold water. And later they took us out and they gave to everybody a, not a dress, I told, a...

JF: A slip?

RF: I don't remember, a slip, no. Like I would not wear a slip. A slip, and the slip was the same material what's we later got the dresses. They were made from a material gray and blue.

JF: Gray and blue?

RF: Right. This was *pashart*²¹ we called in Polish, and stripes down.

JF: Gray and blue stripes.

RF: Right. They took us and they were feeding us. They were giving us, compared, like food, we got, they gave us good food. So, right away somebody was there, and told that they will feed us, and they will take us for soap. That's, that's what's going around, that's for sure they would.

JF: They would feed you and then take you and make you into soap.

RF: Soap, right. Because we know exactly that they are making soap. We knew already.

²¹May be *materjawnpasekki* [Pol: stripped cloth]

JF: You knew this.

RF: Mmm hmm [affirmative].

JF: How did you find this out?

RF: I don't know. People were telling us from other concentration camps they came there, because they were shifting people from one place to another. They told us in Buchenwald, they made the soap from people. And they make from the skin umbrellas for lamp. Else Koch was the one what she was there on top, Else Koch was her name. She was also the woman what she was so, she was so brutal like, She, she...

JF: Her name again? Elsa...

RF: Else Koch²²

JF: Koch?

RF: Koch was her name.

JF: And she was...

RF: She was the chief from, for her on top from the women's camp. Yeah, she was Else Koch.

JF: Yes.

RF: So they told, somebody told that she has in her home, she has beautiful lamps with made from skin from woman. For, because when they looked us over we were sure that they are looking who has a nice skin when they brought us in the shower rooms. And, and they gave us food. So we thought, they will make soap and make umbrellas for the lamps. And, oh when we came out from there and they put us back in the barr-, not barracks, was like, houses, was much better like in Skarzysko. Because then in Skarzysko was from wood made, and when the wind blew outside was the wind inside, and there was like houses. I don't know if they were bare houses where they are keeping the materials. I don't know. But in the rooms was already, the *pritsches* were prepared for us, four in a line, and in our room.

JF: You mean the bunks?

RF: The bunks, yeah. And in our bunk was 600 women. And right I told like they shaved their hair, right? And I was one of 600, not sh-, they, they, to-, she told the, *sztubakowa*, [Pol: undetermined meaning] the, the woman, the S.S. what she took care of our, of this place. Because every, every room got a S.S. woman with, and two Polish girls what's they helped out. The Polish girls they were shaving our heads. When I came up in the line, she looked just up from me, up and down and up and down. And she told not to shave my hairs. My hairs were beautiful like up in a—anyway, didn't shave my hair. And I got *tsores* [Yiddish: trouble] from that because they told me if I will comb out the to-, not comb the hair, that they will take care of me. A comb they didn't give. So one of from Czechoslovakia a man made for me, because in the factory we met men, not Jewish men. Just, and all over what they got. This time were already for

²²Ilse Koch, wife of the camp commandant, 'The Bitch of Buchenwald.'

Czechoslovakia men work. We were working with men from Czechoslovakia. They were our, now what's is called? The repair men with machines. When we moved, when we got trouble with the machines, we called on them. Because when we called on the S.S. she told us we did specially, and she is whipping us. Oh, yes, I remind me because I was one time also [unclear]. Got hit over my head. I didn't have nobody, right? I thought and I will forget. I figured out my mind will not work, after everything was, so I took a piece of aluminum.

JF: Aluminum.

RF: Aluminum, and I wrote down on my machine the address of my brother in Israel. His name is Yisroel Frydman, Binyamina. It was Binyamina. And the other address, when I was still home, we got a letter from my youngest brother that he is in *Novosibirskie Blast* [oblast – region Russian] in Russia, and I remembered his address. *Novosibirskie Blast*. So I figured, if I have this true let me remember these two addresses, 'cause I will not. And I wrote these two addresses and the one was a Russian, other is, the man was a Israeli address. [unclear] The S.S. woman saw it.

JF: You wrote this, you scratched it.

RF: I scratched on my machine with a piece of aluminum, and she saw it. She was watching me. I didn't know that she was watching me, because was time when we were, I think was bombing going on. There was bombardment was going on, so this time we were not working. Now, was in times we work I make, like I mentioned before, I was a very fast one. Like today I am slow poke. I couldn't, because my hands couldn't work. So I took a piece of aluminum, and I scratched on the machine the address from my oldest brother in Israel and the address from my youngest brother in Russia. That's was enough. And beside me was sitting a girl to Crakow. Her father was an artist, a painter. And she took and scratched on the machine, I think, a little girl. We made our work so we, she was, and that's the S.S. woman saw. She let us finish. And we were called to the S.S. office. And with a big stick she was hitting over us head. To, the first she took me, because I got an Israeli address and I wrote down in Hebrew. The Russian I wrote down in Polish letters. And she hit me over my head. And there was sitting three S.S. men. And I was telling her the truth. 'Cause she told you have to tell the truth. And I told her the truth and nothing, just the truth. That's that is the address from my oldest brother, because, and his name is Israel. On top of everything. And that is an address from my youngest brother. And she was hurting, and she was hitting me with all her might what she got. And every time when she was hitting, she was hitting right here, not another place she got me, just here.

JF: The back of your neck.

RF: The back of neck she was hitting. And I was standing and telling that that's I'm telling the truth. That's is it. So an S.S. man, for that's I told that the women was worse by the men, hmm? Because this S.S. man told, "This girl tells the truth." He ask where I am working, and I was in a very important part where I was working,

because this time I was working in, no, it, I was working for parts for planes, screws for planes.

JF: The screws?

RF: Screws for planes. And he called in, the S.S., the, my, how it's called, a man what's takes care of the machines, the master? It's in German.

JF: The supervisor?

RF: Yeah, supervisor. He called in the supervisor was, I will tell you something about the supervisor. This supervisor, he was called the, and he was by himself, he was so afraid, more like I. And he asked the S.S. man, and I did understand. I every time make believe that I don't understand what they are talking. And I, and he asked what kind of worker I am. He told him, "Excellent." That I work good, and I'm quiet. He asked him why he didn't see what I am doing. So he told that he goes between many machines. He couldn't see what's every. Oh, but he told that's I'm a good worker. And he turned to her, and told her that she had to let me go back, because I told the truth, and I'm a good worker. So they sent me back. The girl next to me never came back. So I figure we, and she was alive. This girl was killed the day before we were free, set free. She was killed. I, they took her later to work in office for making, prints. She was excellent. Her father was an artist. And she would say, I don't know where she was, where they send her, because she never come back to the place where we were. They send her in another place, because they were afraid that she will tell us what she is doing. I would like to tell a good word for this, for this, what's it's called you told, the master, the...

JF: Supervisor.

RF: Supervisor. He was an older man. He was from Bainmentiday. He was from the high class from Germany. And this time was already very bad. They were running, the Germans were still coming back already. They were not going ahead. And one time he stands from my machine, after this story, and he tells to me, and, he mi-, I talked with him German. And he told me a story like this that's three sons his was killed. I didn't give an answer, oh, yeah, I'm happy, or not. 'Cause I was sad about what he told me. And, he knows how bad they are making out and I feel very good for this. And after that he brought me every day a tiny little sandwich. He never gave me in my hand, never. He put on the machine and he walked away. 'Cause this time was already very bad with them. After that's, maybe, two months later I was set free. And this happened in '45, this story what's I am telling now.

JF: And you were living in this camp and walking.

RF: Every day.

JF: To the factory.

RF: Yeah, I didn't told that I was walking in winter without shoes. I don't know the record. It's was from this time [unclear]. I couldn't walk, and they gave us wooden shoes. And I couldn't walk in the shoes. It was slippery in the snow, was

winter. So I figured out if I will break a leg, I am out from, they will kill me anyway, so I figured out let me walk like that barefooted. Germany is not so cold like Poland, but still was snow, still was winter. So all the girls was still in the factories. Pieces of paper and a piece of string, two piece of string, and I got my foot in this. And this way I was walking, till one time I came back, and somebody was also on the place, I told, was there, I reported from a Polish girl from Cracow. She came there because she was married to a Jew. Oh, but she was taking care of, no, she was a supervisor like from, from clothing, from what we need, we got to go to her. So one time she approached me. She told me, "Little girl," in Polish, "I have for you a pair of shoes. And you will walk by this door. I will stand by and I will put," 'cause she was also afraid that she is giving me. And this time I was very peaceful with the world because I got a pair of shoes with wooden soles. They were Polish, 'cause in Polish was a factory like that. And, I was so happy that I got this shoe and I was just every time afraid, when they looked at us, that they will ask me from where I have the shoes. Now I have to repeat when you told when we got contact with the outside. Or you have it?

JF: No. Could you talk about that please?

RF: Yes. The first thing we got contact with the Russian soldiers, right? Where they were taking, now how it's called, the Russian, and, in war, not people in war...

JF: The prisoners of war.

RF: Prisoners of war. There I look because I every time were like they were bombing this time already Germany. Germany was already bombed this time. And we were very happy with this. We didn't care, oh we will get killed. So they were, the window shades was every time down. And I was every time to one. I got good, good thing over my head also for that for cover one time. I went to the window to look down. And all of a sudden I see a woman in Russian uniform and I say, "You talk what they are here. What's they are doing?" We didn't know exactly. We know just that the bombing is in the morning and in the night. So, later when they, they gave him also the whole equipment like us, the dresses like us, everything. Oh, but they were sent to work in the kitchen. When we found out from them that the Russian front is coming nearer and nearer, that's was the first. If I mix up it's just, later we got, I told, I looked out and we saw the Polish resistance people.[44] Many were in uniform.

JF: These were people from...

RF: From Warsaw.

JF: From Warsaw, from the Polish resistance.

RF: From the Wisla²³. That's was, that's is a river, on the Wis River. They got Polish resistance. And we saw many in the uniform, and many in pajamas. They took them out, they told us later, and we took, and we still we know. We are born in

²³See latter part of endnote #44.

Poland. Well, when we saw the Polish soldiers, we felt like some contact, I don't know, we hated them because they were anti-Semites, oh, but still this time, when we saw them, we were twice happy that they are with us, and they are from Poland [laughs]. And so, this time was the second time when we, and we took from our meager little bread, and we threw it down the window to them. And when we threw down to them, they caught us by that. And that's was winter. That I remember exactly. And I got, washed my dress, and I got dressed, and my hair was wet. And they took us out. What they took, this man, they shoot-, took in the men's barracks, because we never saw there a man. In this place we never saw a man. We saw just the S.S. They took them away and we were called down. And we were staying on our knees with the hand up. Final got dressed and went there and went in a wet hair. That's I remember exactly.

JF: Your dress had been wet from the shower...

RF: ...yeah, because I went in the shower to wash this way. I never got a way to wash, just to get dressed to work and standing under the shower. They wants from us to be cleaner but they never gave us a clean thing, just the only dress what's I was wearing for the year-and-a-half, and I didn't have nothing more. So, and they killed this time a few women of us. They were screaming what, and wondered that we gave this bread, and how much we could already give, well next to nothing. And that's was in Skarzysko. And I don't know you got the introduction or what's all, when they brought...

JF: No, this was in Leipzig.

RF: This was already in Leipzig.

JF: Leipzig.

RF: All right, you got the introduction where how they when they brought us for work to the factory, how they introduced us that, that was we were nothing but prostitutes, and burglars, and we are brought from the jails. That's what they told us. That's what they...

JF: This is how they introduced you?

RF: Yeah.

JF: To the factory.

RF: Right. And it that's after what's we were working so hard so many years. They introduced us like this way.

JF: Were there any other religious experiences that you had in Leipzig?

RF: No. In Leipzig. Not any.

JF: No.

RF: I couldn't. Yes! We got, the S.S. man was screaming and laughing in our face, that, where is, where is your Moses? How they talked. They asked, "Where is Moses? Why he is not helping you?" That's we know that we are Jews. We know all around that we are suffering *just* because we are Jews. Was not another reason.

JF: Were there any times when you got medical help at the camp in Leipzig?

RF: No.

JF: No.

RF: If we would got sick, they would sh-, we were afraid to tell them that we are sick or something. No, never, never.

JF: Now you were there until 1945?

RF: Mmm hmm [affirmative]. Yeah, not so fast they treat us. 1945 was three. They took us one day, they came. They took us out from our eating quarters, where we lived. And, they mar-, they, they took us outside like the way we are going to work. And there we saw in thousands and thousands of people already outside, men and women. From all over they brought to one place. And they, took us on a march. They told that we are going to Czechoslovakia. And there was saying there Czechoslovakia is there a gas chamber. Oh but they didn't took us far. They took us till Dresnow.

JF: To where?

RF: Dresnow. That's a town in Germany. And in Dresnow we saw a skeleton of the town. Was already bombed when we went through this town. Which makes us so happy when we saw that's is everything in ashes there. And they brought us from Dresnow, yeah, in Dresnow, when we walked out from Dresnow, why we knew exactly it's Dresnow? Because one S.S. woman was crying, that's was her town. "My Dresnow!" she was screaming. And, we know this time that's that is Dresnow.

JF: This is the same as Dresden in Germany?

RF: Mmm, Dresden, Dresden.

JF: Dresnow.

RF: Dresden maybe, maybe. Yeah. We find out that's that the town was already bombed till the ground. Oh, but we were, and the smoke was going down the woods. Walking through they never had another way. They took us to a big field, I remember also, and they stopped us there in this field. And there came out, they gave us, everyone got there a cooked potato. Came out, I don't know here is for sure, also that big trucks with steaming potatoes they were. And they were giving us one potato. Everybody got a potato, which was a great thing, that we got a potato. And from there they brought us till the Elbe. The Elbe is the big river where I was freed, the Elbe, Elbe.

JF: How were you freed?

RF: On the Elbe, they brought us to the Elbe, you know where a river is, there is a, there is wet around. How it's called, *dinyiszhino* [phonetic].

JF: The bank...

RF: Yeah.

JF: Of the river?

RF: Yeah. Bank of river. They put us there. And there we saw that the German soldiers making a bridge across, it's a pontoon bridge, from, do you know what...

Tape three, side two:

JF: This is tape three, side two of an interview with Mrs. Rachela Frydman.

RF: [tape off then on] -walk anymore, so my friend approached him, a German soldier, to tell that's houses around what they couldn't take me in, inside. So, the German soldier went to a woman where right on the Elbe, and he told her for sure the story, 'cause we couldn't hear what she was talking about. And we just heard that she is not shielding prostitutes [unclear] and she don't want let us in in her home.

JF: She...

RF: They was, they were already losing the war! They were already on the brink where the Russians were behind them, and they still called us prostitutes, so, that's why we in jail. They heard exactly what's, no for sure they were writing in the paper about it. They brought people to work. Anyway, I was freed there.

JF: How were you freed? By whom?

RF: With the Russians.

JF: The Russians freed you.

RF: The Russians. The Russian freed me. And,

JF: You were on the banks of the river at this point?

RF: Right. Right.

JF: And the Russians came...

RF: And the Russian came, and the Russian came in the night when we saw the first soldiers, like, like, like an angel on a white horse. And they told us that they knew exactly that's we are there. They are not bombing this place because they saw, oh, from, they got, the things what they could see who is there. That's is just women sitting on, because the army was, the Russian, the German army was right behind us! Where we were freed, we saw in the thousands, they were on the horses, this part from the soldiers, the Germans, dead, lying around us. And they were not bombing them. They were saving the one which was near us because they saw us. They knew that we are there. When we are freed there, that's was on the way when they were going to Berlin, was not after the war. This was the time when they went to Berlin. They went there. And...

JF: This was on their way to Berlin?

RF: Oh, on the way, right. From the other side was the American soldiers, the other side from the Elbe, the American [telephone ringing] army came. And in this side was the Russian army. And we were freed by the Russian. Oh, but the Russian were on their way to, I don't know, the telephone, the Russian were on their way to, Berlin, so, we were left. What's they did with us, I even couldn't remind me what's they did with us. I was, I, I was not walking, that I remember. And they took me in a home. And, and, the Russian army, [pause] I...

JF: You were taken into a German home?

RF: N-, yes. In a home nearby because I couldn't walk anymore. And the

Russian army was all over around us.

JF: Who was living in this home?

RF: Nobody was. They ran away.

JF: And who was with...

RF: All the Germans.

JF: Who was with you in the home?

RF: My friends. Just my friend walked out and there was the, how it's called, the General Staff was making their [unclear] in this place. So she walked in there to the Russian and she asked about help for me. Because they didn't give a damn even for us. Even they didn't give a damn for us.

JF: The Russians?

RF: No, because they were going ahead, and it's was war. We were in middle of the road. Just was lucky that she was a girl, she was much older from me. She was my teacher, so she was much older from me. She knew exactly good Russian, too. And she turned to one of the captains, 'cause she saw he is wearing like a sigma [insignia] that he's a doctor. She knew it, and she told that's she has there a girl and she is very sick. She couldn't walk, and she couldn't talk. And that was a Jew, from Kiev, a doctor. And he came to see me. And he transferred me to the hospital, how it's called, the field hospital?

JF: The field hospital.

RF: Right, and he came and that's was I told again. He told that I am not Jewish. And I told, "[unclear], I am not Jewish?" Because he told everybody is Jewish from the girls, just not me. I told, "I don't know why everybody tells me." I was told by the Germans that I am not Jewish. I am told now by you I'm not Jewish.

JF: Who told you you were not Jewish? The Russ-...

RF: That doctor.

JF: The doctor.

RF: The Russian doctor told me. Oh, but he gave me all kinds of help. And later he was a very nice person. And he talked to me and he told me, "If you will tell me some thing, what's your parents doing on *Shabbes*, on Saturday." And I told him that's my, my father goes to the synagogue, and that, he was a son from a rabbi, and he knew Hebrew. And he asked me what this is. I think he pointed to the wall, and I told him *kir* [Heb: wall]. Later he pointed to a, oh he was so good, he was so nice. We told, "You don't look at all Jewish." And he gave me all kind of help. And I showed him the house where they didn't want let us in, even when they knew that the Russians were around. He told that he burned the house down there. Nobody was in the house.

JF: Wait...

RF: Because when before the Russian, came my friend turned to a soldier, the German soldier were already in great panic there. They were running. And she told that I couldn't walk anymore. And I am lying in stre-, and she would like us to get in a home

bed, because there were no home around. And she told us we are lousy prostitutes, that she doesn't want us to have there. And later I pointed the house, that there was a house there on the way. Nobody was in the house. And he told the soldier, and they burned down the house.

JF: Who didn't let you go into the house?

RF: The German woman.

JF: The woman.

RF: Still the Germans was there this time. You understand? She didn't let us in. We begged her about a little water for me. She didn't want to give.

JF: The person who was living in the house at that time.

RF: Right. Right. She didn't want to give us a little water.

JF: So after the Germans had fled, they went and burned the house down.

RF: Right. The Russians they kept, the doctor told the soldiers to burn down the house. "Let them not have a place to come back," he told them. He didn't got place this time to letting people what she saw how we are, so he told them, "Burn down this house." Well, you think that this time we were free? We were still wasn't free, because the war were going on this time. They told us we are in a very dangerous spot. And we are in front with the field hospital I was.

JF: And how was your medical treatment in the field hospital?

RF: They were great to me. They gave me everything. That's true. But they didn't care about us. I mean the Jewish people. He brought me many captains, many people what in high ranks, and he introduced me that's in the Russian *Natsozimblatchka* [phonetic]. This is one of ours. They came, and just they looked me up and they walked out. But they were in the army. This time the war was going on, when I was freed. Still the war was on.

JF: How long were you in the field hospital?

RF: Oh, I have, I was I think by, oh they went ahead later by 10 days.

JF: You were liberated in what month of 1945?

RF: In April.

JF: In April.

RF: That's my month of liberation.

JF: And you were in the field hospital for about 10 days.

RF: Right.

JF: And were you better by the time you left there?

RF: I was not so much better because I couldn't walk. My whole dream was when I will walk again. And I was dreaming when I could walk through the, through the road, there just on the other side. I would like to walk so far. And they were still with me. He left us all kind of medication for me when they left us. And we were there, I think two weeks more. And still was the war. We hear that they lost the war, and that Berlin went down, and we were still staying there because we couldn't walk. Not me

just, they also were very...

JF: What was wrong with your foot?

RF: I couldn't walk. I had some of the circulation...

JF: The circulation.

RF: And the fact is that I am today not good off because my hands are not good. The circulation in the hands is very bad because I was hit here.

JF: Your hands are bad because of the injuries that you received to the back of your neck, from the beatings.

RF: Right. Right.

JF: Your legs, the circulation...

RF: Came back over years and years. Took me years. I was in Germany in many hospitals. I was in a hospital in Heidelberg. They pulled me of my teeth because I was full of pus. I don't have, I was this time, how much 27 years. They got to pull all of my teeth.

JF: You were in hospitals after this time.

RF: Oh yeah.

JF: You went into hospitals.

RF: When I came, right, right. Because after we just start walking. You know what we did? We went through the [unclear], and the other side were the Americans. We didn't want to stay here. We went to the other side, and the American took care of us. And I went from one hospital to the other. I remember when they pulled my teeth. In Heidelberg, I went to Heidelberg, to pull all my teeth because they couldn't pull them even. I have trouble till today. In a few places they got to cut the teeth, not to pull, 'cause was, the gums they were full of pus. And they cut me till to my bones they cut mine gums.

JF: Who were running these hospitals?

RF: The American army. The American army was already running the hospitals. And there I was for more like a hospital out and a hospital in. I was more like a year in the hospitals.

JF: And who was paying for your treatment at this time, who, where were you getting support?

RF: Right we got the treatment from the UNRAA.²⁴ Yes, from the UNRAA we got the treatment.

JF: And then after your stay in the hospitals, what happened?

RF: I came to a camp.

JF: A DP camp?

RF: Right.

JF: Where was this?

²⁴United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration

RF: Hess Lichtenau, by Kassel.

JF: Can you spell that for me?

RF: Hess, H-E-S-S, Hess, L-I-T-H, C-H, oh, a T before, Litch, no, no, L-I-C-H-T-E-N-O-W, Lichtenow, Hess Lichtenow²⁵.

JF: And this was in...

RF: By Kassel. That's the town by Kassel. We were in Hess Lichtenau. There I was, oh there was, I get a ride. I was back in Poland for a year, a year, few weeks, I went to see, no before I went back, before Hess Lichtenau. I went back when I was free there, and I start walking and was going, the Poles were going back to Poland, so I, I wanted to know if somebody is alive from my parents. Maybe, I just dreamed about it. Anyway, I didn't have nobody. Later was the pogrom in Kielce. I meant again a pogrom, in Poland, a pogrom after the war.

JF: You were in Kielce?

RF: No, no, I was in Łódź. Just I heard about the pogrom. We went back to Germany, then I came to Hess Lichtenau.

JF: You were only in Łódź for a short period of time.

RF: Oh sure. I just went to see, oh, I, and there I found out that my sister is alive. That's was the, because I was looking who is alive, and a man met me on the street, and he knew my father, and he was screaming that my sister is alive, and she's in Bergen-Belsen. She was freed in Bergen-Belsen. So I went fast back to Germany, and there she was already on her way to Israel. I don't never. I met her a few years later when I went the first time to Israel.

JF: So at that point you went to the DP camp.

RF: Mmm hmm [affirmative].

JF: And you were there for how long?

RF: Till 19-, I came here in 1951.

JF: You were in the DP camp all that time?

RF: Let me just think. No, one year I was in, Pra-. I was in a pr-, yeah, in, *oysh*, I forgot the place. I'm not, and, let's see, and now was the first camp, in, now I forgot the place where I was. [Tape goes off then on] Being I could run around. I write work for somebody.

JF: This was in...

RF: Mmm...

JF: The DP camp?

RF: Yes. In Hess Lichtenau I am talking about Hess Lichtenau and Kassel. I was working with director Schwartz. He was director from all the, the UNRAA. And I was working with the people what they were coming down this time, people coming back from Russia, the Jews, were coming back, and I remember we got so many people from

²⁵Actually, Hessich-Lichtenau.

Rumania, from other countries. Also from Poland they came there. This was in Hess Lichtenau. I lived in Hess Lichtenau, although I was on the premises till just real private, because my husband got before the war business in Germany, and he got back his business, so we lived there privately.

JF: You...

RF: So I could afford to help other people.

JF: You married in Germany?

RF: I married in Poland. I met my husband in Poland. When I came back to Poland...

JF: For that few weeks.

RF: Looking for family, yes.

JF: Yes.

RF: My husband was my, my husband was my first cousin. And I met him.

JF: I see. And you married him in Poland.

RF: In Poland. And we went back right to Germany.

JF: And your husband's name?

RF: C-H-I-L, Chil, the same, Frydman, same, 'cause we got the same spelling.

JF: I see.

RF: Yeah.

JF: So Frydman was your name, and was also...

RF: Mmm hmm [affirmative]. I never changed my name.

JF: Was also your husband's name.

RF: I never changed my name. And got, this is my second husband.

JF: Yes.

RF: I met in Poland. He came, everybody came back, and, not everybody, many people came back to look for family. And, I came back. I didn't met nobody. Just again my friend. We met my friend's sister, and we were living with her. And, I went for work. I was a, I never knew them. I was a seamstress. [Laughs] I never knew what's to do. Just somebody took me in and I was helping out. I, I have to tell a very interesting point what's I got in Poland. My friends, what's I was with them in concentration camp, we met her sister. She was already in Poland. She got already an apartment. She took us in.

JF: This is in Łódź?

RF: That's was in Łódź, yes. And I, I didn't met nobody, and I didn't have nothing, and I didn't know what to do. I was running around, but never. And I went back to Piotrków from where I am come. Piotrków Trybunalski. And there I didn't met nobody. So when I came back, I met a girl what she was together also in concentration camp. Her sister was already established. She was a seamstress in Łódź. So she told her, if you don't. And I was ashamed, because the woman what she took us in, she was feeding us and I said, "Why she has to feed me?" I, I, and I didn't have very much.

“Still don’t worry.” She knew me from the home. “Don’t worry. You will get something. You will see.” And there I find out that’s I have a sister, right? And the sister is in Bergen-Belsen. She was freed in Bergen-Belsen. And there I found the woman, a girl also what’s I met her in concentration camp. And she told me the story that’s her sister is established. And I told her the story I don’t know where to go. I don’t know what to do. And there was a committee. And they were giving out, they were helping us.

JF: Who was this committee?

RF: A Jewish committee was. And they gave me a ticket to go to Piotrków. That’s was I got, ‘cause I didn’t have any money.

JF: This was the committee in Łódź?

RF: The Jewish committee. Right. And I came back still to Łódź and she told me, “Y’know, if you want you could come any time to my sister. You could help her. She is working. You will know how to finish dress. How to do something.” And I went to her, ‘cause I never believed it. What’s I got to do, a girl alone by herself and what’s I will do? And, where I am lived in the place also everything with between friends. In the place where I lived, one time going back from the girl where I was working with her, I was very much depressed. I didn’t know what’s to do and what’s, where I will go, what’s. Where I have to go? So I knew that I have a brother in Israel. So I ask on the committee how I could get in contact with my brother, because I don’t have here nobody. This time was not any contact with Israel. They told, they, we will be a week through. We will establish a contact for you with your brother. Because they saw that I am so distressed and so upset. And this time I went home. She paid me so much that I got enough for the transportation from her place to the other place, ‘cause she by herself didn’t have money. And when I walked down from the street car, you know, in the same street when I got to walk to my friend where I lived, was one side was homes where I lived, right? The other home, the other side, was the Russian embassy, because the Russian occupied Poland. And there was not allowed to walk. Oh, but I walked with my head down, and I didn’t see where I am walking, and for sure I went the wrong way. And all of a sudden I hear a Russian, just a scream, “Stop!” I, I, I, just, raised my head and I got right a, a, a gun across my head, right against me. And I figured, “Oh where I am?” It was still like what I am in concentration camp there because I saw a gun. And I start screaming, wild screaming, because I start so screaming when I saw the gun, I start again. And there come voice from upstairs, and a woman from the window. She was observing me, how I am walking. And that’s was a Jewish girl. She was a wife from one of the, he was a mayor or a captain from the Russian army. And she was living there. And she had start screaming at *him*. “Stop! Don’t shoot! Don’t shoot!” in Russian. “Stop!” And I was so wild screaming that’s, that, that’s, I don’t know what’s I am doing. And she came running down. And I remember she took me in her arms. She knew exactly who I am. And I couldn’t talk. And she told me that she saw that I am going,

and there were posters not to go there. Just, I just walked. I walked down and I walked just in this direction. And the man, it was not his fault. It was my fault, because he was on his duty there. And she took me upstairs, and she couldn't quiet me down. I couldn't quiet down. I want. I saw already that I am safe, and I just couldn't quiet down. And I was screaming and crying. So she took, and she called the doctor because she got in place. She was from the captain's wife. She called the doctor. He gave me a needle. And I fell asleep. And when I woke up, she told me, "Don't worry. You are in good hand." And she told me that she is also from Kiecle, that she's Jewish. She did understand that I just walked because I didn't look where I am walking. I was so despondent. I didn't know where to go. It was not my home. I didn't have to home to walk. So she start asking me where I lived and what I do. And I told her the story that I am just by a friend across the street. I saw where I am, and that she took me in. This was eight days and I came back from concentration camp and she took me in. She told, "Don't worry, how much food just you want, and the whole family where you live." Just my, she called a soldier, and she told to send in food and I was in a dress in an old, and I didn't have nothing. And she told us, so I came with my friend, that is my friend's sister. She was supporting us for almost the whole time what's I was in Poland till I met my husband. Even when I met my husband, she asked my husband to go around with her. She was a stranger in Łódź and we knew exactly. And she was giving us everything what's we need. That's was the first thing when I got all the support from. And I just remember the minute when she took me, when she met me in the street. I was so violent screaming.

JF: Mmm.

RF: I was so was screaming. All of a sudden I see again a gun against me. And I didn't know that I am there on the wrong place. You know, was allowed to walk here, oh but not on this side. And I was walking there. And, later we went back to Germany, went to the pila-, camps.

JF: And then when did you come to the United States?

RF: In '51. Again, I think, in April about the 19.

JF: And you mentioned before that you have a daughter?

RF: Yes.

JF: Who—was your daughter born here?

RF: My daughter was born here. No, mine daughter is born in Germany. She was a year old when I brought her here.

JF: She was born in 1950?

RF: Yes. She's in a high position. She's now working in a good school for, she is a counselor. She has her master's in Education. Her husband's a doctor. She live too much, just, but she just moved out from this house, 'cause she bought a home. And she has a little boy. And that's what's I want to give you the story about, how happy that after so many years a boy was born and his name is Joshua. And I called him Hoviev,

that was the name of the child what's I left from, the, Piotrków. And when I left my father and my sister and the little boy.

JF: This was your nephew?

RF: Was my nephew.

JF: Your nephew was Joshua? And now you, and your grandson...

RF: Yeah mine, and the grandson's name is Josh. He is Josh Yufiv, after my husband. And, my daughter asks me, "Why, Ma, what you are calling him Natush? How is Natush?" Because when I saw a child I called him Natush. So I want just to bring out. You couldn't forget what's happened. This time came back the child. Now the child when she asks me and I told her the story why I am calling him Natush.

JF: You called him Natush?

RF: Yeah. Because the name of...

JF: Which was the name of the other child.

RF: Other child.

JF: And your grandson's name is Josh.

RF: Josh. Right. Right. And many times, I don't know, I am wrong, because many times, even now I call him with this name. It still comes me back the name of the child what's I was between till the last minute. He was a nice little boy. Okay. C'mon here and I...

JF: Thank you.

Historical endnotes for Rachela Frydman by Dr. Michael Steinlauf.

General Note: In ‘correcting’ the interviewee’s geography, I am simply making it conform with current Polish spelling. Assuming that transcriptions and transliterations of her speech are accurate, the original names in the interview are probably worth preserving along with the ‘official’ spellings, because they are a part of the vanished Jewish geography of Poland.

1. Two Zloczews: The other Zloczew, better known in Jewish history, is located east of Lvov, in what in the nineteenth century was eastern Galicia, a province of Austro-Hungary. In the interwar period, it was located in southeastern Poland, after the war in the Ukrainian SST, which is now Ukraine.
2. Województwo łódzkie: Łódź voivodship or province.
3. by Łódź: surrounding Łódź
4. Lututów: located 14 km SW of Zloczew
5. near the German border: as it existed in the interwar period. The Polish-German border today is considerably further west.
6. Beth Jacob: schools for girls maintained by Agudat Yisrael, the Orthodox Jewish political party in interwar Poland.
7. It is not clear what proportion of the afternoon was devoted to Polish studies. Speaking of another Tarbut school, she says that Hebrew was used in the morning and Polish in the afternoon. This suggests more Polish instruction than was often the case in Tarbut schools.
8. a Polish partner: There was no law against Jews owning land in interwar Poland. But it was common for Jews to take on Polish partners who would act as the official owners in order to avoid various bureaucratic difficulties.
9. Łask: about 30 kms SW of Łódź
10. Lututów: see above, she says I gave the town, that is, she already mentioned it.
11. The point is that he spent so much money on education for his daughters (a modern idea) that people worried that he wouldn’t have money left for dowries, without which, in traditional society, it was very difficult to find a husband.
12. *avoo viudi di doi beresh kridmen*: consult an elderly Ashkenazi Jew to determine the meaning
13. Din Torah: civil case before a rabbinical court
14. *Kehilla*: the local Jewish community, represented by a council. Every town in interwar Poland with a Jewish population had an officially recognized *Kehilla* to oversee communal/religious needs.

15. *Mizrachi*: the small Orthodox Zionist party in interwar Poland. Most Orthodox Jews were strongly opposed to Zionism; this is why she says he was not an Orthodox, and the rabbis were against [Zionism], meaning the great majority of rabbis.
16. three hours ...six hours: a dispute over how much time should pass before one can eat dairy after meat. Her mother was obviously more strictly observant.
17. The school was the only school in the town: This was a Polish public school; her school was a private school run by Zionists.
18. I was very young at the time: She is doubtless referring to the period just after World War I, when there was a wave of anti-Jewish violence throughout the newly created Polish state. She would have been four or five years old at the time.
19. That is, she also attended the local public secondary school [*gymnasium*] for a year, presumably, after she graduated from the Tarbut school.
20. the universities...: in the 1930s the universities became hotbeds of antisemitism, including a campaign to set a quota on the number of Jewish students, or to expel them altogether.
21. Her insistence that she was raised between [among] Poles seems to conflict with her statement that most of her close friends were Jews.
22. Directly through the Polish government?: The officials who her father's parents bribed would have been Russian, since there was no Polish government prior to 1918. This was common practice in tsarist times. But the following story about her husband does refer to the Polish government. It is not clear whether the reference to war is to World War I or other wars and actions immediately following, such as the Polish-Soviet War. During World War I there was no Polish state, and the Polish Army was volunteer.
23. Orthodox Jews did not, as a rule, serve in the Polish Army.
24. Like every second Jew, that is, like every other Jew.
25. Piotrków Trybunański: often written Piotrków Tryb., a large town SE of Łódź.
26. *Hashomer Hatzair* was an extreme leftist Zionist youth group, rather far from her father's Mizrachi politics.
27. Many *gymnasiums* turned away graduates of Jewish schools for being 'unprepared.' If she means Beth Jacobs schools, it is unclear why these Orthodox schools for women would support Tarbut schools.
28. *Der Moment*, published in Warsaw from 1910 to 1939, was one of the two pillars of the Yiddish daily press. It usually supported Zionism, but it was not, as she claims, an advocate of Orthodoxy.
29. 'Eh' is an ayin ... She is explaining how in Yiddish certain letters of the

alphabet become vowels, unlike in Hebrew where all the letters are consonants.

30. In 1939, Jews with Polish citizenship were expelled from Germany beginning in October 1938. The Polish government refused to accept them, whereupon thousands were lodged in a no man's land just inside the Polish border.
31. Piotrków Trybunański; available in the Gratz College library, by the way, is a new memorial book in English about this town, which includes material on the Holocaust. Ben Giladi (ed.), a Tale of One City: Piotrków Trybunański (New York, 1991). Most of this material is translated from the memorial book: Piotrków Trybunański ve-ha-seviva (Tel Aviv, 1965), in Hebrew, Yiddish, and English, which contains over 1,200 double-columned pages. It includes a good English summary of the Holocaust in Piotrków. The Jewish community in Piotrków was 400 years old; before the war, it numbered about 15,000 Jews out of a total population of 50,000. This population included, besides Poles and Jews, some 12,000 Germans.
32. *Spółka*: meaning partnership. But indicating some kind of collective enterprise in Communist Poland.
33. The ghetto in Piotrków Trybunański, established in October 1939, was the first in occupied Poland.
34. 100,000 is greatly exaggerated. The Jewish population of Piotrków in 1939, as noted above, was about 15,000. On the eve of the ghetto's liquidation, in October 1942, there were some 25,000 Jews. This figure included thousands of Jewish residents of outlying towns and villages who had been driven into the ghetto.
35. Beginning in 1941, the Germans assigned Jews to work in local glass works and in a woodworking factory.
36. After the Germans invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, they organized Ukrainian volunteer detachments that were sent to Poland to work in ghettos and death camps. According to the Piotrków memorial book, Ukrainians first appeared just prior to the liquidation of the ghetto in October 1942.
37. The reference is to spotted typhus (transmitted by lice), epidemics which raged in many ghettos. The typhus epidemic in Piotrków claimed 1,000 victims in 1942.
38. It belonged to the Third Reich... We heard... they're all killed.: Unlike Warsaw and Piotrków, which were located in the Generalgouvernement, Łódź was located in the western part of Poland which the Germans called Wartheland, and which they annexed to the Reich. Her information was quite inaccurate; Łódź was the last ghetto to be liquidated in October 1944.
39. In the synagogue: These recollections probably relate to a German 'Action'

which commenced on November 30, 1942 and ended December 19. Some 20,000 Jews had already been deported, primarily to Treblinka, in October. About 2,000 slave laborers and thousands of 'illegals' still remained, and many of the latter were rounded up, locked in the synagogue for many days, and subjected to horrendous torments. Most were then driven to nearby woods and shot.

40. Skarzysko-Kamienna: about 70 km SE of Piotrków, site of a labor camp established July 1944 for Jews from Poland and all over Europe. The prisoners worked in an ammunition factory and made uniforms and boots.
41. She must mean March 1943.
42. The threads were probably linen or sisal.
43. Leipzig-Schönefeld: subcamp of Buchenwald.
44. Polish resistance: in October 1944, the Nazis deported survivors of defeated Polish uprising in Warsaw to camps in Germany. Warsaw is on the Wisła (English: Vistula) River.