

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

DANIEL GOLDSMITH

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Edith Millman
Date: February 6, 1995

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DG - Daniel Goldsmith [interviewee]

EM - Edith Millman [interviewer]

Date: February 6, 1995

Tape one, side one:

EM: Edith Millman interviewing Mr. Daniel Goldsmith. Today is February 6, 1995. Mr. Goldsmith, could you tell me when and where you were born, and a little bit about your childhood and about your family?

DG: OK I was born in Antwerp on December 11, 1931 to my parents who were originally from Poland. My father was Chaim Goldschmidt. He was from Rymanov, Poland. And my mother was Ruchel Goldschmidt, originally, her maiden name was Münzer, and she was from Przemyszlany, Poland. They both met in Antwerp and got married and that's where they lived.

EM: Could you tell me when they migrated to Antwerp?

DG: My mother migrated to Antwerp in 1930, my father migrated to Antwerp in 1928. My father had his own business. My father was a plumber, and he had his own business. He lived all the years that--of my childhood, we lived on one street in three different houses but on the same street, which was Korte Kiebit Straat [see pgs. 7&8] in Antwerp. That was in the Jewish section of Antwerp.

EM: Was your father and mother religious?

DG: Yes. My father and my mother were both Orthodox, modern Orthodox. My father didn't have the beard, but he was *Shomer Shabbes*. And my parents kept a kosher home, as well as they sent me to a *yeshiva*. Because I went to a *yeshiva* by the name of *Tachkemoni*, which I believe is still in existence today.

EM: Was this in addition to your regular school?

DG: No. No, I had both my secular and my religious education at the same school. It was an all day *yeshiva*.

EM: Oh. Do you know if your parents had to pay for you to go to the *yeshiva*?

DG: Yes, they paid. My parents I would say basically were middle class people, so they had to pay for that, yes.

EM: Did you have any siblings?

DG: Yes, in December, 1939, the 26th of December, 1939, my sister was born. Actually, in between my sister and I my mother had a miscarriage. But my sister was born at that particular time. So when the war started, it had already started, you know when she was born, because we look at the war having started in September, 1939.

EM: Tell me, did your parents have contact with their family, if any, in Poland?

DG: Yes. As a matter of fact, when I was small, my mother made a trip back to Poland to visit both my father's family and her own family. And I, as a matter of fact, I

have some pictures, you know, that show me being in Poland. And they were constantly in touch with them.

EM: Were any other members of your parents in Antwerp?

DG: No. My mother and my father were alone in Antwerp. My father's family--most of my father's family was here in the United States. He had one sister--my father was one of nine children--so my father, one of his sisters, and his younger brother were the only ones that were left. And his younger brother had just also gone to the United States. So there were just my father and his sister that were left. The sister was left in Poland.

EM: OK Could you tell me a little bit about antisemitism in Belgium, if any, as you were growing up?

DG: I have to say that having gone to a *yeshiva*, and having lived in a Jewish area, OK, for the few--in my younger years--remember I was only nine years old--you know, when my father got taken, or actually eight years old when the war started. I encountered very little antisemitism. Even though the street that we lived on was a half Jewish and a half non-Jewish, the people were basically nice to us, so that I did not have any problems. And of course, all my friends were, most of my friends I should say, you know, were Jewish.

EM: Were Jewish, oh.

DG: So I didn't encounter as a little boy.

EM: So you didn't have much contact with non-Jewish...

DG: Right.

EM: ...frie-, people.

DG: Right.

EM: How about your parents? Do you think that they had much contact with non-Jews?

DG: Yes, they did. They--my father being a plumber, OK, did work in a lot of the non-Jewish houses. My mother was very friendly with the non-Jewish people, you know, on our street. So they did have quite a bit of contact with them.

EM: OK Do you happen to know if your parents were Zionists?

DG: Yes. My parents were very strong Zionists. Matter of fact that's why, that's where I got my feeling for Zionism, you know, from them.

EM: From there.

DG: Yes.

EM: Were there any Zionist organization that would take children as young as you, you know, to group meetings or so?

DG: No, I was actually--we talked about that, you know, but I really was too young, you know, to go to attend any of those meetings.

EM: OK What was the language of instruction in the *yeshiva*?

DG: The language of instruction in the *yeshiva* was Flemish for the secular course and Yiddish for the Jewish instructions.

EM: So there was secular instruction...

DG: Yes.

EM: ...at the same time.

DG: At the same time, yes. Of course we learned Hebrew in the *yeshiva*.

EM: Yeah. How--do you know how old you were when you started school?

DG: Six.

EM: You were six. What are your earliest memories of the war?

DG: The earliest memories of the war actually were the discussions that my father and mother had, because living in Antwerp—Antwerp at that particular time was a very big port of exit, and many, many people that my mother and my father knew from home, meaning from Poland, came through Antwerp to leave, basically, for the United States.

EM: Do you know if your father tried to get an exit visa for...

DG: Yes, yes, my father, as a matter of fact, tried very, very hard, you know, to get his family that was over here, you know, to send him an exit visa. And the family apparently did not take it as serious as my father took it, OK? Because they said, you know, “Why do you want to come over here? You know, you have a successful business over there.” Of course, you know, in retrospect you can also say that nobody knew what was going to happen of course, you know. It was just another war so to speak at that particular time. Although my parents sensed that it was much more than that because of the stories, you know, that people would tell, you know, coming through, of what was happening in Germany and what was happening in Poland.

EM: Right. What happened when the Germans invaded Belgium?

DG: When the Germans invaded Belgium, we fled, like most of the Belgians actually did. We fled south. We went towards Ostend, you know, which is the seashore, you know, of Belgium, and then south towards France.

EM: Right.

DG: But the war in Belgium lasted a very short time. It was only two weeks. And so we were in Calais, which is in France, near the Belgian border, when the Germans caught up with us. And when that happened, there was nothing else that we could do except go back to Antwerp. And the ironic part of the whole thing is that it was at that particular time, just before the Germans invaded Belgium, that finally my father received the papers to go to the United States. By that time it was too late already, because the last ship had left and he couldn't leave anymore.

EM: So he did get the papers...

DG: Eventually.

EM: But it, eventually.

DG: It was too late.

EM: When you came back to Amsterdam, did you go ba-...

DG: Antwerp.

EM: To Antwerp, I'm sorry, did you go back to your own apartment, to your own house?

DG: Yes. Yes, we went back to the house, because that was like in 1940. And actually life basically went back to normal when we got back, meaning my father went back to work and I went back to school and everything was OK, you know, for a few months. And then after that little by little the sanctions started. You know we had heard...

EM: The what?

DG: Sanctions.

EM: Sanctions against the...

DG: Against the Jews. In other words we had curfews...

EM: This, the curfew was different for you than for the Belgians? Or was there no cur-...

DG: It was only for the Jews.

EM: There was no curfew...

DG: For the Belgians.

EM: ...for the...

DG: Yes, it was only for the Jews. Then they started closing down the schools. Teachers couldn't teach. Doctors, you know, couldn't practice anymore. My father couldn't do any work anymore. We had to wear the yellow star.

EM: You had the yellow star, right?

DG: Yes.

EM: It was on the chest and on the...

DG: It was on the chest on the jacket, yes.

EM: Jacket. On the jacket.

DG: Yeah, the yellow st-, we had to wear the yellow star. We couldn't go to the theater anymore, you know. All the civil rights were taken away, you know, little by little. And this went on until August, 1942 when my father received a notice to report to the train station for--I mean to go to a labor camp.

EM: Was this the first time that you or your parents heard about labor camps or about people being taken to labor camps?

DG: It, it--yes. This was not the first time in other words that my parents had heard, I mean, that there were labor camps. But this was the first time, I mean, that you know, he heard, you know, that they were going to take Jews away, you know, to labor camps in northern France.

EM: In northern France.

DG: Yes. In other words he knew he was going to France.

EM: Oh, he knew that he was going to, he had to go to France.

DG: To France. My father and my mother...

EM: Were there any people, Jewish people, shipped out from Antwerp at that time, I mean to, young people?

DG: Oh yes. Oh yes. They had thousands of them that were shipped out. There were, if I'm not mistaken, a couple of transports.

EM: That were going where?

DG: That were going to, supposedly, to France.

EM: Oh. Were these mostly young people? Were they men and women or just, do you know?

DG: Men.

EM: Only men.

DG: Men. I don't know about how young they were, but that they were men.

EM: Men, men.

DG: My mother and my father had discussed, you know, because at that particular time, you know, a lot of people were starting to think about hiding, leaving the country by any which way, you know, and my father and my mother talked about it saying, well, he was in very good health. My father was, I'm trying to remember he was like 40 years old, 42 years old. He was in good health. He said: "You know, the war has already been on for over two years, you know." He says, "How much longer can it last, you know?" He says, "I--you know, I think I'll go, you know, and I'll be back shortly. It's not gonna last very long." That, I have to say that at that particular time, we had not heard about concentration camps.

EM: And that was in 1942 or '43?

DG: Two. We had not heard about concentration camps. We had heard about labor camps but not the concentration camps. That's the reason, you know, why my father actually decided to go. We went to the train station...

EM: Do you remember what month it was?

DG: August.

EM: It was in August.

DG: August, 1942. August-Sept-...

EM: Right after, yeah.

DG: August-September, 1942.

EM: Yeah, OK OK

DG: We went to the train station. The--this is the time that I really remember quite vividly. [pause; tape off then on]

EM: We have to interrupt for a while. Mr. Goldsmith is overcome by emotion. [tape off then on]

DG: We went to this train station. My mother, my father, and my little sister and I. The train station in Antwerp is a huge, I mean huge, train station, a covered train station. And there were thousands and thousands of people, same as us, you know, saying good-bye. And my father said to me, he says, "You're now the man in the house." [weeping; tape off then on] Anyway, he said, "You're the man of the house now." And he says, "You'll have to take care of your mother and your sister until I come back." And I told him

I would. And that was the last time I saw my father. We heard from him a little bit later on. We received a postcard which said that he was in France near Boulogne and that he was OK.

EM: And that's all it said, that card?

DG: That's all it said. I'll show you the card. And we went back to the house. We tried to live the normal life as possible, which was difficult, because, you've got to remember my sister was a year-and-a-half old. And we were not used to all these restrictions, you know, which had been imposed.

EM: How about financially since your father couldn't work much the previous year? Were you OK financially at that time?

DG: Well, my mother was strapped financially, because--but we did have some money. And what she wound up doing is as she needed some money she would sell some of my father's tools, things like that, things that were precious. She had some sort of a foresight, I don't know, it's like a sixth sense. She figured, you know, things were gonna go wrong. And so she went across the street. We had this non-Jewish family that lived and had a grocery store. And she gave them our pictures. She asked them to hold onto our pictures. And she went to a couple of other neighbors and gave them our silverware to hold onto that, and gave to some other neighbors dishes, and to some other neighbors some of my father's tools so that they would be saved. Not everybody would have everything at the same time. And when my father would come back, you know, it would be enough, you know, that we could start over, over again.

EM: Could you tell me if at that time the Germans would come into Jewish homes and rob their houses or...

DG: Well, they did more than that, because very shortly after my father left, there was a raid on our street. Now we lived in the Korte Kiebit Straat. It was a...

EM: Korte, what do you, how do you spell it or how could you...

DG: Korte Kiebit Straat? It's...

EM: Korte Kiebits-...

DG: Korte, which is, it means "little bird" I believe. It's a kiebit bird. Korte, or "short" it's actually. K-O-R-T-E, and Kiebit, K-I-E-B-I-T...

EM: OK

DG: Straat is "street."

EM: Oh, is street.

DG: It was actually row homes. They were all attached. You know, two stories high.

EM: Right.

DG: And what happened very shortly after that was in the middle of the night sudden--we heard commotion. We, our house was #34, which was not at the end of the street. It was like towards, somewhat in the middle of the street. So they, the Germans had blocked off both ends of the street. And what we heard a commotion was the yelling and

the screaming that was going on, you know, when they came and they just took people right out of their beds.

EM: But you said it was a little mixed neighborhood.

DG: Yes.

EM: Did they take the Belgians too? Or just...

DG: No.

EM: The Jews?

DG: No, they didn't, because that's when the true colors showed up.

EM: Mmm hmm.

DG: Several of the non-Jews showed the Germans where the Jews lived. And when the--where the non-Jews lived, and they helped them. With that, I don't know, my mother was, was a woman, you know, that had a good head and was also very heroic. She quickly took my sister and I and took us upstairs. We lived on the--it's like the steps going up and we lived on the first floor. There was a second floor above us where, where there was a skylight, you know, that you could push up. She got a ladder and we climbed up onto the roof, you know, through the skylight. She got rid of, she knew, she pushed the ladder away. And we went and we hid. And the roof was slightly tilted, slightly tilted. And the front had a stone wall. And we hid...

EM: Behind that...

DG: Behind that wall, stone wall. It was very difficult of course because my sister was a little baby, you know, and you know, my mother was saying, "Shh, be quiet and don't make any noises or anything like that." In the meanwhile we could see and we could hear all the yelling and screaming that was going on of all the people that were being dragged out of their houses. And we saw some of them being beaten up. And we could finally hear, you know, where they came to our house. Because they rang the bell and when nothing happened over there they bashed in the doors, you know, and they came running through the house. And they didn't see any, of course we weren't there. They did go upstairs but when the skylight opened up, you know, we were here. The pitch was this way. The skylight opened up this way. And they just looked around and they didn't see anything, fortunately for us.

EM: So they didn't take the ladder to go up there or anything like that?

DG: They did take the ladder...

EM: They did take the ladder?

DG: But they didn't go onto the roof. They just poked their heads through and shown their flashlights. But they didn't see us.

EM: So that was at night you said.

DG: At night, yeah.

EM: At night, at night.

DG: It was three, about 3:00 in the morning. So, they left. And as soon as my mother made sure, you know, that it was safe to get back into the house, you know, we

went back inside. And it was an absolute mess. They ransacked the whole house. There was no furniture that was left, you know, that wasn't broken or anything like that. I mean it was a real mess. Because, we heard the whole commotion, you know, but we just didn't know what was happening. And we couldn't get out, because they had barricaded the door. You know, they had nailed the whole front shut.

EM: Of the building.

DG: Of the...

EM: Of the apar-...

DG: The door, the door of the house was nailed shut, because they had smashed the door in. And they nailed it shut. Now we lived behind the railroad tracks. Remember I mentioned to you it's a very, very--at that point we did not live too far from the train station. So at that point, you know, you have all the different tracks, you know, that are coming and so it's a very wide...

EM: Area?

DG: Area. And our house was behind the railroad tracks and we had the house and the little backyard where we had the outhouse, because we didn't have any indoor plumbing at that particular time, although we did have water. But we didn't have a bathroom. So we used to take, you know, in the olden days, my mother had this big, I don't know what you call it, the pan, a big pan or the vat, whatever it is, and she used to boil the water, you know, and...

EM: And that's how...

DG: We would sit in it, you know, and that's how we would get our baths. But anyway, when everything was quiet, you know, she told us not to make any sounds, you know, and not to do anything. And my mother left, at night. And my mother had already at that particular time...

EM: What, did she get out through the window or...

DG: She went out through the back yard.

EM: Oh.

DG: The back yard which was not, you know, the front was...

EM: Was shut.

DG: Shut, you know, but the back was not. And she was able, I don't know how in the world she managed to climb up, you know, onto the railroad tracks. But she did that and she was able to contact the underground. My mother had made, already had started, had enough sense to make contact with the Belgian underground.

EM: Were these gentile Belgians, or were they Jews or mixed?

DG: Some, some of them were Jewish.

EM: Some of, oh.

DG: Some of them were Jewish. That's how she made contact with them. And what she was able to do, was able to make arrangements to place my sister and I in a

convent. That was the first place, while she, you know, the convent was away, you know, from Antwerp, and it would be a safe place. So that's where we went.

EM: Who brought you to the convent? Did...

DG: My mother did.

EM: Yeah.

DG: My mother did, and, and the, like I said the underground people helped her. Because they, they were the ones that brought the car.

EM: You went by car?

DG: We went by car. And all this was done at night.

EM: Was that many days after that action that they had in--when they got all the people?

DG: Yeah, it...

EM: Was it several days later?

DG: Several days later, yeah. Several days later.

EM: But up to that time you stayed in the apartment?

DG: In the house.

EM: In the house.

DG: Yeah. And we, we ate whatever food, you know, was left, you know, I mean that they didn't break or anything. Because they just left a mess. I'm talking about, you know, everything was splattered on the floor, you know. Everything was broken.

EM: Do you happen to know how many people were taken that day, approximately?

DG: No.

EM: Were there any Jews left in...

DG: Yes. There...

EM: Antwerp after that?

DG: Yeah, yes, there were.

EM: Oh.

DG: But they were like, sudden raids. They--I think there were several of these raids, you know, that happened, one after another.

EM: Do you know where these people were taken?

DG: No, I don't know. I don't know.

EM: But they were all taken families. I mean women and children.

DG: It was everybody.

EM: Everybody.

DG: Everybody was taken out. Everybody was taken out. And what hurt, what hurt were these non-Jewish people that helped. Not, now I have to say this not everybody did. The people I was telling you about, the grocery store and all that, those people were wonderful people, and they did not help the Germans at all. They were decent people. But there were other people, there was one in particular I remember. And he was a policeman,

that family that lived there. And they were going around, you know, showing the Germans, you know, where the Jews lived. So, we went to that convent and we didn't stay there very long. We only stayed there for a couple of months.

EM: Did the people in the convent knew that you were Jewish, that these were Jewish children?

DG: There were very few people that knew. It was the Mother Superior. The Mother Superior knew, and a few nuns knew.

EM: Were there many children in that convent?

DG: Yes, there were a lot of children.

EM: Mostly, many Jewish children do you know?

DG: No, there weren't...

EM: Or you don't know?

DG: Yes. There were some Jewish children, because what happened was in December suddenly my mother shows up and takes us out of there and as well and warned...

EM: That was in, excuse me, that was in 1942, right?

DG: December, 1942.

EM: 1942. OK

DG: December, 1942. My mother is, has been told by the underground that the Germans found out that there were Jews being hidden there and they were going to raid...

EM: The convent.

DG: The convent.

EM: So she warned the Mother Superior. All the Jewish children were taken out of there. And so now my mother had the problem, you know, of being responsible for us again, you know, and then doing something. So she hid us, you know, with some Christian people that she knew. But we couldn't stay there for very long.

DG: Tell me, these non-Jewish people that took you in, were they being paid or did they do it for nothing?

EM: They did it for nothing. The people that my mother...

Tape one, side two:

EM: This is tape one, side two, interview with Mr. Daniel Goldsmith, Edith Millman interviewing.

DG: So again I'll repeat. The people that my mother dealt with, they did it without any pay. They were humanitarian people.

EM: Was there any punishment if they had been caught?

DG: Absolutely. It would have been, it was death.

EM: Was the dea-...

DG: Death.

EM: Did they threaten with death or...

DG: Absolutely. Because they, part of the edicts, you know, which came out, you know, when the, all the restrictions were coming, after the raids, OK, the edict came out you know that, you know, you can not deal with a Jew. You can not hide a Jew, you know, on the punishment of death. So, through them, my mother decided, through them meaning the Belgian underground, my mother decided to split my sister and I up. And so what she wound up doing is placing my sister with a private Christian family. And myself, she wound up placing me in an orphanage. The orphanage was run by a Father Cornelius, who had several orphanages. He was a very good man, but he also was a Catholic man.

EM: It wasn't a monastery or anything like that.

DG: No.

EM: It was an orphanage run...

DG: It was an orphanage for boys. Orphanage for boys, where the first orphanage where they took me, you know, which was in Weelde, you know, was actually a very nice place because...

EM: You, you're talking about the convent now? Where was the convent?

DG: No.

EM: Where is the...

DG: I don't know where the convent was. That's one thing I don't know.

EM: You don't remember.

DG: I don't remember that. And neither did my mother. Otherwise I would have made a point...

EM: Con-...

DG: You know, to find out. But she just couldn't remember where it was.

EM: Mmm hmm. So...

DG: But...

EM: So then you went to an orphanage. And...

DG: And then I went to an orphanage, right. And this orphanage, like I said was in Weelde.

EM: How do you spell that?

DG: That's W-E-E-L-D-E.

EM: OK. OK.

DG: Weelde. And like I said, you know, it was run by Father Cornelius, oh, not Cornelius. Cornelissen, Cornelissen.

EM: Cornelissen.

DG: C-O-R-N-E-L-I-S-S-E-N. Cornelissen. And it was a very nice place. I'm talking about the place, you know, where you learned farming, you know, where you were out in the open air, where you raised animals, particularly pigs. Things like that, you learned, you learned quite a bit over there. One thing I have to say is that he also was a Catholic priest, you know, and he tried very hard to convert me.

EM: Mmm hmm.

DG: But I would not convert. Because with--I always had with me a *siddur* [Hebrew prayer book]. This was the one thing that I always had with me, a *siddur*. And he was not successful, you know, in converting me. However, he had to make sure, you know, that I was not conspicuous, you know, with the other children.

EM: Right.

DG: OK, because he was the only one that knew that I was Jewish. No one else knew.

EM: Do you know if you were the only Jewish child? Or do you think there were...

DG: In that orphanage, I think I was. There was a second orphanage which I know I wasn't. And I'll explain that to you later on. The--what he did, you know, is he made me go, you know, into Catholic school, like with the other children.

EM: Mmm hmm.

DG: And that kind of made things, you know, a lot easier. But he wasn't, he didn't want, you know, to leave things alone because he wasn't too sure, you know, if I would be found out or what, you know. So he moved me. After a while he moved me to the other orphanage, which was in Mechelen. That particular orphanage...

EM: He was also in charge? I mean he...

DG: Yeah, he was in charge.

EM: He had connection with...

DG: He had...

EM: Both orphanages?

DG: Yeah. That one, you know, however, I didn't know it at that particular time but I found out later on that there were more Jewish children there. And there, not only did I go to Catholic school, but I went to church. I became an altar boy. I learned everything about Catholicism. And, oh...

EM: What was the name of that orphanage, do you remember? The second orphanage. Or do you know where it was?

DG: In, I only know the name of the orphanage was in Mechelen.

EM: In Mech-...

DG: Mechelen. It's spelled M-E-C-H-E-L-E-N.

EM: OK.

DG: But I don't remember exactly the name of it per se.

EM: OK, if it doesn't come...

DG: But that was an orphanage in Mechelen where--and by the way, what he also did in order to make things a lot more, let's say right for the outside world, is he created false baptismal papers for me. This is, again, he was trying to get them legitimately by converting me. But since I didn't, you know, he finally did agree, you know, to make the false baptismal pa-, and also changed my name. And my name at that--when I was in the orphanage, was Willie Peters, which is a typical Belgian...

EM: Willie.

DG: Willie Peters, a typical Belgian name. In there, like I said, everything--I went to school--and everything, you know, seemed to be basically normal. Now we're talking already about, you know, going from, you know, in the first orphanage it was in 1943, OK? Now we're talking about the end of 1943 is when he put me in the other orphanage. And now we're talking about the beginning of 1944.

EM: So that that time you were about 13 years old?

DG: No, 12.

EM: 12.

DG: 12.

EM: 12, OK.

DG: 12 years old. Because I was born in December.

EM: Oh, I see, OK.

DG: OK, of the year, so I was 12 years old. And then everything was coming along okay until one day suddenly the Germans showed up, under the clear blue sky. And what they did is they gathered all the boys--it was a very simple thing for them to do--and they made everybody undress. And everybody that was Jewish was circumcised.

EM: And the Belgian usually don't circumcise?

DG: No.

EM: They're not circumcised.

DG: They're not circumcised. There was one other little boy that had a problem because he did have an operation on his penis, but it was not a circumcision. But they took him anyway, you know, because they weren't sure, you know. But, here we were, you know, all the Jewish kids, even though we didn't know by ourselves, you know, that we were Jewish, amongst ourselves. But the Jewish kids were circumcised. And nothing helped. The papers didn't help, you know, the name didn't help. All the witnesses didn't help. And nothing helped. So they took us to prison. And...

EM: How many children were with you, do you remember?

DG: Six.

EM: Six boys.

DG: Six boys. They took us to prison and over there, you know, they tried to, you know, to find out, you know, if we knew more, you know. There was questioning going on. By that time, by the way, it was May...

EM: Of '44?

DG: May of '44.

EM: '44.

DG: May '44. And none of us knew, you know. So they had no use for us anymore. And so what happened was, you know, they put us on a train. And they put--but, in the prison, you know, I met other children. I mean it wasn't just us, you know, there were other children that were there. They put us on a train. And we started going, we didn't know where we were going. But there was this one young boy, you know, who was older than we were, you know, who was a real fighter. And he says, "You know, we have to escape from the train." And that's what we did. We escaped from the train. Twenty, about twenty children, you know, were able to leave...

EM: Was it a regular train or was it one of the cattle car trains?

DG: Yeah, one of those cattle cars.

EM: Cattle, a cattle car train.

DG: And...

EM: How did you escape? How did you do it?

DG: He did it by, I don't know where he got hold from, we got a hold of a piece of iron. And he was able to, to--now, the other thing that I want to say, even though this was a train, you know, it was apparently, apparently it was not as well guarded as you would--some of the other trains were, because, I don't know for what reason. But whatever it was it wasn't as well guarded, so that he was able to take the metal piece that he had with him and break the piece of wood enough, you know, for us to slide through.

EM: Well was the train moving or no?

DG: Yeah. But what he did is he waited, you know, for when the train was slowing down at a curve.

EM: Yeah.

DG: And then it's when he said, "Go!" So that's how we escaped. Now, once we all got back together again, because we all got, you know...

EM: They jumped out at...

DG: We jumped at different places. We all got back together again. And the first thing that we did is, again, two things. It happened at night, OK? And fortunately for us, we were near a group of trees. It was not a forest per se, you know, but certainly a group of trees, you know, where we were able, you know, to get in there and hide. But we didn't know where we were. We didn't know where we were. So we decided, you know, to hide during the day and at night, you know, to, like a couple of us, you know, older ones, you know, would go out and try to find out, you know, where we were. And try, we couldn't

talk to anybody, but at least, you know, if you could see a sign, you know, or something like that.

EM: Were you still in Belgium? In...

DG: Yeah, we were still in Belgium. And what we wound up doing, once we found out we were in Belgium, the oldest boy went to a church. I mean it was very, very risky, you know, but we felt, you know, we had no other choice. Went to a church, spoke to the father over there, and we hit it lucky. He took us in, and what he did is he placed every one of us with a Christian family, but nobody knew where anybody was. And the other Christian families didn't know that there were other children, you know, in town, being hidden. Nobody knew. Nobody knew, only the priest. And I was placed with this one family, Monsieur and Madame Botier. And what they did is they hid me in the attic. One of the good things about this, though, was that--I couldn't show my face, of course, you know, I couldn't see or hear anything--was that they had a, again, this is one of these little villages, you know, where all the houses are attached. So you have long, deep gardens, you know, they had. So I was able to at least go out at night because there was no light. And I had to do it very quietly. And I spent some time outside at night. But during the day I was up in the attic. People were very, very kind to me. They were older people. They had two daughters. At that particular time one was 18; I believe the other one was about 20. And they kept me there until we got liberated. Now remember, I'm in Belgium, OK? So we got liberated in September, 1944. Remember, June is when the invasion started, you know...

EM: [unclear].

DG: And we got liberated in September, 1944. And I even have a couple of pictures I brought with me. They're not very good pictures but that was the liberation of the town. And, OK, let me regress a little bit, OK? My mother knew where I was.

EM: How...

DG: But she also found out that, through the underground, of course. You know, she knew the priest, you know, and she knew through the underground, you know, where I was. But she also found out from the underground that I had been captured. So she started looking for me, because she didn't know where I was. And my mother was in a--looking for me through another priest, a wonderful, wonderful man by the name of Father André. And this is in the city of Namur, which is also in Belgium. Just a side note: Father André was recognized as a Righteous Gentile. [pause; tape off then on] He was recognized as a Righteous Gentile and his picture is one of the pictures that are on the United States Holocaust Museum. And of course his picture, I have a picture of him, you know, when he was much younger.

EM: Right.

DG: But now he's passed away since. But he's much older...

EM: So, he must have been in touch with the underground...

DG: Yes he was.

EM: At the time.

DG: And he saved a lot of Jewish people. He was a wonderful, wonderful person. Here's another person, you know, he didn't take any money. And he helped a lot of Jews after the war also. Anyway, my mother was looking for me. And she was in a city in Namur. And there was an air raid, an Allied air raid. And my mother got caught in that air raid. And she lost a leg in the air raid. As a matter of fact, she was the only person that survived in that building. But she almost died because she was bleeding, you know, and her leg had been severed from her. And they took her to the hospital. And so when--this happened just before the liberation. And after we got liberated, Monsieur and Madame Botier, you know, they got in touch, you know, with the underground and they were trying to locate my mother. And they finally found my mother in the hospital. And I went to see her. And I almost didn't recognize her. She aged twenty years. I mean she was white as a sheet and her hair was gray. And of course she was in terrible shape, you know. But eventually, you know, everything worked out OK and she came out of it.

EM: Tell me, all this time was she on false papers? Or how did she go about, you know, who was hiding her or [unclear]...

DG: She was, all this time, I mean, she was actually working with the, with the Belgian underground. She had false papers also. She was caught--I can't believe this--four times, and escaped four times. She was just absolutely heroic. And all this, I have to tell you this, all this was because of the light at the end of the tunnel, which basically was the hope, you know, that my father would come back, you know. We would be able, you know, to start a family again and be a family again. Later on she told me if she had known my father had been killed she wouldn't have done all this. And I believe her. I believe her. So, she moved around. She was never in one place, you know, for very long. She moved around a lot.

EM: Tell me, now, tell me about, well, first of all, what happened to you later?

DG: Oh, after...

EM: So you were liberated when, in '44?

DG: In September, 1944. And then very shortly after that the--I forgot the, it's a French committee, you know, for, you know, that helps Jewish children--went ahead and started collecting Jewish children from the Christian homes, and to try to bring them back together again, to try to reunite them with a, you know, with whatever family there would be later on, OK, and also to try to start a new life. I mean, after all, all these children, you know, missed several years, you know, of their childhood. So we were first put in a place called *Hommes de la-bas*, which again was a *chateau*.

EM: Was that in France or in...

DG: No, no.

EM: Belgium. In Belgium?

DG: This is always in Belgium. *Hommes de la-bas* was in Belgium, which was a *chateau*. Actually it was a big *chateau*, because half of the *chateau*, I'll never forget this, was occupied by us, and the other half was occupied by American troops. And I remember

very vividly Thanksgiving 1944, because we had never heard, you know, of Thanksgiving. It was the first time we saw white bread, you know, and how you celebrate and how the Americans were celebrating the...

EM: Thanksgiving.

DG: The Thanksgiving. And little by little, you know, we, they were bringing us together.

EM: But at that time you knew that your mother was alive. You were in touch with your mother at that time?

DG: Yes. At that time I knew my mother was alive and also that my mother couldn't take care of me, you know. But so...

EM: Right.

DG: You know, because she was in the hospital for a very, very long time, a very long time. It was not only, the reason she was in the hospital for a long time was not only because she had lost a tremendous amount of blood, and that's how close she was to death, but she had to regain her strength. And then she wound up having, literally having a peg leg, because she had a very, very short stump left, you know. She didn't have an awful lot of her leg left. She had a very short stump left and it would have been very difficult, you know, for her, you know, to learn how to walk, because of the short stump. So they kept her in the hospital for a long time. Anyway, after they got us, you know, from the *Hommes de la-bas*, we stayed there for a few months and they started bringing in other children. Now these were children now that were starting to come in, you know, from Holland, from Germany, from Czechoslovakia, from Hungary, from Yugoslavia. These children actually were, this is why, what I mean by displaced persons camp, OK? Because it was not the same thing as they had in Germany but this was strictly for children. But these children knew for a fact, you know, they had lost their families. There was no place for them else to go. So, once we were a fairly large group, then they transferred us to another place, which was this place *Aische En Refail*, OK?

EM: How do you spell that?

DG: *Aische En Refail*, it's three words. It's *Aische*, A-I-S-C-H-E, *En*, E-N...

EM: Yeah.

DG: *Refail*, I believe it's R-E-F-A-I-L.

EM: OK.

DG: You know, *Aische En Refail*. And that was a house, a fairly decent large house in which they took all of us children, OK? This is the place actually, it was in the country, it was on top of a hill. It had a beautiful view of the surrounding, you know, countryside. And this is the place where we started to learn how to live again. It was run, you know, by a doctor and his wife. And we started to learn...

EM: Were they Belgian or French, do you know?

DG: No, they were Belgian, Belgian Jews.

EM: Belgian.

DG: Belgian Jews. Where we learned the basics of life so to speak, again. They separated us in groups of, in different groups in different ages, you know. We started learning things again. At the same token, at the...

EM: The same...

DG: At the same time, I should say, the Palestinians, Jews, the *Haganah*, actually, sent people over to help us learn Hebrew, and to start learning, you know, what is called *Hachsharah*, which means, you know, to learn, work, you know, in the fields, you know, and agriculture and things like that.

EM: So were children being taken out from there through the *Aliyah Bet*, through the illegal *Aliyah* [immigration to Palestine], to go...

DG: Some of them wound up in the illegal *Aliyah*, yeah, eventually. I didn't see anybody go, OK? But some of them did wind up, because most of these children wound up in Israel. You know, they did...

EM: Right.

DG: A lot of them wound up in Cyprus, until they finally got to Israel. How I know that is really because the correspondence I used to have with them, you know, after the war. Unfortunately a lot of the correspondence got lost, but I do have some pictures so I can show you that. We had the pleasure of seeing the Jewish Brigade. I don't know whether you're aware but the Jewish Brigade, you know, was the Palestinian, you know, Jewish soldiers, you know, that fought with the British?

EM: Right, right.

DG: And they came to see us and we went to see them. And so we started living again. I'm talking about we started keeping *Shabbas* again, you know. We started *davening* [saying prayers]. We started learning. We started going places. We started life again, except it was just amongst us none of us had any parents, you know, to go to. We didn't know, you know, what was happening, whether we were going to have any parents. Because believe it or not, for us this was the most difficult part of the war, because now, you live for hope, OK. And now, the end has come. The war end has come, and now you're trying to hope, you know, and making sure, you know, that so-and-so is coming back and so-and-so is coming back. Those were very, very, very difficult times. Most of us never saw our parents again, most of us. In my case, of course, I saw my mother, you know, but my father, you know, didn't come back.

EM: Now tell me about your sister. What happened with your sister?

DG: Oh. My sister was with a Christian family, which was very, very good to her. They really raised her. But there is a sad part to this story, and that is it's, it happened many times over and over again. When you give a family a baby, like remember my sister was a year-and-a-half, almost two years old, and she spends two, two-and-a-half years with them, they become very, very attached to her, which is very, very understandable.

EM: Right.

DG: And so, it was 1945. So you're talking about my sister basically spent three years with them. In 1945, before my mother finally had enough energy and strength, you know, to come out of the hospital, at that point she is looking to claim her child. The problem is, you know, these people didn't want to give her up. It's a tragedy. It's a tragedy, I mean, you know, for the people who actually, you know, treated her very, very nicely. They, she became part of their family. But it's also my mother's child and she wants her back. So, it became a battle. Fortunately, unknown to us, my father's younger brother, the one that I had talked to you about that was the last one to leave home, came to Belgium as an American soldier, and started looking for us. And he found us. He found us just about the time, you know, when my mother was having a hard time, you know, with these people. And so this is my uncle Moishe. And he used his influence as an American and as a, with American authority, you know? And he took my sister away from them. So here is...

EM: Did your sister have a rough time adjusting to your mother?

DG: She, it's, it's yes and no. Yes, because my mother in essence was a stranger to her, you know, at that particular time. But no, because when they took my sister away from them, you know, they put my sister with me. And that was with--in the home that I was in, OK.

EM: Oh, OK

DG: Which is the home that I was telling you about in Porfancar, in *Aische En Refail*. And there she was with other children, you know. And myself, you know, being able, you know, to tell her, you know, who she is, etc., etc., it made things a lot easier.

EM: Mmm hmm.

DG: OK? And after my mother got out of the hospital, she still couldn't take care of us, because she couldn't work. She was in the process, actually, with the help of Father André, in trying to get an artificial leg. So she had a hard time with that. So they transferred us from, now from this home to another home which was the *Hachsharah* of Marquin. It was like a school, again, a very, very large place. This was more religious. It was more Orthodox. And the same thing, it belonged to *B'nai Akiva*. But the point was, you know, to teach us a trade, to teach us how to take care of the land, you know, to prepare us, you know, to go to Palestine.

Tape two, side one:

EM: Edith Millman interviewing Mr. Daniel Goldsmith. Today is February 6, 1995. This is tape two, side one.

DG: OK, so now we're talking about already in 1947. And in Marquin...

EM: How do you spell Marquin?

DG: Marquin is M-A-R-Q-U-I-N, Marquin. In Marquin, you know, I started to learn machine shop and also, you know, agriculture. Also, you know, within that period of time my mother was getting much better. And what I didn't know is that my mother had been in touch, you know, with my father's family. And again, you know, she had been trying, you know, to get us to go to the United States. And sure enough, you know, by the end of 1947, you know, she had gotten all the necessary papers, you know, to go to the States. So, it was actually in 1948, April, 1948, that we immigrated, you know, from Belgium--my mother, my sister and I--to the United States. And we went to New York, you know, where we met my father's family. They're the ones actually that sponsored us. And what they wound up doing, though, you know, was not to our liking, which basically was, here we thought we were going to live as a family. As it turned out, when we got to the States they split us up again. They put my mother with one aunt and uncle and my sister with another aunt and uncle and myself with another aunt and uncle. And...

EM: These were siblings of your father?

DG: Yes. These are, all...

EM: Yeah, all...

DG: Brothers and sisters of my father.

EM: Brothers, sisters, OK

DG: Older brothers and sisters of my father. I had an occasion, you know, to be at a dinner, you know, with all the family, you know, when they wanted to find out from my mother, you know, what happened during the Holocaust. And she told them about it. And I found out right there and then that they didn't understand by my uncle, who was the patriarch of the family, you know, after my mother finished talking. He said, "You know," he said, "you know, we suffered over here also." And my mother said, "In what way?" He says, "We had a Depression over here." And that's when I turned to my mother and I said, "Mom, they don't understand." So, my mother, you know, being an invalid so to speak, because she could hardly walk, I mean it was very difficult for her to walk, she was trying to get the family, you know, to help her, you know, to get established and all that. And they just wouldn't do anything for her. So finally one day, you know, she decided, I mean, enough is enough. We didn't come to the United States, you know, to live in three separate areas. She went to HIAS and they put us up in a hotel while she went and looked for an apartment. And she finally found an apartment, even though it was a cold water flat in Brooklyn, it was good enough for us because we were gonna be together, you know. And

that's what happened. We moved to Brooklyn and from there, you know, my mother became a merrow operator. I don't know if you're familiar with that. You make sweaters...

EM: Yeah.

DG: You have to sew the collars and the sleeves and the rest, the pockets and everything. That's what my mother did. You know she, you know that was all that she could do, really.

EM: Right.

DG: And we lived in Brooklyn. I started being, you know, going back to school, you know, and being educated, and my sister the same thing. And that's how we lived after the war.

EM: OK. Now, when did you, you did get married, correct?

DG: Yes, I got married in 1958.

EM: And to a survivor also?

DG: No, this is, no, I got married to a, an American girl, who came from upstate New York. I met her through somebody from work, and we lived in Brooklyn, you know, also again but in a different section. When my mother got the first apartment we lived in East New York. And when I got married I lived in Brownsville, Brooklyn, near Pennsylvania Avenue. And then about a year later our son was born. Hyman was born. And...

EM: So you have three children you said?

DG: I have three children now, yeah. But the first one was born in Brooklyn. It shows, by the way, it shows, if I may say this, it shows how things are different nowadays. In those days, because it was a boy, we had the *Bris* at the hospital and so she stayed in the hospital for eight days and my son stayed in the hospital for eight days. Nowadays you're out of the hospital in a couple of days. But from there, you know we, the neighborhood was starting to change and we realized, you know, that we couldn't stay there anymore. And at that particular time I was working in Valley Stream, Long Island. So we...

EM: What kind of work did you do?

DG: At that particular time I was working in the electronics industry for the Bulova watch company. They had, in Valley Stream they had an electronics division which was making radios and phonographs for the Bulova watches. And they were using the Bulova watch stores to do their distributing, you know, from there.

EM: So you didn't work in the technical aspect. You worked in the office as a...

DG: Well, at that part-, yeah, at that particular time when I was, what they were doing is they were training me for management. And the way they did it in those days was they made you spend a month, sometimes two months in various different departments so that you know, you know, how each department works, OK? And that's what I was doing at that particular time.

EM: Well...

DG: And that's when we decided to move to North Bellmore where we bought our first house.

EM: OK. Now, your children are married, right?

DG: Yes.

EM: And did they marry Jewish people?

DG: No.

EM: No, they didn't.

DG: None of them married Jewish people.

EM: OK. Do you have grandchildren?

DG: No.

EM: No grandchildren. All right, I think this just about concludes the interview. And, first of all I want to thank you very much. And I just want to ask you if there is anything else that you would like to add to what you already said. Anything that's...[tape off then on]

DG: ...think more about it, you know, I might come up with a few other things. But right now basically that says it all in a nutshell.

EM: There, one thing that I would like to come back to is your experience with the clergy, the Catholic clergy.

DG: Yes.

EM: So and, overall it was a good experience now, mainly?

DG: Absolutely.

EM: Mainly.

DG: Absolutely. All the people that I mentioned to you, they were good people, humanitarians. They did these things even though they knew it would possibly cost their lives. They did it because it was the right thing to do.

EM: OK. Well that's very important...

DG: Yes.

EM: ...for us to know and...

DG: Yes.

EM: To stress. All right, Mr. Goldsmith, thank you very much. We appreciate the interview.

DG: Let me a- [tape off]