HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

SIMONE HOROWITZ

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Sylvia Brockmon
Date: October 19, 1999

Holocaust Oral History Archive
Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

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SH - Simone Horowitz[1] [interviewee]
SB - Sylvia Brockmon [interviewer]
Date: October 19, 1999[2]

Tape one, side one:

SB: Tape one. Simone Horowitz is being interviewed by Sylvia Brockmon on October the 19th, 1999. Simone, please tell me where you were born, and when, and a little bit about your family.

SH: I was born in Paris, on June 10, 1926, and I was born French. My parents already were French by that time, but they were born in Russia. My father came from Minsk and he was born in 1988 [she means 1888], and he left Russia in his teens, after having witnessed the pogroms in Minsk. He went first to Germany, or Switzerland--I don't know which one first--but he spent time in both countries. He didn't like it, and finally came to France, not too long after living in Russia. And he settled outside of Paris, in a suburb called Genevilliers, which is close to Asnières, close to Clichy, just northwest of Paris. My mother was born in Polotsk, which is a small town outside of Leningrad, and she was born in 1898. She, they both, both of my parents came from a large family and a very observant family. But my grandfa--my mother's father, died when she was relatively young. She was still a young teenager, I think. I don't know much, because nobody ever told me much about them, nor about my father's family either. But the family, after this tragedy, my mother's family after this tragedy, left Russia.

SB: You mean the tragedy in Minsk?

SH: No, no, the tragedy of my mother.

SB: Oh, of your, I see, oh, I'm sorry.

SH: Yeah. Left after having lost the father, the breadwinner. And they were a big family, and they, all but three of the children left for first Canada and then USA. And they settled most of them in Detroit at first. My mother, and another younger child--my mother was second from the youngest--lived with the oldest sister in Leningrad. She was already married. And I don't think she had children then, because I know that afterwards she had two children but they were adopted. So she must have been without children for a long time. And there was another sister who, one of the older sisters--there were, I think there were eleven children--so there was another sister who settled in France and had been married to a Frenchman. And that's how my mother got to know my father, through my

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[1]née Zuckermann

[2]Collateral Material files available through the Gratz College Tuttleman Library include: an additional audiotape of Mrs. Horowitz's report about the Reunion of Jewish French Children (France 1999); photocopies of her father's Death Certificate, a document about expropriation of funds from the Zuckermann bank account and a copy of a photograph of a monument erected in Porte-les-Valence (where her father's name is listed).

uncle during the war. And that's a long story which I will tell afterwards when we get to that. That's the story of my parents.

SB: Now…

SH: In a nutshell.

SB: And when your father came to France, what was his profession there?

SH: Oh, he was a metal worker. He was making parts of cars. And usually, he was under contract from a big factory to do, it was a luxurious car, which looked on the outside like the regular Citroen car, which was very popular then before the war. But because it was a luxury car, so some part of it, like we do here in America, was changed. And this is what he was doing. He was changing the shape of fenders and of the, whatever.

SB: The chassis?

SH: No, no, the chassis was the same. But it was all the outside that he was changing--the hood and the trunk, and all the metal parts that could be reworked. This is what he was doing. He had a small plant near our house, and he had his workers working with them. Not too many; it was a small plant. And this is what he was doing. And he did that all for all his life.

SB: Did you have a comfortable life?

SH: Very comfortable. Very middle-aged. I mean…

SB: Middle class.

SH: Middle class, I mean. Middle class! Yes, we did well. We had a car. We, on weekends we were all over, we used to spend summers on the shore, which not everybody did, but a lot of people did. All the middle class in France did in those days.

SB: And what happened once the Nazis began to occupy France? What happened?

SH: Well, we have to go back in '38 when Munich came first. I remember that was the summer and then we were in the, at the shore, with my uncle and my aunt and my parents. And there was a real fear that war would be declared any day. And instead of finishing our vacation, we, they were talking about coming back home. And I was terribly worried that my father would be drafted. And he assured me that he wouldn't be, because he was already too old. He had already fought in the First World War. And so he didn't think that they would bother him again. And so was my uncle. So, at that point, I have to say first that even though my parents were, came from very observant homes, once they left Russia, they left everything behind them. And we had absolutely nothing really Jewish in the house. In fact, until Munich, I didn't even know that I was Jewish.

SB: Really?

SH: Except that I knew we were not like the neighbors, who were Christians. They, not every one of my neighbors used to go to *shul*, to church. But enough of them did for me to ask, "Why didn't we go to church?" And my parents said, "Well, we don't do these things." And they never told us why. So when Munich came, they decided that it was time to tell their children--I have a sister who is two years younger--to tell us where we

came from, and who we were, because my father had some of, kind of a premonition that Munich was only, even though Munich came and passed and the war didn't start for another year, he still had the premonition that something would happen. And it would be better if we knew what might happen, since he knew that already in Germany there were so many anti-Jewish laws. He was afraid that it would come to us too. And we should be prepared. So, when I found out that I was Jewish, you would think that I was shocked. But I was shocked in a pleasant way. Because all of a sudden I realized that we weren't just from nowhere, you know, that we, we knew we had family in Russia, but that we, we had a connection. And so I felt much relieved.

SB: So consequently, since you didn't know that you were Jewish, you didn't suffer any antisemitism before this?

SH: Well there was, no--in our area, in the suburb where we lived, I must say that I had never, ever felt any kind of antisemitism, not even in school, nowhere. I never even heard the, I mean, I could see on the papers; there were some articles. But I wasn't really allowed to read the paper. It was just like a sneaky…

SB: So, your family then didn't have any Jewish friends and any kind…

SH: Oh yes, they had! Oh yes, absolutely! And they talked about it. But they always talked in Russian. And I always kept on hearing things, because in those days I could understand it. So, I wasn't supposed to ask any questions because I wasn't supposed to listen. And, you know, we had a very strict upbringing. And when we weren't allowed to do something, it was best not to do it.

SB: Well, this is interesting, because most families, Jewish families, belonged to Jewish organizations, and…

SH: Well, you have to realize that before the war, and until way after the war, the French Jewish community was not really very strong. There were organizations of foreign Jews, who had come in France because of what happened in eastern Europe.

SB: As refugees.

SH: As refugees. But the French Jews were very clannish, and they were very, they really didn't particularly care for eastern European Jews. And those who came from the, you know, those who came from Germany went together, and the Russian Jews went together. My parents had a whole slew of them, but they--and if they, at that point, they never talked in front of us about anything that happened, in terms of antisemitism. And I know there was plenty, because it was in the papers. Politically it was not a good, a great situation. But it was all still, even though it was in the open, there was no dangers for Jews, just unpleasantness.

SB: And consequently, were you aware that some of the Jews had served in the French Army?

SH: Probably not, because, you know, I was talking to my husband recently about the Dreyfuss case, and I only learned about it way in the middle of the war, when I began to read more and discuss more with my friends. We were with the, you know, we

had a lot of Jewish friends. So, that's when I heard about it, but before, remember, the war started really in '39 and I was 13. So…

SB: When you found out that you were Jewish, what was, aside from your reaction, did you become involved in any Jewish organizations?

SH: There was no way to get involved because my parents didn't get involved and wouldn't let me get involved. There was nothing where we lived anyway. We didn't even have a synagogue in our area. So if you had to do anything, you had to go to Paris. I went to Paris in high school the first year in '39 I think. But I didn't have the time to really belong to anything because it was, you know, it was like almost an hour trip each way. And the school hours were long, so the only thing I got out of it was my friends in high school were mostly Jewish. As a matter of, just, I don't know, but we sort of gathered together and, no, I really didn't have any chance until a few years a couple of years later, when I joined the Jewish Scouts, and I began to learn about Jewish life and Hebrew, and all the things I should have done before. So I did it a little later than everybody else.

SB: Would you say in general, then, that the Jews in France enjoyed a fairly secure life?

SH: Well the, not all of them. Certainly the refugees had a hard time, because they weren't really, they had a hard time finding some sort of work. And certainly by the time the war started in '39, until the occupation of France, which was in June, they managed with whatever they brought with them. And I suppose that there was some form of help from the Jewish community. There was an organization. There was a, in France it was a different kind of organization. The synagogues are all, I think, they're part of a *consistoire*, which is somewhat overlooked by the--not managed by the government, but certainly helped by the government at that point. And they must have had some form of help. But it didn't last very long, because as soon as France was invaded, and that was in June '40, then everybody had to be on their own.

SB: Prior to that time, I mean prior to the occupation by…

SH: By that time, yeah.

SB: Yeah, but by, but prior to the occupation, you would assume, then, that the Jewish had a fairly…

SH: Well the French Jews were pretty well-off. I would say most of them.

SB: I see.

SH: Not everyone, but…

SB: But their life was pretty secure, you would say.

SH: Middle class.

SB: Middle class.

SH: A lot of professionals. A lot of professionals. And some business people. A lot of them. You know, the usual, the furriers and tailors and the shoemakers and the, a lot of them.

SB: I see. Can you tell me specifically how your family's life changed after the Nazi occupation?

SH: Well, quite a bit. When France was invaded, in the middle of June 1940, then like all the Parisians, we were afraid that the Germans would race into the city, because there had been terrible antagonism between Germany and France for generations. So most of the Parisians, who had any kind of means, left Paris on the road. Of course they owned cars. So we found ourselves--first of all we went to my aunt's house outside of Paris, a weekend house. And then when they got closer, and the French Army wasn't fighting, we decided to leave, to go south. And everybody was on the road. And I guess you know the story. There were some Italian planes who strafed the people on the road. We just missed them, because we knew there was a disaster before. We saw a lot of problems on the road and people lying on the side. And then we were as far as we could go. You know, the gas was extremely hard to get and there were stops on the road, on the way all the time, by the French military, who checked all the papers. But they didn't stop really anybody because what could they do with them? So we ended up outside of Lorient, which is Southern Brittany on the coast. We stayed in a farm for about, I would say two to three weeks. And then everything quieted down. The Germans occupied half of France. The Vichy government was put in place. And so we decided to go back to Paris. But very soon after, in '41, I believe at the end of the winter, my uncle, who was a pharmacist, on the outside of Paris, from us, was arrested. And we don't know why, because at that point, we knew that Jews were being arrested. And he was, but he was French, and they weren't arresting French, so they said. But that wasn't so, because there were quite a few Frenchmen who got arrested. And he was put in a prison in Compiègne and from there he was deported to Auschwitz where he died in *Pesach*, 1942. That we found out after the war.

SB: How long ago? It was almost two years after the Nazis occupied France?

SH: No, he was arrested in '41 and he died in '42. It was about six months after he was arrested that he died.

SB: And you were aware that he died?

SH: No, well, we--nobody wanted to believe what happened. There were rumors that they were sending them to Poland. Apparently the official word was that they were deported for work, but--and we believed it. Because we didn't want to believe that there were concentration camps where they were exterminating people. Although at that time it wasn't quite so; they were just killing them, in trucks and in every day. Crematoria were built a little bit later. But we didn't want to believe it. Nobody wanted to believe it. So soon after that my father was afraid to stay home, because there was a rumor that if the men were arrested in a family, they would pick up all the other adult males in the family. So my father decided to go to southern France, which he had to smuggle through the demarcation line. And he was able to do it and he came outside of Lyon, where he lived, in Vénnissieux, which is the south side. And he lived there until July '44, when he was actually, until June '44, where he was arrested, because he was working for the

underground, for the Resistance. He was put in the Montluc prison [Lyon], and in July 8, 1944, they shot him with 31 other hostages. And there is a monument there. And it's in Porte-Les-Valence, it's about an hour away from Lyon. With 31 other hostage. And there's a monument.

SB: How did you become aware?

SH: I only found out after I came back from Auschwitz and I asked the Red Cross to tell me if they had any news of my father. Already, in '44, I had stopped hearing from him, letters. And I was wondering what happened, whether the mail, which was--of course the Allies had invaded France. So by June, and this was by the middle of June, three weeks after, I wasn't hearing from him. So I suspected that the mail was difficult to reach, because of what happened with the front, the new front in France. And I left it at that. So when I was arrested later on, and on the 21st, I think, of July 1944, I was put in Drancy first. Of course I'm getting a little bit ahead of myself. But fate here. I was put into Drancy and there, before we left for Auschwitz, there was a whole bunch of young men, young middle-aged men who came from the Montluc prison, which they, Jews, of course, which they had emptied and sent to Drancy in order to send them to Auschwitz. And when I found out that they were in Lyon, I asked them if they knew about my father. And they look at each other and one was winking. So they said, "No, we never heard of him." And so I suspected something must have happened. But since I was optimistic always in those days, I didn't believe anything happened. I didn't want to believe. And I had, I hoped that nothing had happened. And then I--that's what sustained me during the camp to come back, in order to see my father again.

SB: So your family actually didn't have time to make any plans to emigrate out of France?

SH: Well, they could have, because my mother had a big family in Detroit, and they kept on asking them to come. And they assured my father he wouldn't have any problems working there, here. He had a very marketable skill. But my father didn't like America and he didn't want to come. He hated the materialism of America and he hated the politics, although I can't say that the French politics were any better, if anything. So they didn't really make any plans. So after he was, after he left, my mother, of course was with us, in our house, until they arrested her in 1942. It was after June, after my birthday, so it was some time, either the end of June or beginning of July '42. And they took her because they couldn't find my father. And they didn't take us. And I don't know why, and I never found out why they left us. But they didn't want any children at that point. And she went to Baune La Rolande, which was a collection camp. One of them in 1942 was in a, was what they call it Vel D'hiver, which was an arena in Paris. But she went to Baune La Rolande. And from there she went to Auschwitz. But we--I know she was in Baune La Rolande, because we used to get mail from her, for a little while. And then we didn't hear anything. And we were told that they went to work in eastern Germany, in eastern Europe. Deported in eastern Europe. They didn't call it "deported". They said, "transported". But

we didn't hear from her. And I know they went to Auschwitz, because everybody fromBaune La Rolande was transferred to Auschwitz. But I have never heard, never found anything, don't have any trace of her. We assume she died there. There would be no question she was, I don't think she had the will, nor the ability to fight to survive from '42 until '45.

SB: And where do you think she died?

SH: In Auschwitz.

SB: In Auschwitz.

SH: Everybody went to Auschwitz. Now whether they transported her from Auschwitz to somewhere else, I don't know. I really have no way of knowing. There is no record of, in that particular time of, span of time, of who went to Auschwitz.

SB: So…

SH: None from France.

SB: I see. Can you tell me whether you were aware of any of the Jewish community organizations, at that time, that were involved in trying to save the Jews or to…

SH: Not at that time. Only after we decided, my sister in I, in 1943, I think it was the fall, to leave our house, because it became very hard to live on our own. Financially we weren't badly off. We had some money. So we were able to sustain ourselves. But just to be able to, you know, do our shopping for food, and taking care of the house and worry about all the news and studying, because we went back to, of course we continued our school. And we were--I was just not able to cope with it. So we decided to go to a Jewish home. And I can't tell you how I found out. I'm not sure. I probably, well, no, in a way, no, that's not true. Because even, as I was going to high school, in order to eat my lunch in high school, I would have had to surrender a lot of my food coupons, which I felt was unfair. And then we would be put in a certain section because we were Jews. And I'm not even sure that we were allowed to eat in that high school as Jews. So, what I found out is that not far from my school there was a, sort of a canteen, run by the Jewish community, for anybody who wanted to go there. So that was my first connection with a Jewish organization. And from there I found out that there were some, an organization which took care of those children who were left alone. And when the time came, I got in touch with them, in '43, and I went to one of the homes in Paris, because my school was in Paris and it was more convenient. And my sister went to the, somewhere in the suburb outside of Paris. And we stayed there until we were arrested in 1944.

SB: Did you hear about or in any way know about the experiences of Jews in other countries?

SH: No, really, no, because there was no news, you know. Everything was terribly sanctioned. We knew that terrible things happened, that Jews were disappearing from France. And we knew that the, especially the foreign Jews, we knew, had an extremely difficult time. They had to hide. I knew of people who were hiding because by

then I joined the Jewish Scouts, who were very, very active in the underground. So through them I learned a lot of what happened. Although I didn't want to believe half of what they told us, as always, like everybody else. And I also helped them in many, many ways, because I wasn't look--I didn't really look very Jewish. I don't know if I do today, but I didn't do then. I was blonde. I had light colored eyes. So they asked me to forward some false identification to families who needed it. And that's what I was doing. But they were the ones who provided them. They were printing them or, the best thing to, we didn't know what exactly where it came from, who was involved with it, because they were afraid that if you were caught, you would be able--they would force you to talk. So everything was really undercover. And we didn't know as much as we, I would have liked to know. But I did what they asked me.

SB: During this period and before, did you have to wear the yellow star?

SH: Oh yes, of course, immediately after. Of course as soon as the Germans invaded even the half of France, and then of course, in '42 or '43, I don't remember, when they invaded the rest of France, we were subjected to all the laws, anti-Jewish laws. As a matter of fact, very soon after, and my father was already down in the south so therefore it had to be after '42, after '41, I have a receipt of a withdrawal of half of our funds in the bank, as Jews, that were forwarded to Vichy. I still have the receipt. And I'm still trying to collect. So soon, I hope to, because it's so official that I will soon be able to get something out of it. But it took all these years, they, where they just wouldn't want to do anything, didn't want to recognize it, or even denied it. But very luckily, and I don't know what kind of a miracle that was, but I kept the receipt. And I still have it with me. So there were laws against Jews and we, I mean, we had, for instance, we had some bonds. And this is how we were able to survive. And I had to have some non-Jew, of course, some kind of an accountant, to negotiate those bonds for me in order to get some money. But we couldn't do that. It was absolutely forbidden. This was all done in the black market. So that's how we were able to survive. So the laws were very strict, and of course you couldn't do work and you couldn't--we had curfew. I was wearing the star but when I wanted to go out, later, after the curfew, which was 8:00 at night, I would wear a jacket without a star. And of course I took a big chance, because there was always some kind of a collecting of people, or raffling[3] of people. I don't remember how you say that, but where they would just check your identification. And once when I was eating in that community lunchroom, which by the way was very good for the war--it was probably one of the best places you could eat during the war--there was a check of identification. But I had nothing to worry at that point. I had the right identification. I was French, and I had my star, so, but I remember a woman jumped out of the window. And we were on the second or third floor, and she managed to escape that way. So we knew they were serious about checking identification, and taking away all the foreigners. And this was done by the French, by the way, under the Vichy command. I suppose they were forced by the Nazis to do it.

[3]*Ruffia*, sudden round up of Jews by Germans.

SB: But how about the general population of the French? How did they react to this?

SH: Well, you have to know that the French, roughly, 55, 50% of the French, were right-wingers, which is Nazi sympathizers. The other half were totally anti-Nazi, and many of them fought. So, it depended where you were. In my area, where I lived, we happened to be in an anti-Nazi area. They--so, I didn't feel threatened as such. But we were always aware that--and I must say also that my neighbors really helped us. They never, never touched anything in our house, including after we left, all the way until after the war. When I came back, everything was intact. They didn't touch, they didn't do, and as a matter of fact, they watched over the house. So, I had a very unusual, we lived in a very unusual street area, or whatever you call it. Because they knew we were Jewish. We weren't, you know, my parents couldn't hide it. We were so different. And we lived a little bit differently. Nobody had a car around us. But nobody was envious. My father was very nice to them, and they were very nice to us. So, I must say I was very lucky. Because I had a lot of friends who lived in Paris in buildings where the minute they left their apartment everything was taken. And the apartment was taken. They couldn't even recover it after the war. So I know those things existed, but I was lucky. These things, I didn't have any of that.

SB: Was, your sister was how many years younger?

SH: Two years younger than me.

SB: And did she go along with you in all of these things that you were doing?

SH: Well, she had very little choice. She was younger. She certainly was a little more, very mature anyway. She was a favorite of my father, and of course not being with him was very hard for her. And of course when she found out after the war--well, I'll talk about it later--that he had died, it had a devastating effect on her and she never recovered from it since. So she went along with me, and we sort of supported each other at that point. Of course we had a hard time, because we didn't get along too well.

SB: And you said before that you were working in the underground…

SH: Yeah, well, in my own way.

SB: And that you delivered…

SH: I delivered false papers to the families.

SB: Was your sister also involved?

SH: No, not at all. No, no, because we lived in different places. She lived in a suburban, one of the homes for the children in a suburb, near Versailles, so that's quite a distance. So, no, she was too young to do it anyway. And, I mean, she lived in a Jewish home, but I don't know how much Jewish life they had in the home. In the one where I was, it was very Jewish. We had Friday night service with a young man who had gone to *yeshiva*, who was, had a good voice, and had services. And there were some courses in Hebrew. There were some courses in Jewish history in that home. It was very nice. For me, it was great. This was just what I was looking for.

SB: And it really gave you a feeling of Jewishness that you didn't have before.

SH: Oh, absolutely! Yeah, and I was looking for it, and I found it there, which was one of the reasons I was so happy. And I told my father about it, and he was very happy that I did, because he realized he had made a big mistake not to tell us earlier or give us some form of Jewish life.

SB: O.K. So when were you arrested and taken to Auschwitz? Under what circumstances?

SH: Well, in, apparently in July, 1944, the French had orders to arrest all the children who were in those Jewish homes. And there is a big question whether the Jewish community, the organization, which is UGIF[4], it's called, it's--I never know how to translate it, but anyway, it was the main organization allowed by the German, and the Vichy government, to take care of all the Jewish questions, all the Jewish refugees, all the Jewish population in France. So they had an order to arrest all the children. And there were like, I must tell you the exact number, because I never quite remember. There were 350 children that were arrested within two days and put in Drancy. And I was one of those. And my sister, whom I found the next day, she came up on the 22nd. So we were arrested in Drancy. We went, they came early in the morning. And I am absolutely positive that the French came, although my friends who were arrested with me made deposition that said that only Germans came. But I remember seeing that French policeman with that special K.P. they called it, Kap, and his navy blue uniform. So I know they were, but I suppose for a political reason, the French didn't want to accept the idea that they were involved in this kind of disgrace. So they blamed the Germans. But I know it was done by the French police like they did when they arrested my mother. And they took us, they told us to take whatever we had. We didn't have any time to take a suitcase, so they said, "Put everything in a sheet." And we took our bundle and went to Drancy by, well, it's not exactly a bus. I think it's more like a police car, a big car, where they used to put inmates there. And that's how we ended up in Drancy. And we stayed from July 21st til July 31st. No, July 21st, no, until August something. I don't remember. The 3rd, I think. No, until July 31st. That's right. We stayed in Drancy.

SB: In Drancy.

SH: In Drancy, yes.

SB: Can you tell me about your life in Drancy?

SH: Well, we were prisoners. It was a building that was not finished. It must have been built for apartment house or something. So there were some very large rooms. The stairs were built, the cement stairs, going from one floor to another. That I remember vividly. We didn't have anything to do except to get, collect ourself to get counted. We went to the yard every so often, just walking. There was no activities, nothing.

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[4]UGIF is the *Union Générale des Israélites de France*. Established November 29, 1941 by the Vichy Government, it was designed to be the French counterpart of the Polish Judenrat. Nora Levin, *The Holocaust*, Crowell, NY: 1968, p.436.

SB: And no forced labor?

SH: Not there. No, not there. No, there were, it was just a collection point to send people to Auschwitz. So there was no work. There was just a lot of people who worked for UGIF and tried, I know now they tried to find out where our relatives were. And of course we weren't giving any of that information. At least the older, the oldest children, weren't giving any of that information about where their parents were or where the, you know, the family was, and friends. We tried not to say anything, because we knew that they would be arrested eventually. So, that's the only thing that we did then. It only lasted ten days, so…

SB: And after ten days?

SH: They collected us and took us to a train, which was right nearby. Or maybe they put us on a bus to take us to a train. I don't really remember that very well. But they took us on a cattle train, 60 by car. And there were, of course as I said there were 350 children. And they asked the older girls to take care of the younger boys. I took care of a little three, four-year-old, to look after him.

SB: Were they the youngest ones, the three and four-year-olds? Or were there any younger ones?

SH: There probably were some younger, but they probably were with their mothers. But there were a lot of three, four-year-olds who had no one. Maybe five, also five years old. So they asked us to take care of them, to see that they should be in the facilities or whatever they had down there.

SB: Were the guards cruel?

SH: Not in Drancy. Then once we were in the car, piled in, we heard the Ger-- there was strictly guarded by Germans, and dogs. And we heard them bark…

SB: In France?

SH: Yeah, in France. From France on. And they were barking and, you know, and scaring everybody and…

SB: Let me go back for a moment. When you were in Drancy, the guards were German or French?

SH: There were some Germans, but…

SB: They were French.

SH: Yeah, mostly French.

SB: And they were not cruel? They…

SH: There was, I don't remember seeing anything, you know, that would have scared me to the point of, I mean, I was scared enough to, you know, to know where we were going and what will happen to us. But aside from there I didn't see any life-threatening events, there.

SB: And the food was adequate?

SH: Well, no. I mean, the food was, we were, we took some stuff with us. And some people got some packages during these ten days and we shared. I didn't, because

there was nobody to send to me. I didn't want to tell my aunt what happened. I'm sure she found out sooner. I had an aunt in France, the aunt whose husband was arrested and sent to Compiegne and then to Auschwitz, I knew she would find sooner or later where we were, but I wasn't sure that she would send me a package. And I didn't want to, I did send a card to my friends, who lived in that same town, with whom I grew up--And I'll tell you about it later--that we were there, but we didn't receive anything. We just shared with those who did get something.

SB: So during the ten days that you were in Drancy, you really didn't suffer too much, except for being incarcerated.

SH: Yeah, that's right, you know, and not knowing what would happen, and wondering what happened to my father, and who would tell him. That's how I sent a card to my friend, telling him to tell, telling them to tell my father what happened. And, but of course I didn't know my father was already dead by then.

SB: And all of this time you were not aware of what was going on with the other European Jews?

SH: Very vaguely. We knew they were transported to a work camp and the conditions were terrible, just like the French camps. They arrested a lot of foreigners into many camps in France and we knew the conditions were appalling. You know, overcrowding and no food and no hygiene and no medication. And this we knew. So we were afraid this is what would happen to us. That we were afraid. To know, to tell you that I knew about crematoria at that time? No, I didn't know. Or if I heard, I wouldn't believe it. And I wasn't the only one.

SB: Now, between 1942, then, and 1945, you did have contact still with some of your friends and with your mother?

SH: Well, '45, you mean '44. Because '45 is where I was in camp as of August, '44.

SB: I see. So, from 1942 until you were taken to Auschwitz, then, you did have contact, then, with some members of your family? Your aunt and…

SH: Well, I had an aunt, and she continued to run the pharmacy. And the Germans were trying, or the French were trying to force her to tell them that she was Jewish. But because she didn't spell her name as my mother, which is Ifliandik, and the E in different languages spells differently. In one language it's an I. In another language it's like, like in French. In English it's an E. And in Russian is a U. So therefore the name wasn't the same. My family in Detroit, my mother's family in Detroit, spell it differently than my mother because of that first letter. So she told them she was not her sister, that's all. And they even threatened her to take a blood sample to try to find out. They said that it would show in her blood that she was Jewish. At that point I told her, and I knew, that this is, it was just a lot of bunk, because you can't tell from a blood test that you become Jewish. It was just intimidation. And she was smart, I mean, you know, she kept her head on her shoulders. And so she was not arrested. She stayed until the end of the war. And her

son was two years older than me. He managed to, while he was in school first and then he went and hid himself in many places. He even went to my father down in the south but he couldn't stay because he realized that my father was deep in, up to his ears in the underground. And he was afraid that if he was to do that as a young man, at that point he would be arrested. So he, I don't know, he managed to move around. And then he came back to Paris and felt that the best place to hide was in Paris because there were a lot of people and you could always hide better in a big city than in a farm. So he survived.

SB: And did he ever tell you about what kind of underground work your father did?

SH: He told me that he couldn't be specific because he could see that the people my father dealt with always were very secretive. And when they had something to say, they wouldn't say it in front of a stranger, not even in front of him. So he understood. And he didn't ask too much, because as always, the more you knew, the more you were afraid that you would, if you were arrested, that you would be tortured to tell. So he was smart enough not to insist, but he saw right away that they were working. I don't know what they were doing, probably planting bombs or alerting people of what happened or maybe they had information that trains were moving and somebody had to blow them. I mean there's so many things that happened on those days. This was really the end of the war.

SB: I see. Now, let's go back when you were arrested and taken into the cattle car.

SH: Right.

SB: Describe the conditions in the cattle car at this point, please.

SH: Well, it was appalling, you know. It was so overcrowded. They had one big bucket for the facilities, for bathroom, with some kind of a, we put a curt--a sheet around to have some form of privacy. They emptied it only once a day when they opened the car, when they stopped, and it usually was at night. During, I'm sorry, during the day. At night the train rolled. During the day most of it, it was stopped. The crowding was awful. We only ate what we had. There was hardly enough water. I was very lucky. I sat on top of bundles near the window. There was a teeny window with a bar, and I could see what happened. I know at one point that some people I knew, older men, who were part of the train which I had seen in Auschwitz, I mean in Drancy, tried to escape, and I saw a whole bunch of men walking on the ground naked, being taken to the first car, because they had tried to escape. So we knew things were really desperate. And then I had to take care of that little boy. And there were a lot of little children. There was the crying and it was just awful. And they opened the doors only once a day. That was it. So it was a…

SB: And how long was your trip?

SH: Three, I think three days. Something like that. And we arrived in the middle of the night. It may have been four days. At that point it was very difficult to have any concept of dates, because you know, you didn't have a calendar. You leave and it seemed to be forever, that trip. So we arrived, but I know, I remember, we arrived in the evening,

late. And they told us to get down. There were some German. You know, "*Raus, raus!*" You know, the way they talk. With dogs. And there were some inmates with the striped uniform. I understand there was a Frenchmen or two there with a stripe, but I didn't hear them. Some others did. The train was, I don't know how many cars. There were thirt--there were 1300 I think in that train. So if you have 60 per wagon, so you can figure there's a little over 20 cars. So there were some Frenchmen who told some people what would happen. But I didn't see it. The only thing I knew is that we have to get off, not to take anything with us. And we have to jump down. And of course some people were afraid to jump down. There were people that were older.

Tape one, side two:

SB: This is side two of tape one, of the interview with Simone Horowitz, who will now continue. You jumped down from the train.

SH: We jumped down from the train, and I remember the little boy who was with me didn't have any shoes, so I had to carry him. And when I got to the, we got to the head of the line, there was there, there were two Germans with dogs, German Shepherd dogs. And there were, Mengele was there.[5] And he had the stick and then he pointed to the left or to the right. And by the way, the train arrived in Birkenau. At that point, all the trains came to Birkenau. So he asked me in German whether the little boy was mine, and I said, "No." I guess he realized he wasn't my child. I was only 18, barely 18. So he said, "Well let him go." And I let him go, and they took him, I don't remember, the right, with all the other little children, and I went to the left, which was the right of Mengele. And so there were about, I would say about 60, 70 women, maybe less, I don't know, maybe 50, who came to the camp. All the rest were gassed. Because the men were taken in a different area. So I, this was, they went to a, they were sent to another place. And then we found ourselves together, taken to a big building.

SB: Just one moment. Did any of the mothers, or older girls, or any older person, refuse to leave the children?

SH: Oh yes, oh yes. As a matter of fact, the directress of our home didn't want to leave the younger children because she had been taking care of them for quite a while. She wanted to go with them. And they all ended up in the gas chamber. And of course the mothers wouldn't part with their children. That's also true. No, we were all single, or we had left some of the young women, who were with me, had left the rest of the family behind. If there was a mother, she pushed them to go, you know, not to go with them. Because some of them, apparently, had the notion that if you were separated it would be best that you go with the young people and then they would go with the others, because if you put the young people together, that those who were able to, strong enough and to work, they would have a better chance to survive, or something like that. It was an innate instinct you see to go, and besides, we didn't have much choice. It was very difficult to go to a different place, if you were sent in one place, because they would beat you up. And some were beaten up. So, there was no point to.

SB: So Mengele, then, did the *Selektsia,* and…

SH: He did all of them, all the trains that came in Birkenau. I understand he was there to do the selection.

SB: And now with you, he had chosen you and your sister…

SH: Yes.

SB: …and a lot of the other younger women.

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[5]This man was identified as Mengele by the interviewee during her subsequent selections in Auschwitz-Birkenau, according to a later discussion on July 18, 2000.

SH: Yes.

SB: Now continue from there and tell me what happened.

SH: Well, it was in, at night, and we were taken to a big place, a big building, a building. It looked big but I, of course after having been in a, confined in a cattle car for three, four days, I mean anything would look bigger. I have never been back there to really realize how big this place was. But we were told to undress, to leave everything we had. And then they shaved us, took all our hair off, sent us to the next room where we had a shower, cold shower, no soap, no towel. Of course we now know that it was either a shower or the gas. We were lucky we had a shower. And after we finished showering--I don't know how long it took--they collected us and took us in another room. And then they gave us some rags to put on us. For some reason we kept our shoes at that point, and I had a good pair of shoes, a very good. It belonged to my father who was rather short and I was probably bigger than him by that time. So I kept these shoes because they were heavy leather shoes and I, somehow I took that and I kept them. And then for a long time that helped. So we got dressed, and then they took us to the bunk where we were supposed to be, which was a long building. They were made of wood. They were not bricks like in Auschwitz. They were made of wood. They had, in the center there was a, like a long wall, but not a wall but like a long, well, where they had the, some kind of a pipe inside. And they would heat a little, at one end and it was supposed to heat the whole place. That divided the place into two but you could step over it. It was very long. And then on each side they had bunks, three-tiered bunks, where you put four to six in a bunk, depending on how crowded the camp was.

SB: So each person had a bunk? Or some people shared, two people shared one bunk?

SH: No, no, we had four, six on each tier of bunk.

SB: I see.

SH: Which had three tiers. And we were given some form of a blanket. That's all we had. And I think they gave us, well afterwards they gave us like a container what you would eat from a liquid part of the food. But that was for three, four, or five, depending on how big it was. And that's it. And we were, we went to sleep and it must have been around 3:00, 4:00 in the morning, and at 5:30 we were wakened up by the *Kapo*, who were brutal people. Mostly, the ones who were in our area were Czech. There were others, there were Polish and others, but the one that I, we had to deal with, that French contingent, they were Slovakians. And they were terrible.

SB: And there were no Jewish *Kapos*?

SH: I don't know whether they were Jewish or not. Maybe they were. But we had no way of knowing, because we couldn't have any contact with them. They spoke whatever their language. They certainly didn't speak French. They absolutely, everyone in the camp hated the French, just like today. Today they hate the Americans. Then they hated the French, because they had the wrong perception of what the French women were. They

thought we were all prostitutes and easy women of easy morals. And they thought that, you know, we had the good life. And, which was ridiculous. But this was the perception and so many times we heard from the *Kapos* and others, "Oh, you French women! You are so elegant, and you thought you were the best in the world, and look at what state you are now! Nobody wants to look at you," or something of the sort, very demeaning. I mean, life in Auschwitz was so brutal. So brutal. Because it, we were lucky we are a group of French girls together, so we could sustain ourselves morally. And we did. We, those who had gone to school tried to tell about the books we read, and tried to, you know, the novels we read. And there was no teaching. I mean, I understand some, were lucky to have people of Jewish knowledge who taught them something. But I never had this in the camp. All the months that I was there, I never had that luck. And very soon after we came there was a contingent of Budapest Jews who came. And they put them with us, to fill up the bunk, the barrack, actually, it's not a bunk. The barrack. And I made, I was, I made a connection with one of them, who was a little bit older than me but she had been, she was a pharmacist, and we communicated in very poor English, but both of us had learned English in school. And this way I had, she told me a little bit about herself and I told her about us. And it was very pleasant. But it didn't last very long because within two weeks the Germans, during one of the *Appel* [roll call], the Germans asked if there were any nurse, any doctors, pharmacists among us. And so she said yes, she was a pharmacist. So they took us, they took her, and they took her I think in Auschwitz to work in a, in the famous medical…

SB: Experiments?

SH: Well, building, whatever they were doing. And they were doing experiments on twins in those days. But we didn't know of course. These things were known only afterwards. And once we were in camp we tried to find out, you know, what it was all about. It was very difficult. Most of the inmates were really Polish, or certainly Eastern European. And those who knew--and it was difficult to get to talk to them. You had to sort of know Yiddish, if they knew Yiddish, because none of us knew Polish. Even among some of our friends whose family was Polish, they didn't speak the language. If they did speak a little Yiddish. So we tried to know, but slowly we found out there were some men floating around the camp, even though it was mainly a women's camp. And the camp was, Birkenau was divided into sections. So we didn't have any contact with the men except those who were responsible for certain specific work that had to be done by the men in the camp. So, you know, word filtered down what's happened, you know, by the crematorium. First of all we had the terrible smell all the time. So we knew something was not really right. Where did it come from? So finally we found out that they, they were burning people. And, you know, living with that, just with that thought, with that possibility, was frightening enough. Of course there was no food. We got food three times a day, so in the morning, right after the *Appel*, and the *Appel* it was a collection of everybody by a row of five, in order to count every day, three times a day, how many people were in a camp. There were several attempts to escape. Not among us, but certainly among

the Polish Jews, who knew the language of the country and who could, who had hope to be able to escape the camp. So the *Appels* were constant, and they could last from an hour to three hours, five hours, half a day, if anybody was not around. So you had to stand up, any weather, *any* weather. Sometimes during the rain we would be collected inside the barrack and they would count us there. Mainly because the *Kapos* and probably the Germans didn't want to get wet, or whatever. But most often it was out, under the brutal sun of August, in, you know, this is in southern Poland, and it can be very bad, and it's in the bottom of a hill. It can be very muggy. And in the fall it's like a swamp, because there's a lot of rain. And in the winter there's a nice amount of snow, so you stood in the snow. It was just awful. Three times a day. So in the morning they gave a black water, which was called coffee but really was chicory. And then lunch they had some kind of, what they called a soup, which was brought in big barrels--like the coffee, by the way, in barrels--and I suppose they cooked a few potatoes in it, and the peels and the cabbage. The potatoes never came to us. It was taken out during the, on the way either by those who worked in the kitchen, those who transported the food, the *Kapo*, I mean, if we found a leaf of cabbage, we were lucky. And that's all we had for lunch. And for supper they gave you like a, maybe a, less than a quarter of a pound of bread. And sometimes it was a little pad of margarine. Sometimes it was a little pat of marmalade or jam. And sometimes it was one slice of salami. That's all we lived on. It was nothing else. And you had to eat it right there, because if you left it anywhere, you would never find it. There was a tremendous amount of stealing. When we slept, it was best to sleep with our shoes, because otherwise we wouldn't find them in the morning. Somebody would take them. And you never knew who it was. Of course it wasn't the one around you. It was always somebody who was watching what you were wearing. And in the summer we'd use our blanket as a pillow, but in the winter we didn't have any pillow. It was just a straw under your head. So we used a blanket to cover ourselves.

SB: Did you work at all during that period?

SH: No, because I came in the camp in August. And I think by September, some time in September, probably toward the end, I came down with scarlet fever. There was an epidemic at that time. And of course I had never had it, so anybody who didn't have it would catch it. My sister also had it a few days later. So they isolated us in the so-called infirmary, the barrack which was just to put us away so the rest wouldn't catch it. But there was no medicine. There was nothing. They just let you stay in the, in a bed. If you were strong enough, you could get up for the *Appel*, because they had the *Appel* there too. And there we were subjected to the *Selektion* more often than the rest of the camp. But this was already toward the end of the camp life. I have to say that the Russians were not far. We heard the bombing very, and all day. Very, you know, in the distance. And in many ways that's what kept us, our morale, up. Because we knew that eventually that camp would be liberated. Of course we didn't know that the Germans would put everybody on the road and empty the camp before the Russians came.

SB: So you had no routine as far as work is concerned.

SH: Not then. Not until after I was sick.

SB: I see. And then they took count of the number of people who were in there…

SH: Right.

SB: Still three times a day.

SH: Oh yes.

SB: And…

SH: The only kind of work was those who volunteered to do this kind of medical work, that was associating with medical work. They were separate from us and taken to Auschwitz. Otherwise not. I remember one day, and it was before the time that I was sick, they took us to Auschwitz. We were in Birkenau. It's about, I would say, three to five miles away. It's hard to say. I think it's 5km. So it's under three miles. They took us all on a road in five, in, you know, like two by two, to Auschwitz. And there we took a shower there. I don't know whether the shower in Birkenau wasn't working, but for some reason they took us there. Which in a way was what also saved me because this way I knew how to go to Auschwitz. You know, the road to go to. And then they took us back by the evening. It's the only thing I remember that were outside the routine of the camp. Then after I was sick, then I went to the infirmary and stayed there until, and I think it lasted about, oh, I don't remember, a week or two weeks. But by then at the end, then I caught either typhus or typhoid. I don't know because they had no way of testing. But I had to stay in isolation in that infirmary. My sister recovered, and there was another woman who also stayed with me, another French girl, who stayed also with me in the infirmary until the end like me. But I don't, I didn't remember her until very recently. They told me afterwards. But my sister, and whoever else was with us, caught the, that scarlet fever and got better, went back to the camp. By the beginning of October there was a selection throughout the camp, plus in our infirmary. But I was still strong enough and didn't show exaggerated sign of emaciation. So I, they let me stay.

SB: Was Mengele also making this selection?

SH: Yes, definitely. As a matter of fact, I remember there was an Austrian woman whom I met there, an older woman. And she talked him out of taking her to the crematorium because she spoke beautiful German. She was from Vienna. And in many ways she was rather interesting, because she had supposedly had a good life in Vienna and told us all about it and all the food they ate. But one of the terrible things in camp is we were starving but we were always talking about what we ate before, and what we would eat afterwards. That was really torture, but we did it. And she talked him out of taking her to the crematorium, and she managed to do it because she spoke German. And he let her stay. Another woman, who was a Polish woman who spoke German also, but she had a child with her. And that child had the scarlet fever so she stayed with the child in that bunk, in that isolation barrack. But she couldn't talk Mengele into saving her, because she had the child, which was illegal in the camp, and she stayed with him. And so he sent her to the

gas. And she knew because the selection was done and they took them the next very early morning. She was wailing throughout the night. It was just absolutely unreal.

SB: So there were no children at all. They were…

SH: There were no young children in Birkenau *legally*. Now, if anyone was smuggled and stayed there, I didn't see them because that, they had to stay hidden. So I don't know. I, some say there were but I never saw any, another one, except in that bunk. And that's how he ended up. I mean, they found the child and the mother and they sent both into the crematorium.

SB: How many people, do you judge, were in the camp at the time?

SH: Impossible to tell. I don't even know how many people were in that barrack. It's, you know, you'd have to look into, there is a lot of books written about the camps. And, but meanwhile, as I explained to you, there was a, that selection. And they also selected the rest of the camp and took all the able-bodied of my barrack, went to Czechoslovakia, to work. And my sister went with all my friends. So I found myself with only one French girl there. I found another one later on when they transferred her outside of that barrack and put her somewhere else. [unclear], before the end of the war. Wait, let me finish. And they all went into Czechoslovakia to work. The rest stayed in camp, whoever was not selected to go to the crematorium. So that's how I found myself staying in camp, in Birkenau, not working. This was already in October. And by the end of October, not even the very end of October, they stopped using the crematoria. They only burned those who died, of all kind of reasons. So, this is, you know, this was a break for us, who managed to survive at that point.

SB: So, what did you do during the day in between the taking roll, to find out how many people were there? What was your routine?

SH: Well at that point I was in the hospital. I was very sick. I had a big fever and I had the…

SB: But even before you got sick, what…

SH: Nothing! We did nothing! We sat around, mostly outside, except if it rained, and we talked to each other. At one point we, they told us to bring some stuff from one end of the camp to the other, and then bring it back. For a few days they did. But that was it. There was--our group was not involved in work in Auschwitz at that point. And those who were involved in work were sent to work into Czechoslovakia. In other words, at that point, Auschwitz was--I mean Birkenau, which I should talk about because I don't know, Auschwitz was another camp not far--at that point the camp was just a collection point of people who could survive the hard condition of life in camp, but who would be strong enough to go to work. And the work was in other camps. They took people to other camps. But in Auschwitz, *per se*, there was no work. There were some people who worked from Auschwitz, but not in our area of the camp.

SB: I see.

SH: Because I know there were people who were taken every morning, who had to go outside of the camp, walking, do some form of work. Some of them worked in factories, because there was a lot of factories around, and came back at the end of the day. That's why they were always counting us so carefully, because there were people who went outside. And there was always a chance of escaping.

SB: I see. Were there any religious services at all during that…

SH: Absolutely nothing! The only thing we found out, as I explained to you, one day we were taken to Auschwitz to take a shower there. And while we passed the head of the, of that particular camp--the camp was divided into sections--that section of the camp, when we passed that place where he lived[6]--it's not a house; it's not a, it's the guard's house really--the window was open and that dope had a big map of Europe on the wall. And wherever the Germans were, there was a German flag; and wherever the Allies came, or the Russians, he had the flag of the country. So we saw that. In Paris, the flag was the French flag. And even a little further there was a flag. So we knew that the war was going on and that things were almost finished in France for them. But that's the only thing that we knew. We, there was no way to know anything else. And sometimes some of the Polish men who worked in the camp would give some news to somebody. And it would run like a wildfire through the camp. And that's the only way we knew. And there was very little of it.

SB: Was there any one particular figure in the camp who helped you, and others, to hold on, to struggle to survive?

SH: Well, not really. You know, I was sick for so long that I was probably, you know, many days I was sleeping more than anything else. And it was just a vegetative life, with not much. Then they emptied the, as I said, they emptied this isolation barrack and put us in another one. That day I met another French girl, who had been in France. As a matter of fact I knew her brother, but I found out only slightly later she had been in France and she lived, I think, around Grenoble. She had an affair with a German and she got pregnant and they sent her to Auschwitz as a reward. And then she had the child while we were there. And I'm sure they induced the labor. Or the child was prematurely born because of the kind of life she--and she tried to hide, and she hid for quite a long time. Of course the infant died, and then she remained there for a long time. She also came down with typhus or whatever. And this camp was essentially, this barrack was essentially of those who were sick with typhus. And we stayed there until they emptied the camp. They emptied the camp in stages. We were the very last one to be put on the road, the sick ones. And we were marched. It was in January. January of '45. Snow on the ground. Very cold. And they marched us for a while. And all of a sudden, after a while we found ourselves alone. The guards left. It was really that late in the war. The Russians were really around. We, the cannon noise was already deafening and pretty close. And we were really very scared. So we didn't know where they wanted to send us, but we found ourselves alone. So we finally

[6]Commander of Auschwitz, *Obersturmbannführer* Rudolf Höss.

decided to go into the homes. There were homes on the road, houses. And so some of us, the French, we were three French girls together at that point, we went into one of the homes. There were already some people there, in a basement. And we stayed there for a whole week, with a quarter of a pound of bread. That's it. And…

SB: For the whole week.

SH: For the whole week. And then we sometimes melted snow and broke furniture. And they melted, so sometimes we ate the snow. But, the clean snow.

SB: When you first started out of Birkenau, how many people were with you in that…

SH: It was a whole, I mean there were quite a few but I can't tell you in terms of numbers. It was a long line. Now I can't tell you how many. It was impossible to tell.

SB: The guards, or the *Kapos,* gave you no prior information? They just left?

SH: They just left!

SB: And…

SH: In the middle of everything!

SB: I see.

SH: They had, apparently they had trucks around, but they just left. And we found ourself after, you know, after about, I don't know, half an hour, an hour, that there was nobody around for us. We were sort of free. So, but because it was really the front at that point, pretty much the front of the war, we knew that we shouldn't stay outdoors and try to run. I had an idea that we were on the way to Auschwitz, and in fact we were. We were only, I don't know, maybe fifteen minutes by walk on the road to Auschwitz.

SB: Tell me, when you were in Birkenau, how many, how long altogether were you in Birkenau?

SH: Well, I was there from August the 3rd, or 2nd, until January the 5th or the 6th.

SB: I see.

SH: Something like that. Maybe, maybe January, yeah, something like that. And the, I think the 8th the camp was emptied.

SB: O.K. Now you said…

SH: And it was…

SB: That you, the thing that you discussed so very often was food, because you were so hungry.

SH: Well, yeah.

SB: And you tortured yourself with discussing it, but you, that helped to lift your spirits, the way things were.

SH: Yeah, we did try to lift our spirits, but I couldn't talk philosophy to my, to people around me. I was used to discussing much more serious stuff before but there was nobody to talk to there at that point.

SB: [laughing] All right.

SH: So we had to do the best we could.

SB: Yes. Now, what did you think, or what did the others think in terms of your survival? Did you think you would go, you were going to get out? Did you…

SH: At that point, once we found ourself alone on the road…

SB: No, I'm talking while you were in the camp.

SH: Well, as I explained to you, I had always the hope to see my father, so I fought in order to survive. And even though I was sick, you know, I could have let myself go and then I would have been finished. But I sort of had a spark in me, to say, "Don't do it. Don't do it. Go back." And it was enough during the end of the war to have a hope that we would be able to survive.

SB: And did you discuss this with the other women and young women in the camp?

SH: Well, remember, at that time the young women were gone. Whatever I knew were already different people. Because they were those who were left in the infirmary or in the so-called isolation barrack. And these were not French. I only had one I spoke to. The second one I found when we were moved from one place to another at the very end, before we were put on the road. So, at that point, yes, we all said to each other, "It's time, you know, we have to survive." And we did try to help each other. But these gals were not, I mean they were not, they were, I couldn't discuss too much with them, except life that we had before the war. That's all we could do. They were not on my level and, you know, they hadn't gone to high school as far as I went. So it was difficult.

SB: So the Russians actually, while, well nobody so, liberated, so-called liberated your camp?

SH: Nobody liberated the camp.

SB: That's right.

SH: We were marching to it when they came close enough. As a matter of fact, the Russians knew all the time where Auschwitz was, and we know that today. Just like they knew that in Warsaw there were, there was a ghetto and they could have liberated it years before, but they didn't want to. They weren't particularly interested in saving Jews anyway. But when they had to march through they found the camp. And I remember after staying a week in the basement that two young Russian soldiers--and amazingly, one of them looked like my father, but in a young face. And I didn't know how to speak Russian but I could understand because my parents had once spoke Russian. So in my very broken Russian way, I asked him, "Are we close? Or do you know where Auschwitz is?" And he said, "Yes, at the end of the road." And that's how I took myself out after. I asked him, "Is it possible to get out?" He said, "Yes." So I went, by myself, no, with one other woman, but not the, one of the French. They were, one of them had frozen feet and the other one was in bad shape. They decided to stay. But I went with another Polish woman, and we went to the camp, which was not far, maybe 15, 20 minutes walking in the snow. It was hard walking, and I didn't have any strength, but by the time I went there I found out that there was a bunk of, a barrack, of French survivors. So they directed me there. And then

another story of my life started. There was another chapter. I was able to connect with a French group. They were not all Jews. Because in Auschwitz they sent some political prisoners from France. I met a doctor, a researcher, from Clermont-Ferrand, who was about my father's age, but he was of tremendous help to me. First of all, he told me what to do, where to go, since I was still sick. And then while I stayed in, sort of an isolation, infirmary barrack, there they were…

SB: Where? Were…

SH: In Auschwitz.

SB: In Auschwitz?

SH: Yes, of course. There they took care of me. I don't remember getting much medication, but at least some food, which I first, the very first food I got reaching that place was the wrong food so I got jaundice on top of everything. But that eventually cleared, and I stayed in bed for about two, three weeks.

SB: Now, at this point who was in charge of the camp?

SH: I don't really know. I can't tell you. But there must have been some Russians taking care of the camp. At that point also the Red Cross took care of it too. And the French Red Cross took care of the French contingent. And so, but I don't really know much about it. I was still very sick and weak. I, and I wasn't interested in knowing. I knew we were liberated, that we were free, and that there would be some way of getting back. And this was what I was trying to get, to get back. And this doctor helped me and others to get in contact with the Red Cross. And eventually, I mean we stayed from the beginning of January-- should say the middle of January--until sometime in April, the beginning of April. We stayed in that camp because there was no place to go, until they collected enough people to repatriate to France.

SB: And how was the sanitation, then, at that point?

SH: Oh that was, that wasn't a point. It wasn't bad because we had a more normal life. I wouldn't say it was normal, but we had food and they took care of us as far as health is concerned. But there was no kind of study group or any kind of normal life. It was still a matter of getting better and survive to be able to get back.

SB: O.K. Now when you finally recuperated and you felt strong enough, what did you do?

SH: Well then I waited until I could be repatriated. We spent the days, you know, like going around, walking and talking. And at that point there were many other French, mostly men. And you know it was easier, much easier. I was in a room with women, and they were, you know, in another bunk with the…

SB: And tell me, how were you repatriated?

SH: Oh. So the French Red Cross managed to get enough inmates from Auschwitz, forced labor from all around central, all the liberated area, I should say, of Europe, and made a train, a cattle train, to go back to France through Russia. So, first we went to Krakow, which was the place where the train left. So they kept us in Krakow for

about a week, in a school. And I remember some very strange things. We had a little, they gave us a little money, Polish money, and we tried to supplement our diet. So we wanted to find some eggs and cook them. So we bought eggs, but no matter how little we cooked they were always hard eggs. Until we realized, they were selling us hard cooked eggs.

SB: [laughs]

SH: And we tried to go around to see a little bit of Krakow, but right around where we were. We can't say that there was an encouragement in doing that, or that we were terribly anxious to do it. We knew that the Poles were pretty unpleasant at that point. We knew that they had done some terrible things to Jews too. They hadn't helped them. We didn't know the extent to which they were bad. And they were retaliatory to the Jews, for those who came back. But we knew better. And we were told by the Red Cross not to get too close to them anyway. So we were warned. And we stayed around. We tried to get to do things, until the train got, they had enough people in Krakow. They put us in the train. And I don't think we had any papers at that point. It was just a list. They had lists of people. We didn't have any private papers. So we couldn't go very far. We couldn't do much because you never knew if you didn't have an identification of some form. So we were put in cattle cars again, but certainly not 60 to a car. We had enough to all lie down on one level so we didn't, I don't know, there must have been about 30 or 35 people. And whenever we had meals, the train would stop. And we went from Krakow all the way to Odessa, through the Ukraine. So they would stop for each meal. They would cook, I mean they would prepare the meal in the car, and…

SB: And this was under the Red Cross?

SH: Yes, yes, yes. Definitely under the Red Cross. There were some French people there that were not part of the prisoners or that took care of it. There were some Russians, of course, to guard the cars. And it was pathetic, because the country, you know, Ukraine is flat. And we found out it was, as they say. And it was, they had gone through a terrible ordeal. There was nothing. It was in the, of course it was in the early spring. And you had Russians who came to the cars with their rags who tried to sell us something, tried to buy something from us. It was just pathetic. It was a very, very sad experience. And it lasted about a week until we got to Odessa. And in Odessa we were put also in a school. And there we met a lot of people from the French Red Cross. There we were given some papers, some clothes, some food. In other words, our…

SB: Your identity?

SH: Identity and our self-respect back, which of course while in Auschwitz or in Birkenau, forget it. I mean, we were dragged through the mud every time, especially the French women, as I explained to you. It was just insult after insult after insult. There was never a nice word from anyone that I had heard, except from friends, inmates. It was just terrible, a nightmare. That's what it was.

SB: So, what happened after Odessa?

SH: Well, we stayed there for a week or so. Of course we were not really allowed to get around. The Russians were still very careful not to let us co-mingle too much with everybody else. Of course we didn't know the language either. I mean I understood a little Russian. I could understand a little bit, but I couldn't get around enough to be safe. So we saw the city a little bit. They took us once or twice in sort of, not, maybe it was buses or maybe it was trucks, to show us a little bit of the city, which it was a nice European type city, much more cosmopolitan than anywhere else, I understand, in Russia. And we stayed there. We were fed. We waited until we were put on the boat, a British boat, who would take us back to France, to Marseilles. And remember, this was still wartime, so there were some problems, and of course we were worried that we won't be shipwrecked with a torpedo or something. There was still that worry, and they were doing drills all the time.

SB: And this was what month?

SH: This was in, this was, it had to be in April, the end of April. The trip lasted about ten days. And we got into Marseilles May the 1st. That I will always remember, because May 1st is a holiday. It's our Labor Day. So I remember landing on May 1st, of 1945.

SB: And then what happened? How did you get back to your own home?

SH: Well, in Marseilles we were of course put together in a building and the Red Cross was there and they asked us, as I said, they fed us, gave us clothes, identity, and money, and asked us what did we want to do. And it was up to us. They would take us wherever we wanted. So, theoretically I wanted to go back to Paris, but for some reason I asked whether they knew what happened to my father. And they said they would find out. And the next day they told me that my father had been killed. So, I don't have to tell you the shock and the trauma that it did. But I didn't know what to do. I just didn't want to go to Paris. I didn't know where to want to go. And my aunt was still in Paris, and I was debating whether to go. And my researcher offered to take me to his home for at least a couple of weeks, a month, until I get in touch with my aunt or my friends back in Paris. And that's what I did. I went back to Clermont-Ferrand with him, to his family. He had his wife and his children. His children were about my age. There was a boy, a girl, and a younger girl. I can't say that the wife was terribly happy to have a Jewish survi--he wasn't Jewish--a Jewish survivor, you know, skinny and no hair, practically none, coming to her. I stayed with him about two weeks. And then he had a friend who lived in the mountains. Clermont-Ferrand is in the, what do they call it, in the Auvergne and there's mountains there, not very high but still mountains. He had a friend there, who was a pharmacist, a spinster, an unmarried gal. And I stayed with her for the rest of the summer, where I prepared, I went back to my less--I mean my studies. I hadn't studied for almost a year, so I wanted to go back to my studies, review it, because I had to pass my, now my second part of the baccalaureate. And I prepared myself to enter the school. I knew I was going to go back to Paris, but I didn't want to go to my aunt. So I went to another orphan home, also under the, well at that point they were under the supervision of the OSE.

SB: What is that?

SH: Organization of Saving Children, *Enfants*, OSE [*Oeuvres de secours aux Enfants*], E means *Enfants.* So they had the responsibility of having some homes for the orphans during the war, those who were hidden during the war by their parents, the few who came back from the camps. So that's where I headed, in one of them, not far from Versailles. Because that's where the older children went. And I lived there for a year, not quite a year.

SB: What happened to your sister during this time?

SH: Oh, my sister, yeah, my sister, after the selection in October went to Czechoslovakia with all the other French girls. And she worked there. And she was liberated, and they were liberated much later because the front lasted longer before the, actually she was liberated also by the Russians. And they were liberated in the, I think at the end of May, oh, no, pardon me, in the beginning of May, the 8th, I think, when the war ended.

SB: And this was in 1945.

SH: '45, yes. And I don't exactly know what happened to her right after, because I never really got a very straight answer from her or the friends who came back with her. But they came back with the Red Cross, and she came back to my aunt, lived there for a while, but then decided to go to, also one of the orphan homes, for a while. And then after that I left for, I lived on my own in Paris, rented a room and went back to school.

SB: When did you go back to Paris?

SH: At the end of the summer of '45, in the end of September. School started later there. It starts in October. Before school started. So I went back maybe a couple of weeks before. I went to see my aunt, but didn't live with her. And…

SB: Where did you live?

SH: Well I lived in that home, in an orphan home outside of Paris, not far from Versailles. I think it was a station, station before you got to Versailles on the train.

SB: You did not go back to your own home?

SH: No. No, no, no. For a while we, the home was left like this, and after a while we rented it to someone, who also used the plant for-

Tape two, side one:

SB: Side one, in the continuing interview of Simone Horowitz.

SH: Yeah, the, so the, our house was rented for a long time. And we left it at that until we sold many years later, when I was already in America. My sister took care of it. It was sold.

SB: How did you find your home when you came to, back to look at it?

SH: The way we left it, as I said. Nobody touched anything. Very soon after, we were, at that point we were, both my sister and I, back in Paris. We were still both minors. So in order to do anything we wanted, renting or, you know, we wanted to sell the furniture and the machinery that was there, so what we did, we had to get, what do you call it, oh, somebody who was responsible for it.

SB: A guardian.

SH: A guardian. Otherwise we would have been the guardians of the state and then when you do that, it's extremely difficult to dispose of what you have because you have to go through the red tape and it takes forever. So we were lucky. My friends with whom I grew up, that one family that I knew very well, whose children, the oldest girl was in my class all the way through school, even in university, her mother, they were M. D.s, all of them, the children afterwards. And, but the parents also were M. D.s. She volunteered to be, I asked her and she said yes. My aunt, I didn't want my aunt as a guardian because we didn't get along very well and there was a lot of friction there between her and my father, and I didn't want that to be projected into my life. So, she was a guardian, so she took sort of care of the paperwork there. And because eventually, within a couple of years, we sold everything that was inside the house. Actually, before we even rented the place. And the man who took, who rented it, was interested in using the plant--I don't know for what, but it wasn't my problem. And then it was in the hand of a notary who took care of it, not too well either. And they were not as nice. After that I had much more problems with the outside world than I had with my neighbors, who never took anything. So it was very difficult. But…

SB: Now, all of this time you still had not found out what had happened to your mother?

SH: No, never, not to this day. I mean, I, there was a name, there is a name of my mother in the Klarsfeld book[12], but it's a wrong date. So I don't think that's her. There may have been somebody else with that name. You know, Zuckerman was not an unusual name, which was my maiden name. It was not an unusual name. So it's very possible it's somebody else. I don't know. I tried to find out through the Klarsfeld, but I never got any answer, even though I wrote three times. Remember, I live in America. It is very difficult

[12]*Le Memorial de la Deportation des Juifs de France*, edited and published by Beate and Serge Klarsfeld, 1978.

to get anything out of the French from here. *Very* difficult. From America everything takes twice as long, if not three times as long, and they're not always willing to bother.

SB: Did you…

SH: And remember that the Jews in France are very weak. They are very, they're not actively involved in helping really the survivors or the Jews in general. So it's very hard to get anything, even from the Jewish outfits. Or from the government it's even worse.

SB: Do you have a date when your mother was taken away?

SH: Yeah, a specific date, no, but I could figure out through Klarsfeld books, because they are, they have, for instance, in Beaune La Rolande and on they have several dates where they were taken from there to Auschwitz.

SB: I see.

SH: And I know they were taken to Auschwitz. So I could figure, it was after my birthday, sometime in the third or four weeks of June 1942.

SB: Perhaps you might contact *Yad Vashem* in…

SH: Oh, I did.

SB: And that's not…

SH: I mean, from 1971. I put some information there in order to find some of the people from Russia that might, people from here that I don't know. That I knew I had some family from my father's family, because they got in touch with me after the war. I met one of, he was in the army. I don't know what he was. He wasn't exactly a GI, but, and I know I spoke to him and I saw him, but I lost his name, and my aunt didn't keep it either. So that I never, I know I have somebody here, but I never bothered putting my name in HIAS. By now it's too late anyway; he wouldn't be alive.

SB: Oh. Oh I, now, tell us then, you went to school and you graduated high school in France.

SH: Mmm hmm [affirmative].

SB: Continue with your life. Tell me what happened after that.

SH: Well, for, for a while I lived with the directress of that home I went. She was there for about a year, not quite, so I was there a little less than a year. And I rented the room which she had for the maid, all the way on top. In Paris that was very common, to-- but she didn't have a maid living there, so she would rent it. I stayed there for, well, under, I think less than a year, until I found myself renting a room in an apartment with an older lady, not far from there. But I was back in school. I finished my high school with the second part of the baccalaureate. Then after that since I wanted to go into med school I had to do one year of basic chemistry and biology, which is required, which is university work. And then I went to med school. And I took care of, you know, myself. My sister was back, but she had left the orphan home and went back to live with my aunt because my aunt wanted her to go back to school. But she couldn't study. She said there was no way she could concentrate. And so she tried to work, but it didn't work and she drove me pretty much crazy because she didn't know what to do. And she, then she decided to go to Israel because

one of the boys that she had met in that home went to Israel and she was kind of sweet on him. And I warned her that she would end up in Cyprus, because that's where most of the boatloads of immigrants to Palestine went. And this is what happened to her. And she lost everything, her money, which she took with her, which she shouldn't have had. And her clothes. So she came back with nothing, and stayed with my aunt, and tried to sponge on me, which I couldn't let her do, because by that time I had decided I would leave France anyway. I couldn't see myself living there after what I had gone through. There was tremendous amount of antisemitism. Certainly the French weren't ready to listen to the survivors, and of course in America they didn't either, but--and then the Jewish community was nonexistent. It was pathetic. The little that I found during the war, it was barely there after the war. It took many years for it to reorganize. That's because a lot of the Jews from North Africa came and they were of a different, they were Sephardim and they had a very well-organized--in their countries, in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia. And they rebuilt the French community, but this was way after I had come here. So there was nothing for me. There was hardly any Jewish community, if anything, except the Scouts whom I had known before, the Jewish Scouts which I had known, which I sort of kept, kept going for a while with them. And then we didn't have meetings.

SB: And that was your only Jewish activity?

SH: Well, also I studied, you know, Jewish, I had plenty of catching up to do. So I studied Jewish history. We had, I went to services. I, of course, studied Hebrew, which I could never remember too well. I mean there must have been a block there. [chuckles] It took me a long time after I came here to do it right. But it was also not done right. I mean the people they used to teach you were not really teachers. It, you know, everything was really in chaos.

SB: But you really wanted a Jewish identity at that point.

SH: Oh absolutely, from the time I learned of my Jewish roots that's what I wanted to do. I wanted to know about Jewish life, about Jewish, you know, my roots.

SB: And so then what happened after? Did you finally graduate high school and then, what was your decision after that?

SH: Well I went, I told you, I went to that one year that you have to do before you go to med school, then I went to one year in med school. By then I decided I would finish it in America, thinking that I would have less problem doing it because I had already started, which was a big mistake because they didn't care for foreigners. They certainly didn't, in America they certainly didn't take too many Jewish students to go into med school, and certainly not women. So I had really three strikes against me. And also what I didn't realize is that they would ask me to get some form of equivalence for a Bachelor's degree here, in, with a major in science. So I had to do that back here and, you know, and…

SB: So you contacted your mother's family?

SH: My family, that's right. I knew I had my mother's family here, because I knew they got letters before. So I wanted to write to them, to tell them what happened, in my

broken English, which was still better than my family from here, who couldn't write English. They spoke it pretty well but their writing was atrocious. But I wrote to them and they--I had a friend in France, an older friend who was the directress of one of the homes for the orphans, who finally came to America to speak, as a public speaker, to UJA [United Jewish Appeal], in order to tell about her sad story, and make, and sort of induce people to give for the UJA Appeal. And I knew her, and I knew she was going all over, and I asked her, "Do you ever go to Detroit," where my family was. She said, "Of course." And my family lived very close from a close friend of hers, with whom she stayed every time she came. So she was in touch with my family, told them about me, you know, in more detail--and so anyway--which was not bad at that point. And they insisted that I should come. Of course they couldn't force me, but I got myself talked into coming here. So I applied, and it takes about eight months to get the visa. Until you get your passage it's about a year. And within a year I was here. I left France behind without too much regret. They, as I said, the Jewish community life was nil, despairing even. And certainly the politics of France hadn't changed since the war. It's like nothing had happened. They were in total denial of what happened. They're still in denial today, 55 years after, but not quite as much. I would say there is some form of recognition. But there's a lot of people who won't accept it, even today. Because I've been there twice, and I read what's going on in France and you can tell. It's a disaster.

SB: So continue on your own career.

SH: So, so I, until I came here I stayed in school, obviously. And then finally I came. I ended up in *Liberty* ship, American. As a student I had priority. They gave me a passage, which I wouldn't have had if I hadn't been a student. I don't know I would, you know, your visa is good for six months and if you don't take advantage of it and you can't find passage, it's very difficult. And in '48, in the fall of '48 it was very difficult to find anything. I wanted to fly and there was no way to fly. So, I went on the boat for ten days, a miserable trip. It was in October. Say the end of September, middle of October, the rough, the sea is very rough. I don't know if there had been any hurricanes, but it was very rough. I was sick for ten days and I landed in New York on *Yom Kippur*, 1948, of all days. Nothing I could do about it. I had another friend, an older woman, who--my friend could not come pick me up because she had to speak somewhere. So she arranged for someone else whom I had known about, to take me. And I stayed in New York for oh, two, three days until I got passage on the, on a train to go to Detroit. And I can't tell you the shock to find everything, filled with everything! Food, clothes, shoes. She took me to Macy's. And we had department stores, but they were empty! It was just, I was, you know, absolutely flabbergasted, to see the amount of, you know, freedom and availability of everything that was there in, remember, in 1948 we still had food coupons. The food was still rationed, very hard to get what you needed. So it was just unbelievable. Then I went on a train and got to my family. I didn't even know how I would even recognize them. They sent me a picture. And I couldn't tell. But by the time I got off the train--it was an overnight train--I

went down and I saw them. And I had an aunt who looked exactly like, I looked exactly like her. I mean there was no way to be worried about it! And it was so funny. It was just weird. And I stayed with them for a year-and-a-half. It was a shock to go to Detroit after Paris, even as bad as Paris was. My family was Jewish, but not connected to religious life. They were just travel Jews. And they would meet, you know, for the holidays and have meals. And, but not much more than that. The children had gone through a *Bar Mitzvah*, yes, but that was the end of it. So they didn't know much about their life there, which neither--it was a great disappointment, very great. And besides, I was independent. I didn't really like to live with a family, you know, which, their rules, and you know, and I wanted to be on my own. But I had to learn the language well and I had to be able to be on my two feet. So it took me about a year-and-a-half. I went to school there, first of all took the language of English for Foreign Students. I did it in one term. It was in a university, at Wayne University. Then I realized that I had to take some science course to get some equivalency, because I applied for medical school and they laughed me out of my sleeve [chuckles] if I can say that. And now, there was no way, they told me. I have to have some form of equivalency. And in Detroit they had never, in Wayne University they had never had a foreign student before. So they didn't know how much credit they could give me, nothing. So I stayed there for a semester-and-a-half, after which I came, I decided to go to New York, advised by some relative in my family that I would do much better in New York than in Detroit. And I applied to Hunter and they were willing to take me. But I would have to go back also to get a Bachelor's degree first. So I came to my friend, who was a speaker, and she wanted me to stay with her because she wanted to bring her children and stay in America. So while she was speaking, her children went to school and I was in my school, but I took care of them in the evening. I was kind of a, well, a nanny I suppose, if you want to call it that way. And I stayed there for, until I got my Bachelor's, which was a year later. And then I decided it's enough, I can be on my own, because I got a job. And I rented a place, not far from the Jewish Theological Seminary. But this was just plain luck, because that building had a lot of Columbia married students in it. And by the time I worked, I worked for the hospital where I worked, and in a research lab, the staff was paid by Columbia, and the hospital was the City Hospital. It was, they were working on cancer. The whole hospital was working on, and had patients only for cancer. So I had a chance to go to Columbia. And Columbia gave me a chance to get an apartment in one of those buildings where there were a lot of people there, renting them, married, usually married couples or people who wanted to be out of the campus. And I took some classes at Columbia and I worked during the day. And then eventually I met my husband. So…

SB: And that was a great and important event in your life, too!

SH: That was the *only* great event in my life at that point!

SB: You know, why doesn't it want to pause?

SH: Oh, you have to…

SB: No, come on now, let's try. [tape off then on] What do you think is the lesson of the Holocaust now?

SH: That we should be aware, beware, that it could happen any time, any place again, as we have seen already, maybe not with Jews, but certainly with a little [unclear]. So, we should be prepared. As Jews we should know about our roots, try to defend ourself as much as possible, not let the world run us. Of course we have Israel now, it's much easier than it was before the war. Remember, before the war there was no place to go, if you were being persecuted. This was the tragedy of the '30s. And now we have a place to go. I don't know if that's the solution for everybody, but I know for me it is.

SB: And did you always feel this way?

SH: Oh yes. Since, certainly since Israel. That's the only thing that made me feel that life is worthwhile living. Without Israel, I don't think I would have wanted to have children, to marry, to have a normal life.

SB: What do people ask you about the Holocaust?

SH: Really, very nothing. Never did. My family didn't ask when I came to Detroit except to ask me if it's true that my mother died in Auschwitz. They didn't really, I told them about my father, who had been shot as a hostage. They were not that interested; they didn't know him. But never asked me what happened in Auschwitz, *never*! And I know that I have some second cousins, the children, because the family was a big family, and my mother was one of the youngest. As a matter of fact she was the second youngest. And the people in Detroit were all mostly older, mostly older chil--siblings. And they had children, who already had children my age. So I remember a second cousin, within a year or two of my age, wanting--and I found out that only recently when I got into contact with one of my second cousins who lives in California--and she told me that she wanted so desperately to ask what happened, and be my friend, because she felt, you know, some kinship. But they wouldn't let her. They said, "Don't ask her. It might make her sad, or you may not want to know." Absolutely unbelievable! To this day I, you know, I find this appalling.

SB: How do you feel about the Germans now?

SH: Well I still hate them. I cannot, I just cannot, I know they were not all Mengeles, but for me, they were the perpetrator of a horrible, horrible nightmare, which devastated my family, and others. And I can't forgive them that, ever. It's sad, but that's the way it is. I know it's…

SB: How about…

SH: …unfair, but that's the way it is.

SB: How about the Poles?

SH: Just about the same level. They were just as brutal. Certainly in the camp we didn't have any good relationship with *any* of them, *ever*. They hated the western Jews anyway, even though they knew nothing about them.

SB: Would you like to visit your native country?

SH: Oh I did, twice. As a matter of fact, my second visit, I made a tape of it, because after coming back to France, and all these years, I never tried to find out what happened to all these young women who were with me, my friends. So one day I decided that I should really find out and through a long connection, and it's kind of a little bit out of this tape, I managed to put an ad in one of the little pamphlet, which was published in France, which I saw, to find out if anybody from my, from my transport, which was the 77th transport, and the one before the last that went from France to Auschwitz, if anyone had come back. And within a week I got some answers. So I have never seen them. So, they meet every year, the 8th of May, which was the end of the war, but I never had a chance to see, to go and, especially not at that time. But this last year, in 1999, I finally decided to go. And we went with my husband at the end of May, and met them. And there is a tape about this encounter[13], which, if anybody is interested is a quite, quite, quite an interesting subject.

SB: We will attach it to these tapes. And, how do you feel about your years in the United States?

SH: Well, I have no regret. I mean, it hasn't been easy. It's a very difficult thing to acculturate yourself, especially where I came into my family, which certainly had very little to do with our family. My father was much more of an intellectual than any of them are. They were mostly business people, very well off, some of them, but not interested. And my cousins, their children also were mostly in business, somehow, there are not too many professional in that family. And there were a couple, two or three, but it was a very, it was a difficult.

SB: But now? You've lived…

SH: Now? Oh well, as I say, I have no regret. How could I regret? I reestablished my life and I have a family here, and you know, this is, this is my country.

SB: And how do you feel amongst Jews who did not go through the Holocaust experience?

SH: Which ones, the European Jews or American?

SB: No, here in America.

SH: Oh, here in America. Well, they're a special breed. [chuckles]

SB: [chuckles]

SH: One thing I like is that they're very active in Jewish affairs of any kind--social action and helping others and helping Israel. That I like. This is what I wanted when I was in France.

SB: And here in the United States, have you had any experiences with antisemitism?

SH: Personally? Well, yes, I couldn't go to medical school. That was definitely one of them. And it was a shock after having gone through the war. And also in school. I

[13]Refer to Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive tape of Mrs. Horowitz's report about the Reunion of Jewish French Children, May 1999.

mean, when I went to Hunter College, which was 99.9% Jewish student population, but not faculty, I did find antisemitism, because here I was, a slightly older student, two years older than the average from--for the class I was in. And we were still forced to go into, into a big festival for Christmas and Easter. And I tried to get out of it by telling them where I come from, and they said it was compulsory. So my only way out was to have somebody sign in for me and not go, because I just couldn't do it. I just couldn't do it.

SB: To what religious, civic or charitable organization do you belong personally?

SH: Well I always belong to a synagogue, Hadassah. That's just about enough.

SB: How do you feel about intermarriage?

SH: Oh, well, this is a disaster. Disaster number one for us. And I don't have the answer. Yes, I have some answers, but they don't want to hear about it. [chuckles]

SB: What contacts do you have with other survivors?

SH: Well, I belonged for a while to a Children--they call themselves Children of the Survivors, but there were a lot of survivors among them. And, of course, since a few years ago I got into contact with my friends, who were survivors in France. And there's a big disparity between what they do there and what we do here. They're much more active here. They're much more aware of, really, of the whole picture of Jewish life than they are in France. Of course it depends on who you talk to. They're not all on the same boat. But some of them, I don't know how they can stay there and do what they're doing. It's…

SB: And of course you belong to the Holocaust Oral Archives [Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive]…

SH: Oh yes, oh well that's…

SB: Where you do volunteer work.

SH: That's the best place. That has been the best place for me. It has allowed me to look squarely to the past and not be afraid to talk about it. And hopefully helping a little bit in their work because I find that I owe it to the Holocaust survivors to do something for them.

SB: There's no, there is no question that you do add to the total…

SH: I hope so. I hope so.

SB: …experience of the Holocaust and…

SH: I'd like to do more. Unfortunately I, the only way I help other than going to Gratz is to support *Yad Vashem* in Jerusalem, which I feel is really the only true, authentic museum for the Holocaust that has been built anywhere in the world, including here in Washington, including the one in New York, and including the one in Paris, or anywhere else. They are the only one that really have captured--and I know as a survivor, and I went through the Holocaust--they are the only one who has captured the mood, the whole experience of the Holocaust, and present them, as difficult as it is to see, because when I went there several times, I can never go through the children's exhibit. I always go, and I

leave before I can even go there more than a few minutes. It is so painful. But this is what happened.

SB: When did you discuss your Holocaust experiences with your spouse, children, or friends?

SH: Well, my spouse right away. I mean, I, when I met him I told him I was a survivor. There's no point to hide it. And I wasn't wanting to hide. And they, with my children that's another problem. For the longest time I would not tell them about it. But, of course, they guessed it. Like all children, they're pretty bright. And I suppose, but they don't ask too many questions. They are still afraid to hurt me. And, or hurt themselves. I don't know. I have never really, with my oldest daughter I have talked to her about it. She has a strange, she has her own idea about it, and I don't think it's quite correct. But it's difficult to make her understand that. But I do speak to her more freely than the others. The others are really reluctant, still today.

SB: And it affects your relationship with them?

SH: Oh absolutely. Absolutely. First of all, the fact itself of my not wanting to talk to them about it, you know, put a certain reserve in our relationship. And they knew there was something there, but, you know, I wasn't talking about it. So whenever you do that, with any kind of problems, let alone the Holocaust, there's always a problem in the relationship. In a way I regret to have done it, because, but with hindsight we're very smart, you know. Now I wouldn't do it, but then I had to do it because, remember, nobody spoke about the Holocaust. For the first twenty-five years there was no way you could find, nothing! The media was silent. Peop--the Jews were silent. The survivors were silent. Of course, they were, they felt that they had to follow the, you know, the, what people wanted. And since they didn't want to listen, who wanted to tell?

SB: It's true. What ideas do you, as a Holocaust survivor, want to pass on to your children?

SH: Well, I don't know, I, you know, about the Holocaust. I don't, except, you know, that they should know about it. Not only what happened to me, but what happened to others, to the six million. And I want them to know about what happened during the war. But there's also more to it. You know, I want them to know about their Jewish roots and we certainly did plenty to make sure that they would know. Because we sent them to day school, not to public school, all three of them. And two of them went to the Jewish Theological Seminary as a student and earned a University graduation degree. So we really made sure that they would know enough about their background.

SB: Which of course was different from what your parents had attempted to do.

SH: Oh, the opposite!

SB: Of course.

SH: I have seen the fiasco of what they've done, and I certainly wasn't going to repeat it to my children. And of course my husband was totally with me with that. There is no question.

SB: What activities do you enjoy personally?

SH: Me? Well, I don't know. What do you mean?

SB: Well, what…

SH: Being very involved with the Jewish community because of my husband's work. And I'm very happy now that we're not in it anymore because it was too overwhelming and too consuming. So now we, you know, we have time to read and talk and enjoy life.

SB: And intellectual pursuits.

SH: Yeah, mostly. We love music together. I mean we have a lot of common tastes. And of course I like to do anything with my hands. At one point I painted, and believe it or not, what I did, the Holocaust had some reflection on it, because most of my colors were dark, brown, ochre, very little bright color. And I even have a painting with a, it's a special technique and you're supposed to do something first and then afterwards if you see something, you know, you go over it. And it, I mean, it's sort of in the war. I could have called it *The Holocaust*, but I didn't want to do it at that point. So it really influenced me, what I, really what I, react and the way I thought and painted and…

SB: Is there anything else you wish to add?

SH: Oh, no, one thing I forgot to say is that when you get to camp you get a number.

SB: Oh yes.

SH: Yes, and my number, and I don't, I had it removed when I came to America, was A16, 832.

SB: Would you repeat that again, please?

SH: A16. 16,832.

SB: O.K.

SH: I had it removed when I came to here because I like to wear short sleeves and I didn't want people to see and ask the question all the time.

SB: But things are different now and…

SH: Thank G-d.

SB: And you have a wonderful life with your husband, I see.

SH: Right. It's much different.

SB: And thank you. We are delighted that you are working with us.

SH: Oh, well, I am happy to do it. And I wouldn't want to do it otherwise.

SB: Thanks again.