HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

EDITH MILLMAN

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Bernice Zoslaw
Date: October 1, 1981

Holocaust Oral History Archive
Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

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EM - Edith Millman[1] [interviewee]
BZ - Bernice Zoslaw [interviewer]
Date: October 1, 1981

Tape one, side one:

BZ: The following is an interview with Mrs. Edith Millman, a survivor of the Holocaust. Mrs. Millman, when and where were you born?

EM: I was born in 1924 in Bielsko, in Silesia. It's not far from the Czech and German border.

BZ: Please describe your childhood and family life.

EM: My father was an executive for an American Oil Company, which means my life was that of an upper-middle class kid. We had a beautiful apartment, a sleep-in maid, and in summer I went to the seashore or the mountains and I went skiing. I attended some private schools, so it was very much like the life of a suburban kid in America.

BZ: Are you an only child?

EM: Yes, I was an only child.

BZ: What is the extent of your schooling? Did you have a religious education?

EM: Not very much of it. We, I had a religious teacher come to the public school, or the elementary school. He would come twice a week and even when I attended a private Jewish school there wasn't much really of religious education. But I do have a strong Zionist background. I learned Hebrew as a living language from some *chalutzim* that were preparing to go to Israel. My grandparents were Orthodox Jews. My parents did not keep a kosher house and went to the synagogue just on the High holidays, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. At Pesach we had a Seder with my grandparents. It was held in a traditional way. But I, as I say, I didn't have much of a religious education but was raised with a strong Jewish feeling.

BZ: And your secular education?

EM: I attended in Bielsko, I attended elementary school, part of it in private and Jewish school and then I attended the first year of high school in Bielsko and in 1937 my father was transferred by the company to Warsaw and I attended high school in Warsaw until the beginning of the war.

BZ: Did you ever experience antisemitism before the rise of Hitler?

EM: Yes, I, even as a child I was called a "dirty Jew." Sometimes while walking to school I was chased by boys; sometimes stones had been thrown. But that was rather infrequent, but we were quite aware of antisemitism in other parts of Poland, especially in Warsaw at the universities where the right-wing students always had fights with the Jewish

[1]née Greifinger.

students. We were well-read and we knew about antisemitism all over the world and took it very seriously.

BZ: Did Nazi propaganda in Germany before World War II affect your standing with your neighbors?

EM: Well, I suppose so. I guess it was an undercurrent of antisemitism among the neighbors or the kids in school but, having had many Jewish friends, I really did not feel it that much until I moved to Warsaw, when, which was in 1937, when it became much more prevalent.

BZ: Did you or your family make any attempt to emigrate before the war?

EM: Yes, my father was always a pessimist and as early as 1936 he applied for an emigration visa but then, because of the quota system, I think his number was due to come up in 1941 and he wouldn't do anything that was illegal. There were ways of getting out sooner by bribing and buying tickets and what not. He just couldn't do it.

BZ: Now please give the date and describe the Nazi invasion and conquest of your community.

EM: Well, as I said, I was in Warsaw and the bombing started almost immediately after the outbreak of the war. We lived in a very good neighborhood—it was a Gentile neighborhood—we lived in an extremely modern apartment building and bombs started to fall immediately. An order was given just before the war broke out that one room in each house had to be made airtight because everybody expected gas to be used, and I remember my mother taping the big picture windows in one room to make it gas-tight. Unfortunately, after the first couple of bombs, the windows broke and naturally we didn't have any airtight room. About a week after the war started, there was a call on the radio for all men, able-bodied men to leave Warsaw and go east. We later learned that it was a mere ruse by the Germans but we really don't know for sure. All I know is that my father took a knapsack in the middle of the night—we all had knapsacks prepared for an emergency—which contained a blanket, and some food and a first-aid kit and a gas mask. In the middle of the night we left the apartment. We heard many fighter planes flying low and heard a lot of shooting and in the morning we learned that one of the bridges going out of Warsaw, east towards Praga, which is a suburb of Warsaw. The German *stukas* (planes) swept very low and machine-gunned hundreds and thousands of people. We had no way of knowing if my father survived or not. He did make his way over to east, to the border with Russia and then, especially since the Russians also invaded Poland from the East, he had some harrowing experiences on the way and then he finally made his way back to us, to Warsaw. In the meantime our house was bombed, I was injured, and after the bombing we sought shelter in the sub-basement, which was a storage place for the coal with which the house was heated and hot water was provided. And that's where I met my first cruel antisemitism, because my mother bedded me down on a pile of coal. There was no ventilation, a lot of coal dust and no windows. It was a very hot summer. It was hot and I was feverish from infected wounds. The superintendent of the building, or the janitor, who always seemed

quite nice to us and was getting a nice monthly tip from my father, all of a sudden decided that he did not like Jews and, although he did let us stay on a heap of coal, he did not give us any water, and he knew where the pipes were that still carried some water and so he and his children had water and he let his children splash in it, but refused to give me any. The water just splashed a couple of feet from me. He offered some water to our dog but not to me.

BZ: How soon after the conquest of your community were the Jews singled out for special treatment?

EM: Almost immediately. I remember the Nazis marching in and Warsaw finally surrendered and soup kitchens were established, and people were lining up to go to soup kitchens, and any people that looked Jewish or some Orthodox Jews in their traditional garb, they were singled out for "fun," which meant the Germans would pull on their beards, make them lie on the floor and so on, an order was given that Jews had to take off their caps from their heads when they met a German and step off the sidewalk. Frequently if they looked in the face of a German while pulling off their cap the German could say, "Well, you arrogant Jew, how dare you look in my face?" and hit the Jew or beat him up. If you averted looking at the face of a German you could be asked, "You dirty Jew, what's wrong, why don't you look in my face? What have you done? What are you guilty of?" and be beaten that way. When the order was given for all the Jews to wear armbands with the Star of David, it was very easy for the Poles also to single them out, and if you stood in line in front of a bakery store to get your ration, or bread, or in line for water, because many of the water mains were broken and there were only certain places where you could get water, the police could come and chase you out of the line, and if you were close to the storefront they sent you back to the end of the line. There was just no recourse. You couldn't fight them all and if you tried to fight they would just call a German guard who made you go to the back of the line. Since I didn't look Jewish I frequently left the house without my armband and that helped a great deal, when procuring food and so on.

BZ: When your father went on the march with the able-bodied men from Poland, there was an incident about a horse that I would like you to tell.

EM: Well, as I said, my father left in the middle of the night, and as a matter of fact he left right after he had what the doctor diagnosed the day before as a mild heart attack and so he was really quite weak. After he picked himself up, they were all in some kind of a gutter waiting for the planes to go by, he walked for several hours and he met some other Jewish men and they all were middle-aged and kind of weak and I guess scared. And when they came to a farm they decided to pool the money, they all had some money, and to buy a horse and a wagon so they could put their knapsacks and ride in the wagon. As it turned out, since none of them knew anything about horses—they were all city men and never lived on a farm—they had bought an old horse that was lame and blind on one eye and the wagon was just an old farm wagon. It was falling apart and it turned out the horse was quite weak. But they didn't have the heart to leave it on the road, so they spent more money just

buying food on the road and paying exorbitant prices for the food for the horse, for the hay, and none of them sat on the wagon because the horse just couldn't pull it. They even took the knapsacks off the wagon to make it lighter and then they left the wagon and unhitched the horse and pulled the horse and took it from community to community and just fed it, because they didn't want to leave it as I said, and finally, in some little village, they paid a farmer to take the horse with a promise he would not kill it but feed it. So they left even money with the farmer for food for the horse. I thought it was kind of a funny incident. On the other hand, it shows just how sentimental Jews were about life. My father got quite sick on the way. As a matter of fact that was on the way back, trying to make his way through to Warsaw, but he was taken in by a Jewish tailor in Lublin, I think it was; he had a high temperature and the wife of the tailor took care of him. They were also in pretty bad shape—their house was also burned down—and they were living in some little shack, and they nursed my father back to strength, at least enough strength that he could come back. At the time we were living in my father's office. It was an American company, American office building, and since our house was demolished, almost everything was ruined, we had moved to this office with some other families, employees, of this firm. We slept on the desks and we ate in the soup kitchens because there was no facility to cook. But through some strange coincidence, some of my mother's canned fruits—she used to can fruits and cherries and so on and made jams—this wasn't destroyed in the bombing and we were able to get it out of the house and had it with us and we exchanged the jam and compotes, applesauce and canned pears and so on for bread. There was a kind of feeling of camaraderie. Somebody got some bread or a piece of meat or something in exchange for some jam. I will never forget the first time I ate horsemeat. It was at the soup kitchen and a friend of mine told me, "Edith, there is some good soup there with lots of meat in it but it is horsemeat," and I immediately believed her. I didn't care, so when we went with my mother and she enjoyed the soup and on the way out somebody told my mother. In fact I had told my mother it was horsemeat but she thought I was joking so she said, "Oh sure, sure," and she ate the soup, but on the way out somebody told, my mother was told by another lady who was cooking in the kitchen that it really was horsemeat and my mother got awfully sick in the middle of the street and threw up and I thought she was going to faint. I just want to contrast that with later on with life in the ghetto or life when we escaped from the ghetto, where you paid a lot of money to get a piece of horsemeat and my mother learned how to prepare it in such a way for my father not to recognize it, and I guess I was the first one to insist that we buy and get that horsemeat because I knew how important some protein was. My father didn't know for a long time that what he was enjoying was hamburger but we didn't call it hamburger, [unclear] was actually horsemeat.

BZ: Were you in a ghetto?

EM: Yes, when the orders for the ghetto were given and rescinded and given and rescinded. There was always a lot of confusion. Finally we were moved into the ghetto. My parents managed to get an apartment, or a room in an apartment, in one of the houses

that was right on the border of the ghetto, because the ghetto was established in an old area, an industrial area, dilapidated. And it was just the outskirts where halfway decent houses existed, and that's where we moved in. Unfortunately, that was not for long because, as you know, the Germans kept squeezing the size of the ghetto and always cutting off streets, and the upshot was we had to move many, many times because I guess my folks were unwilling to move back into the middle of things. They always moved, one street inside the wall, and as the ghetto was made smaller we always had to move. I remember the first house we moved into, we lived in a dining room. The other rooms were occupied by other families, but since it was a dining room it was a walk-through room for other families to get to the kitchen. The young people immediately organized a library in this building and we also organized a little nursery for the children that could not go to nursery school and so on. We were not allowed to go to high school; the high schools were closed. I spent a lot of time studying English. There was a rage for studying English and a rage for reading certain books. I remember that's the time when I read *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, and I remember countless discussions about his philosophy of life, what a wonderful life it would be the way Huxley described. We also read a lot of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky was very popular at that time, *War and Peace,* almost everybody in my circle of friends studied English and most of us studied on our own, and later on secret courses were organized in the ghetto for students. They were organized by high school teachers and even university professors. We would meet in groups of five and six. There was a death penalty for being caught studying. I remember vividly that it took us at least half an hour or more to get to a place. We always usually changed the place where we had our lessons so as not to attract attention. We were even afraid to all walk in together to a teacher because it would attract attention, so we went in one at a time. In the winter of 1941, when it was very cold, we had just a little lamp, a *karbowka* lamp, it was called, and we would sit around it and put the lamp on the table and study by that light and more than anything, we would warm our fingers at that little flame. I remember being taught physics by a former university professor who was quite famous in his field in astrology,[2] some measurements that he had made and he was our physics professor. I remember his teaching us with his gloves on and he had some holes in the tips of his fingers and he had these holes so he could hold the pencil better, but often the tips of his fingers would get so cold and he would blow on them to get some more heat. I must say that I got a very good education because I was taught in groups of five by some excellent professors and we took our studies very seriously. It was our way of holding on to humanity. It might sound ridiculous now but the world was falling apart around us and, yet, we were solving some differential equations and studying literature and studying languages. We studied French. We studied Latin. We were reading many works in Latin and translating them, and I guess it was just our way of trying not to know that the world was really, as we knew it, was coming to an end. That does not mean we were not

[2]Perhaps Mrs. Millman means "astronomy."

concerned with what was going on. Our little group organized a little nursery. We would gather the kids together just to get them off the street and there was not much that we could do but just to keep them occupied. We would also collect some food, we would go to our relatives and friends who were better off than most other people, get some canned stuff, make some soups and so on and feed these kids. There were shelters for children but, in spite of that, there were many children who wandered around and these were the ones we tried to get into our little what we called nursery.

I don't know how much you want me to talk about the ghetto. Typhus broke out and typhoid fever and many of our friends got awfully sick. Somehow it took an awful toll among the young people. I had a very good friend who was very sick and lost all his hair afterwards. There were other diseases transmitted by lice and everything was full of lice. It was so bad in 1941-42 that if you walked in the street, and the streets were extremely crowded, if a small wind came you could be sure that the wind brought with it some lice. The place that we lived, we had a rule that everybody had to strip completely before we entered the apartment just to shake all the lice out. But in spite of that, in one apartment where we lived a woman died of typhus. That was my first close encounter with death in the apartment itself. She had a daughter of eight years and several weeks later the daughter also died of typhus. She was the wife of a lawyer who had escaped. One woman in the apartment became pregnant and, we lived with many professionals in the apartment and a doctor performed an abortion right there in the house, and I was a teenager at the time but it was kept a secret for a while, but several weeks later I learned that it was an abortion that was performed.

Tape one, side two:

EM: Another incident in the ghetto that I remember and about the same time was when we had to put our dog to sleep. It seems kind of unimportant now, but there was just not enough food to give to the dog but we did have some sugar, I remember, and we gave the last three sugar cubes to the dog before my mother took him to the vet to get the injection and when she came back, on the way back, she was crying and everybody on the street whom she knew felt that something happened to either me or my father, who might have been taken away, because she was crying so bitterly, and she was ashamed to say that she cried because she had to put the dog to sleep. There were no dogs allowed at that time. There just was not enough food for any dogs. We were often hungry but because my father had the foresight of taking most of the money out of the bank before the war, shortly before the war, and converting it into dollars, we were able to buy food on the black market. This was extremely expensive and we had to be very careful with the way we spent money. In the beginning we were also getting packages even from overseas, from America. It was before the war between Germany and America. My father had some cousins in New York and through the Joint Distribution Committee we got a few packages. In the beginning of the ghetto, my father was still able to work because it was an American firm, so he was still getting some of his salary and that naturally helped. Later on all that stopped and we just had to live on the money my parents had saved up and from selling some stock.

At one time I was caught in the street for labor to be taken outside of the ghetto. I was taken to some barracks and told to wash the windows, I think it was on the fifth floor. It was in winter and it was extremely cold and I was given a bucket of cold water and told to wash all the windows inside and out, and when I asked for a rag or some soap or something they told me, "No soap," and if I wanted a rag I should take my blouse off. And I was sitting on the windowsill trying to balance myself and the bucket and splashing the cold water on the window panes and then scraping the ice that almost immediately formed with my fingers. I felt like my fingers were going to fall off any minute and while I was balancing myself on this window sill, there were some soldiers sitting around and they had a lot of fun just watching me trying to balance myself. At that time at a point when I felt I was going to lose my fingers I started to talk German to them. Up to that point I never spoke German to them. I was proficient in German, but I thought maybe if I speak in their mother tongue they won't be quite as cruel, and it really worked. They told me to get off that windowsill and then they gave me a rag just to wipe the windows on the inside, and at the end of the day they gave me a loaf of bread. It was two kilos of bread which was quite a lot of bread and it wasn't the black terrible bread that we would get with our ration cards. And I was quite hungry because they didn't feed me all day. I decided to bring it back to the ghetto to my parents, but as we were crossing the gate from the outside into the ghetto, a policeman took it from me and said, "That bread was too good for the Jews." So there I was, without having eaten anything and without a bread to show for my labor.

Coming back to the typhus, when it broke out in a building, they would close all the doors and they would quarantine the house and not only quarantine that house but quarantined also the house to the left and to the right and nobody could get in and out, which meant the people could not even go for the food that they would get on their ration cards. People couldn't go to work and because of that, most times we kept it secret and when somebody did come down with high fever, whatever its cause, it just was not reported. Besides, if they were taken to the hospital the conditions in the hospital were so terrible; much worse than if they had just died in the house. Medicine was extremely hard to get and it was just impossible to get ampule of vaccine and so the stronger ones just survived and the weaker ones died. There were some doctors—there were many doctors around—they sometimes would come to these houses and try to help, but without proper medication and with very poor nutrition, there was very little they really could do. It was just a matter of which organism was stronger. At one point, one of my favorite friends was taken—she was very pretty—she was taken outside of the ghetto for some filming and I guess they were sending some films to Germany, how well the Jews had it in the ghetto, and they were taken to a café and there were some young men and young women given clothing to dress up and it was filmed, they were dancing, to show they were having a jolly good time. I guess it was a film for propaganda purposes. I know this as a fact because this girl came back and told us how she had to dance and was drinking something from a cup which was really water but they had to talk about it as if it were coffee.

We did have some cultural life in the ghetto; we had concerts which I attended quite frequently. I especially enjoyed the symphony and I think my love for Mozart and Beethoven stems from that time. You just could immerse yourself completely in music. It was mostly the German composers that were played. I don't remember having heard any non-German composers. I might be wrong, I don't remember, but I think there was a rumor that only German composers were allowed to be played.[3] We did go several times and enjoyed it tremendously. When the order was given—up to that point we had no idea what was really happening on the outside. We didn't know about the concentration camps, how bad they were, and we were under the impression that they were all work camps. Nobody really knew about the Final Solution that was coming. We tried to survive, mainly, I guess, because we never lost faith that the Allies eventually will win, and our only way of fighting Hitler and the Nazis was to stay alive. There wasn't too much active resistance in the ghetto. This means we didn't kill many Germans, mainly because of the repercussions, mainly because of all the hostages that would be taken. I think the ratio was something like 100 to 1. At least that was the announced ratio. And I think the feeling in the ghetto was that we do not have the right to jeopardize the lives of other people because we feel we want revenge. If a German was injured, not only the family—if they caught the culprit—would be taken away, but also the neighbors and the whole house would be emptied of all people

[3]Officially only Jewish composers were allowed to be played, but this order was disregarded and others, especially German were played. - EM

and everybody was taken as a hostage and either shot or sent away, never to be heard of again. I think because of that the feeling was quite strong that nobody had the right to jeopardize the life of another one. I think that was the main reason why there wasn't that much active resistance because we still didn't know we were marked for death. At that time, we just thought we were marked to languish in this ghetto until the end of the war. When the deportations started and in June and July of 1942, that's when we started to doubt that we are going for resettlement and that we are going for labor, because they were taking old people and children were not supposed to be in the ghetto and the whole ghetto was supposed to be a big labor camp and so on. I'll never forget the "cauldron"[4] that they made, I think it was in September 1942 and the order was given that all the Jews had to go into a, I think, six block square area and the big selection was taking place there. I don't know exactly how many people were marching to this *kociol,* I think it translates as "cauldron." There was just a small area where all the remaining Jews—at that time I think maybe a hundred and twenty thousand were left in the Warsaw Ghetto. We were marched out in the middle of the night. The order was given and we were all allowed to take some food with us. And many people were able to procure poison. I had poison. My father gave me some arsenic to have with me and I gave some to my mother and she had some, because at that time we already knew that it wasn't resettlement but it was a camp, and although we didn't know it was a death camp, we had an idea it was a concentration camp where the chances of surviving were maybe slim, or maybe that the torture would have been too much. We didn't know about gas chambers. Although somebody came back from one of the camps and talked about people being gassed, I don't think he was believed. They just thought he was crazy. But I guess there was enough. Even if we didn't believe it all, we didn't believe there were gas chambers, that people were just shot and there were mass graves—there was enough doubt. We just didn't want to go through all that, to be deported. And in this *kociol* we had to wait overnight before the selection started and we were all crowded together in a small room. The thousands of people. My mother, father and I were crowded in a small room and there was an old iron stove and somehow—we were crowded in what used to be a kitchen and my mother took some coal soot from that stove and she put it on my father's head. He was getting gray so just to make him look younger and she put a black thing over his temples to cover the gray and I don't remember where she found it or if she had it but I remember there was a piece of chicory, that stuff that you put into coffee, I don't know if she had it in her knapsack, but it had the reddish brownish color and I remember her putting it on his cheeks to make him look healthier. Then when we were crossing through that border—it was a kind of a gate where the selection was taking place—the Germans would usually just take one. We marched in four, four people and they would just take one out and the rest of the family would go, if it was a family, because at that time people just didn't want to separate. There was a child who was put to sleep in a knapsack in front of

[4]German synonym for putting Jews into a "kettle."

me. Some father tried to carry it through that gate and the child started to cry and move and the German noticed it and made the father take the knapsack off and open it and it was the child and he got some other people with big bags and knapsacks and there were children in those. Some were asleep and some weren't. And he just lined them up and shot them and a few mothers tried to cover with their own bodies the children, and they were just also shot. And then they beat us with whips and we just ran so that I don't really know exactly how many were killed that way. But that is one of my last remembrances of—then we got separated somehow from my mother and we got back into the compound of the Schultz factory where we worked at the time. And my mother worked for Toebbens and they were selected later, so we didn't really know if she made it or not. And I understand there was quite a discussion. The people didn't know if they should go ahead of the line or towards the end and tried to outguess the Germans, if they would be in a good mood in the beginning and let them through or if they would be tired of selecting and towards the end they would let them through. But somehow my mother and her friend chose the right part of the convoy and they did get through. But most of these people did not, and when some of them came back to the ghetto and they said that most of the people from Toebbens were taken to the *Umschlagplatz* and were taken to be sent away, and my mother wasn't showing up and I was with my father and we were sure that she didn't make it. But towards the end she finally did come in. I remember the terrible fear that we had that she was taken but she finally did come through.

I worked at Schultz, in the office. I remember all that. Schultz worked on uniforms and furs. We had quite a group. Well, that was the passive resistance, because most of the uniforms, the fur that was made, we tried to rip the seams in such a way it would kind of pass inspection and fall apart when it would go to the front. My father was working also in the office as an accountant and Schultz was trying to cheat the government, the German Army, I guess it was. He would ask, not directly, but through his directors, the order would come down to my father how to juggle the figures because he would juggle them in such a way as to increase his profit and I once asked my father how he felt about it and he said, "Well, since it was all going against the army and against the government [he said] he felt good about it and the more he could juggle the better." He didn't care who made the profit just so long as in the long run it would not benefit the Germans. I escaped from the ghetto in November of 1942 when I volunteered for a transport outside on a truck labor battalion.…

BZ: Excuse me. When they didn't want children in the ghetto, were most of those children hidden by their parents? Did the Germans ever come with a transport and take the children out while the parents were at work in the ghetto?

EM: At that time there were not supposed to be any children officially, so if the parents went to work they would hide the children. If they believed in the resettlement they would just leave with their children, they would just leave with their children. But one day when we came back after that cauldron, after that big selection, there were dead bodies of

children in the building. These children obviously had been hidden and when they were found by whoever went through the building, Germans, Ukrainians or Latvians, because they all went through the buildings there looking for people hiding, and some people managed there to stay in their houses, they had double walls, double floors and what not. In our building there were bodies of two children that I remember, that were found and shot and I guess the parents had just hidden the children and left to go to the cauldron, but the parents never came back, by the way, so they never knew what happened to the children.

BZ: You were there when Janusz Korczak went with his children?

EM: Yes, I watched the procession and he walked at the head and holding the hands of the children and it was a very, very moving moment. So...

BZ: How did you escape?

EM: Well, as I said, I volunteered and there were some friends of mine on the truck and we did have some contact with the outside. I had a Gentile friend on the outside. And his mother and he knew that I would be coming and at a certain point the truck slowed down at a corner and these friends started a pretend fight on the truck and the guard was too busy beating them up, so I jumped. Actually, the driver of the truck was bribed and he knew that I would jump. Just the guard did not know and he didn't even notice that I was missing.

BZ: The driver was a German?

EM: The driver was a German but he was pretty easy to bribe and I guess I wasn't the first one that escaped that way. I don't even know but I suspect that the guard on the truck probably was sharing, officially [unclear] he was not because I cannot imagine that he never noticed that I was gone. He was busy beating up the two friends but, for all I know, he could have been pretending that he was so busy beating them up. I do know that the driver of the truck was bribed.

My mother escaped several weeks later by joining a group of Polish smugglers. Unfortunately, I think they wanted to get rid of my mother, too. She had to bribe them and pay them to take her along, although she pretended that she was a Pole. She was dressed like a Polish smuggler, a Polish peasant, and she just pretended that she had lost her group and that her usual way of entry was cut off, and that's why she had to join them and she paid them. They waited until it was dark and then they went through some demolished buildings and some holes and sewers and demolished buildings, but, somehow, just as they were reaching the border between the ghetto and the Aryan area, some Germans came along and my mother suspects that these Polish smugglers had set it up because they disappeared and my mother found herself quite alone. So she started to run and she had a vague idea where the escape route was, but the Germans came with their flashlights and were running and she ran and she jumped into several feet into some kind of a hole, which was half filled with mud and dirty water, and as she was escaping in December it must have been from some melted snow or something. Anyway, the Germans stood almost on

top of her on a half destroyed brick wall and they were shining their flashlight, and she was so sure that the flashlight would shine right on her face, but somehow it just missed her and they were looking down, but they just didn't shine it close to the wall where she was and she was just under their feet practically and she always told me how she prayed and she said, "If there is a God, please help me now and don't let them see me," and they didn't. All she could hear them saying: "*Ich hab sie ja gesehen, sie war hier*" means: "I have seen her, she was here," but they stood there for a while and looked for her, but didn't find her. And when it got lighter she made her way out and, since she had some stuff with her because she was pretending she was a smuggler, and she had some stuff with her, when she got out she continued to pretend she was a smuggler. All the smugglers had a pretty good network there and they did suspect her of being Jewish so they took most of her stuff, but they did let her go and she made her way to this apartment where I met her, which was set up in advance and we had some papers prepared for us, identity cards. They were completely false. They cost a lot of money, but they really were no good because there was no basis to them. Later on, I was able to get a birth certificate from a small village in the east of Poland and on the basis of this birth certificate I went to the administration where they were giving regular identity cards and I got another identity card, and it was better insofar that if they had bothered to check they could see that that identity card was given based on a birth certificate, while the first one was just a paper, just the same, just stolen stamps and so on. I had this funny experience, when I went to pick up my second identity card, I walked out of the office and put it in my muff and in the muff I also had the first identity card, which was on a different name, but just as I walked out, I met a friend of mine from the ghetto and we greeted each other and started talking, and two Polish policemen noticed us and that was almost a cardinal sin, to talk with another Jew in the street, because while one Jew could possibly get by unnoticed, when you put two Jews together there was something about them that attracted attention and maybe that's why these policemen noticed us. And one of them took her and the other one took me and took us to a big courtyard and there he asked me for my identity card and I pulled one out and I had no idea which one because they both looked and felt the same. They were just folded, and he grabbed it from me as soon as I got it out of my muff and he stood across from me and asked me what my name was and these names differed on both cards, so I had no idea which one he had. But somehow I thought quickly, and I jumped around behind his shoulders and pointed to the place where the name was printed and I said, "It's printed right-

Tape two, side one:

EM: I don't know what I'm forgetting. I don't know what, where you stopped. Is it going now?

BZ: Yeah.

EM: Yeah. Well I'm, where I'm I jumped behind him and I pointed to the place that was print-, where my name was printed, and I said, "It's right here. Can't you read? I didn't know that they hire illiterates at the police force." And then that gave me enough time to know the whole, my curriculum vitae, so to speak, because it had the birth date and so on. And I had most of my story pretty pat, except when he was interrogating me and when he asked me how I support myself, I said, "I give lessons of German," since I knew German. And he became suspicious. That business of giving a German lesson was good for my other identity card where I was born in western Poland where people did speak two languages. They spoke German. But in eastern part they didn't. If anything they maybe spoke Ukrainian or Russian. But they certainly didn't speak German. So he became suspicious and asked me how come I knew German. And I had to think quickly and I made up a story immediately that my mother really was a German, but she died in childbirth, but my grandmother brought me up and spoke German to me, and that's how I learned. But he was still suspicious. And he wanted me to go with him to the police station.

And I had some money with me which I had taken in case I had difficulty getting this identity card out of the office. And I thought maybe I would need it for a bribe or to buy my way out. But I didn't really want to lose it and besides, I wasn't sure if he would take me to a police station just for a bribe or if he would interrogate me further and send me off to the Gestapo, because that was the next step. You either could buy your way out from the police station or you were taken to the Gestapo.

So, and this happened right across the street from the railroad station in Warsaw. And there were some *gendarmes*. I mean, what do you call them? MP's, German MP's, always on guard or marching back and forth in front of the station. So I, after having made up that story with my German mother, I decided that, well, first when I said to the Polish policeman, I said, "I'm not going to any Polish police; I am half German and if anything is wrong with my papers, let a German tell me so."

And I ran across the street to the German MP. I showed him the identity card and I said, "At least could you look it over and see if it's all right. And if it's all right, tell this Polish policeman that it's so. And if it's not all right just take me to your police. Because this Polish policeman is bothering me." And this MP looked at the card and he didn't know anything. I mean, he wasn't a Gestapo man. He didn't suspect anything. And I was a relatively good-looking girl and young and he was a young guy. So he looked at the card and he says, "Oh, *scheint alles in ordnung zu sein*" which means, "everything seems to be all right." And he called the policeman over and he yelled at him and he slapped him in his face, slapped him on the side of his face. And he said, "You'd better look for bandits and

Jews and leave pretty girls alone." Because no way did the policeman or I, say, that he suspected me of being Jewish. He just wanted to verify my identity. When he saw an identity, when this MP saw an identity card and it seemed all right to him, it had a picture and had a stamp, so, he just said to the Polish policeman to look for Jews and bandits and leave pretty girls alone.

And I ran to the station. And we were hiding out in a suburb of Warsaw at that time. And I went to the station and I, later on I met the same policeman. His beat was right near the railroad station. I met him many times and he always saluted. And that story with that, a German mother who died in childbirth, became very handy, several weeks later when I was looking for a job. I saw an ad in the newspaper for somebody who was bilingual, to work for the railroad stations. And I went to apply for that. It was in a big office building. I had to go to the personnel director of the railroad system. It was a big office building. There were many guards almost, everywhere. So I decided instead of taking the elevator and standing maybe close to some German—oh, the place was crawling with Germans—who might suspect me of being Jewish and might not like my face, I decided to walk up the steps. I think it was the third or fourth floor. And standing on every landing, on every floor, there was a guard and I had to show my fake identity card. I would have been much better off just taking the elevator. But anyway, I made my way in and this personnel director had me sit down and type and he was dictating to me. I knew some typing, which I learned in the beginning of my ghetto years, when my father insisted that I do something constructive, and just as I learned some English and I also had to learn shorthand and typing, which I taught myself. But it wasn't, it was the hunt and peck method. But I mean, but I did know a little bit how to type.

So he was dictating to me, and I always say an angel must have been sitting on my shoulder, because never before and never since could I type that fast and that well. And he was dictating. Is this thing going? I don't know. I have to see. [noise; tape off then on; noise] He was dictating some very technical article, about the brake system. And I swear some words were half a line long and one paragraph was half a page long. And when I finished, he looked it over. And apparently there wasn't even one mistake in that whole thing, although most of the words I had never heard before. They were all very technical. And he shook his head and said, "Well, Miss, are you Polish?" And I said, "Yes, I am." And he shook his head and said, "No, you're not." And my heart sank because I knew that the Germans, the more knowledgeable Germans, always suspected when they found somebody who was a little more intelligent or a little more educated, that they were Jewish rather than Polish. So I said, "Uh oh, he knew, he knows that I am a Jew." And so I kept insisting that I was a Pole. And he kept insisting that I was not. "No, you're not. It's impossible. You're not." So finally, in desperation I pulled my German mother out again, and I said, "Well, I can tell you it's, I'm trying to keep it a secret, but my mother was German, and she died in childbirth. And my father was Polish." So he was so pleased with himself. And he said, "*Ja, ich hab'es gewusst*, I knew it. I knew it." And so he bought this

story. He asked me why I'm keeping it secret. I said, "Because my father was a Polish officer and was in a POW camp. So because, since he was a Polish officer I couldn't very well get papers as a *Volksdeutsche* [ethnic German]. Because most Poles, even if they had one German grandmother or great grandmother, immediately tried to get the papers of *Volksdeutsche*. It was the ethnic Germans, which immediately gave them some added privileges.

And so he bought this story and he asked me where I wanted to work. I said, "I thought you had a job, a specific job. He says, "No, just tell me where you want to work." So I mentioned a little town, which was really, it was a small town. It was a resort in the summer, but it was also a railroad junction, on the eastern part of Warsaw. And I said that's where I wanted to work. And he called the stationmaster in that place and told him that he's sending a young girl over there and to give me a job. I thanked this man and left. The next day I went to that stationmaster and I presented myself for work and he gave me an office of my own, and a desk, and treated me beautifully for a couple of days. And I just couldn't believe my luck. And, because I knew that they didn't even treat Poles or even Germans that well. And he, several days later he comes in and he tells me, "Hedwig," that's, they changed my name from Jadwiga, which was my Polish name, to Hedwig, which is germanized. He said, "Hedwig, Heinz is coming."

And I looked at him stupidly and I said, "Who?"

And he said, "Heinz." Now who is Heinz? And he laughed, and he said, "You know," in a knowing way and kind of blinked and said, "Oh, you don't know who Heinz is, huh?"

And I said, "No, I don't." Anyway, it took a few minutes before I realized that I really didn't know who that Heinz was. It happened to be that personnel director in, at, for the railroad. And apparently he was under the impression, since this Heinz, whatever his last name was, I don't know, called and said he's sending somebody for, to give me a job, he thought that I must have been a mistress of this Heinz. And that's why he treated me that well. So when he realized that I didn't even know who that Heinz was, he took the office, the desk, and everything away from me. But still I did get another desk, which I had to share with some other workers. And he turned out to be a pretty decent man. I mean he, I was put to work translating German directives into Polish. And then also, later on I was put in charge of extra ration cards, or stamps, that the Polish railroad workers were getting. And that helped me a great deal, because I quickly made another list and I stole many of these extra rations. I was put in charge of that whole thing, and I was able to supply some other people with it.

First of all, I was able to get more for us. And, but I also was able to supply some other people with these ration cards. And I knew where the blank identity, railroad identity cards were kept, and where the stamp was kept. And I was able to steal some of those. And the friend that I, that helped me get in the beginning, when I got out of the ghetto, he had a connection with the underground. And I supplied him with these identity cards. And I made

some for some other Jews that were in the area that I knew were hiding. We, I discovered a whole family in hiding, not far from where I was hiding my father. And they all got identity cards.

A matter of fact, one from this family was going out. He didn't look Jewish, so he was moving freely. And he was caught by the Gestapo. But I understand that he was, he ate the whole card before he was interrogated. So, but when I learned that he was caught I thought that my life was in danger, because I knew that he had one, a card that I supplied.

I was able to make, put, make some fake letters. I had there, a letterhead, you know, from the railroad station. And I tried to save my aunt and my cousin, who lived in Galicia. And they were in the ghetto there. And I made out the letter. I typed the letter on this official paper, that I was supposed to take them out of the ghetto and take them to Warsaw, because they used to be railroad workers and they knew certain things that the Gestapo is interested in knowing. It was a very crude way and really didn't help anything, but it did give me some papers with which to go to Boryslaw and Drohobycz and Lvov [L'wow], where my father's family was still in the ghetto.

I made my way. I got, I traveled by train and I, just before we hit Lvov, some Ukrainians threw me out of the train. The train was still moving. I think they were suspecting of me being Jewish. So here I again had a close, very close encounter, with death, really. But after they had thrown me out, the train stopped; it didn't have no entrance to that station. And I ran to the car, the wagon where the Germans, reserved for the Germans. And I got in. It was full of German soldiers. I got in and I, again, addressed them in German and said would they please give me refuge because there were some wild Ukrainian guys after me. And they saw a rather disheveled young girl, a teenager. And so they decided to give me refuge. They thought that these Ukrainians just wanted to have fun with a girl. They didn't suspect me, that I was Jewish, and they didn't suspect that the Ukrainians suspected me of being Jewish, and that's why they threw me out in the first place.

I made my way to the ghetto, in this little town. I bought, with the help of a farmer, who gave me a ladder and I climbed over the ladder in the middle of the night to get into the ghetto. And it's funny, but this cousin, I had the papers, and some clothing for this cousin, who was about my age. I wanted to get and take her with me. But her parents were there and I couldn't save both her parents, who looked rather Jewish. And I wanted to take first my cousin and find her place and then maybe later come back for her parents. But we couldn't all travel, you know, four Jews together. And so I showed her the identity card and this special letter that I had. And that letter, I didn't have opportunity to show to anybody, because nobody had stopped me up to that point. And, but she didn't want to leave her, she didn't want to leave her parents, so she refused.

And then I went to Lvov, where I had an aunt. And at that time they had an *Aktion*, means a selection. And there was a lot of shooting and stuff. And I tried to make my way into the Jewish area. And I couldn't. Frankly, I made it, I almost made it, and I got scared.

And I didn't go in. And I came back empty-handed, after a couple of bad experiences again with some Ukrainians who followed me, who suspected me of being Jewish. And again I jumped, twice I jumped into a German trolley car, pretending to be a German. And I always spoke German. And I made my way back to Warsaw and to this little town where we were living. My mother didn't look too Jewish, but my father did. And besides that, it was almost more dangerous for a man to be outside, because all they had to do is pull their pants down and if somebody was circumcised he certainly was a Jew, because the Poles do not circumcise their males.

I, we had dug a hole under the floor for my father to go in, in case, you know, if somebody came to the door. It was a old farmhouse that we had rented. The owner of that house, a peasant, knew me and my mother as sisters. And that came in quite handy at one point, because we had a couple of blackmail experiences. And at one time the, my mother was blackmailed. And the Gestapo came and they asked for, well, they asked for the people who lived there. And the farmer, but we got wind of that blackmail so my parents had left the night before, to another hiding place. But when they walked into this old farmhouse there was a ton of coal in the middle of the kitchen, which I managed to gather. Every day from, after work, I would fill a bag or a knapsack with coal. I would climb on the engine, on the train, and you know, most of the engines had coal. They were not electrified. And I would carry about forty or fifty pounds of coal, and take it home. And then my mother would either sell it directly for money or exchange it for some other food with the local farmers. But I had managed to get about a ton of coal. And then it was just piled in the middle of the kitchen. So when the Gestapo came, they asked how the coal got there. And that farmer who owned the house said well, the only thing he knows is that this Zoszak, which was my mother's Polish name, had a sister who worked at the railroad station, and that I probably was the one, that the sister was the one who brought the coal, stole the coal.

So the Gestapo came to the station where I was working and asked if there was a Zoszak employed. Now, my boss asked me, because I had all the lists of the employees. And when the Gestapo said, "Zoszak," I was sure that they had caught my mother, because my mother's name was Zoszak. And I had a list that, a special list, made out in pencil, and I pretended that that was Zoszak, and I said, "Yes, this woman used to work for us, but she isn't working any more." And I was sure it was my mother that they had caught. But it turns out later on, when I found out what happened, that they were really after me, because they expected me to have the same name.

You want to interrupt it for a while? Because you...

BZ: No, no, no!

EM: You're sleepy.

BZ: I'm not sleepy! No, no, no, no! [unclear] Come on.

EM: Well, I, so they actually were after me. But because the farmer thought we were sisters, he didn't have my true name. Well I had several other experiences while I was working at the railroad. At one time they caught somebody whom they suspected of being

Jewish. And they brought her to the, it was a woman. They brought her to the railroad station. And they sat her down in my office. And they told me to call the SD, the *Sicherheitsdienst* [Security Service]. And I said I would. And I went...

BZ: Who were they?

EM: Hmm?

BZ: Who were they SD?

EM: Yeah.

BZ: Who were they?

EM: Well, they, well now it wasn't the, it was the "KRIPO," the *Kriminalpolizei*. The police, the German police. It wasn't the Gestapo. It was the German *Polizei*. Anyway, the man in charge of that in our town was a drunkard, and he had already the, you know, the alcoholic shakes and he was completely out. I mean he was an awful, awful man when he was drunk, I mean. He was extremely cruel, with the Poles and so on, because they were really, the Jews weren't really his domain, so to speak. But anyway, at one time they got this woman and I couldn't very well let her know that I was Jewish and that I was [unclear]. She was terrified. And, but I didn't say anything to her, and I just said yes, I would call the people in charge. And so they left me with it. And so I told her she should walk out. And she looked at me as if I were crazy, because, well, she thought I was a Pole. And I said, "Just run." And I told her where to hide till night came. Because I knew the area pretty well. And she left. And then when my boss came back, he said did I call the KRIPO? And I said, "Yes, I did. But I had to go to the bathroom, and then when I came back she was gone. I think the KRIPO must have taken her."

BZ: Oh, that was marvelous!

EM: So, he said, "Are you sure the KRIPO was here?" I said, "No, not really." So he says to me, "Well, you know what that means? It means that we might have let some bandit go." Because they got her with the suspicion that she was Jewish, but they didn't call it that. They called the Jews bandits. So, that we let a bandit go. So I said, "Well, I had to go to the bathroom. I wasn't, I'm not a god. I had to go to the bathroom. And I did call them." So he says, "Well, you know what? Let's not investigate it any." That was the same guy, the head of the whole railroad station. "Let's not pursue it any more, because if she escaped, it's our fault. So let's just leave it alone. And whatever happened, let's think that everything went all right. And as long as we don't know anything." So I said, "Fine with me." And this woman did go to that hideout place. And I knew that the underground was active there, and they helped her along from there. I also was able to get somebody from the underground to work their Morse machine, you know, the Morse Code when you...

BZ: Oh, the Morse Code, yes.

EM: Yes, at the railroad. And there was a girl, and she was half Jewish. And she was also quite active in the underground and she knew, you know, how to work that thing. And they hired her. And through that, we knew when some important trains were coming by. She was relaying information for the people who should have known about it.

BZ: Did they derail the trains and...?

EM: Well, I don't know if I, quite frankly, I don't want to know if I was responsible for derailments or not. All I know is that we gave important information to the underground about some troop movements and some machinery going and so on, and what the partisans did further east, I don't know if certain trains they definitely derailed, but they did get the information.

BZ: Did, what-

Tape two, side two:

BZ: Did, were you aware of an underground in the ghetto?

EM: Not really, no. I was aware when they were staying of, thoughts of resistance, when the young people were getting together. We had a couple of meetings of what to do, but I was not in the thick of organizing and resistance in the ghetto itself. It was more on a, I would say more on a philosophical basis when I was there. That was in the early spring, or should we, shouldn't we? What can be done? There was no definite planning at that time. I guess there was, but not among my friends. Among my friends it was all that intellectual part of business, what can be done, you know, these discussions or, about the plus and minus of armed resistance and so on. But, and my relation with the resistance movement outside of the ghetto was not a direct one. I knew one person who was in the underground. And whatever I did, I just gave him. But I wasn't involved in any, in a close way. I mean I supplied some ID cards. I supplied some ration cards. And then I got a job for this one person who worked in the, with the Morse and so on, so that, you know, through her I guess I was involved.

BZ: But the underground was involved when you escaped. The person that you escaped to, was she involved? It was a woman and her son?

EM: Yeah. But they were...

BZ: [unclear]

EM: They were the son—there was—the woman wasn't Jewish. The son was half Jewish. The father was Jewish, but he escaped to the States before the war. And he, I think he left his wife. I don't know if it was really an escape. I think he was, they weren't divorced, but he left. So the son was half Jewish. But he wasn't brought up as Jewish. But he had contact with the, I don't how active he was in the underground, but he had contact with the underground, and he had access to fake identity cards, because we got our cards through him, the first ones.

I had, you know, there were many cases of blackmail. I was renting or subletting a room in an apartment which belonged to a Polish policeman, actually. And there were just French doors connecting my room with the rest of the apartment. And it wasn't really subletting it. I was renting this one room which used to be part of this apartment, and the rest of the apartment was rented by this policeman. And the administrator of this house, this house used to belong to Jews. And the administrator of this house, in the beginning, was extremely friendly. And then I learned of an apartment in this big building, an empty apartment, and I had another Jewish friend who escaped from the ghetto, whom I knew from the ghetto. And he and his mother and sister were hiding. And they were in need of an apartment. So I procured this apartment for them. But they looked Jewish. And from that time on the administrator suspected me of being Jewish. Up to that point I don't think he knew that I was Jewish. And then he started to suspect me. Because he did rent them the place. And I think he suspected them of being Jewish. And I think that they paid quite

a bit of money later on. But since I was the one to bring these people to him, he started to suspect me of being Jewish. And one day he came to my little room and he thought he was probably, get himself a mistress very cheap, you know. And he started to make advances. And then he started to talk about Jews, that he does not really hate Jews, they are also people, they're people like everybody else. And then he slowly brought the subject up, if I agreed to live with him he would protect me. He wouldn't throw me out. And I had to make a choice, if I wanted to be a mistress of a 55-year-old, ugly, toothless Pole who had a family and maybe seven kids, or not! And so when he finally came out with it, and he made a move, he wanted to kiss me, I slapped, and I looked at his teeth. I still remember his half-rotten teeth. He was approaching me and I slapped him real hard in the face. And I said to him, "You dirty old man! And how dare you! What makes you think that I am Jewish?" And I started to yell at him and I threw him out and said, "If he bothers me once more not only will I go to his wife and tell her, but I'll go to the police, and tell them that he is willing to hide a Jew!" [laughter] And that guy got so scared or thrown back, because he really figured that if I was Jewish, I would just submit, and I would do anything to not to be discovered. But he was so shaken that I guess he really had his doubts, so he was convinced that I was not Jewish. And he was afraid I might tell his wife or go to the police. So he left me alone. But I did tell the other people then, that it's dangerous to be there. And a couple days later they found another place and moved out.

Another experience I had was with a *Volksdeutscher*, who was an ethnic German who suspected my mother of being Jewish. And at that time we had no other place to go. You know, usually we had one or two places where we could escape when things got very bad. But my mother came to me and she says, "This woman is making, or talking in the neighborhood that she is going to get this Jew," and what should she do? Now I knew a German officer, who used to go to the, take the train quite often. And he was a, some kind of an instructor, at an army training base or something that was in the neighborhood. And he, I knew his name, and I knew where he was stationed. He used to be an instructor in philosophy at the university in, I think in Halle it was. And, well, I guess I should go back a little bit. At one time I was trying to take a train from Warsaw to Otwock, and I was waiting. And the trains were coming. They were packed full. And I couldn't get on the train. I mean they wouldn't just let anybody on any more. And I had to go back because my parents were hiding, they were in hiding and, you know, they would be scared silly if I didn't come back at night. And they...

BZ: Were they in hiding together?

EM: Yeah, they were in, at that time they were in hiding. Sometimes they were and sometimes they weren't. At that time they were together. But they expected me back that evening. And it was getting late and our curfew and what not. And I didn't really have where to go. So, I, a couple of trains went by and then these two officers came and waited on the platform. And I had a book by Kant, a German, you know, philosopher. And I was into philosophy at that time. And I had this book with me. And they noticed that, and they

made some remark. And they wanted to get acquainted. So in the beginning I ignored them completely. But then when I saw that it was really getting late and that I, when another train came, and while I was waiting, and they were already moving to get into the train, and I couldn't get in so I let the book drop. And they picked it up. And so they gave it to me and they, you know, they had seen before it was Kant and it was in German. So they started to talk and I smiled prettily and then I said something, "Well, yes, I read Kant." And do they know anything? And they started to talk but the train was ready to move. We had a couple of minutes. So, I said, "Well, it's a pity we can't discuss Kant, but I can't get into that train," you know. And so they said, "Oh, come with us. Come with us as our guest," you know, there, because they were allowed to have somebody with them. So I said, "Okay." You know, so we got into that compartment for the Germans and we discussed Kant. And they were very interested, especially this one guy. He was middle-aged. And, as I say, he used to be an instructor in philosophy. And so he was very impressed and then, but somehow I let them know that I didn't like the Germans and they tried to convince me that the Germans are nice. And he asked me where I lived. And I wouldn't tell him. But a couple days later he saw me at the railroad station. So he figured out where I work. And he had to go to Warsaw quite often. So very frequently I would find a fish, smoked fish, or some sausage, in my drawer. It was his way of proving that the Germans aren't all bad. [laughter] So when I came to the office I smelled the fish in my drawer, I knew what that was, that here are the good Germans!

So, anyway, I had a few conversations at the railroad station and he was always going somewhere and I was working. And when this, my mother came, so desperate that she didn't have where to go and that this woman really means business with that blackmail. And she didn't even want the blackmail; she threatened she is going to go the Gestapo. I called up and I called this base there and I asked if I could speak with this lieutenant Osthus was his name. And he came to the phone and I said I want to talk to him. And he came. And I said that it's very important. Because he had once said, "Well, if you ever," I also told him that my mother was a German, you know, the same German old story and my father was a P.O.W. Yeah, a P.O.W. So, and he was very intent on proving that the Germans are good people, and that I should become a *Volksdeutsche* and this, since I have German blood in me. And anyway, so he said if I ever need him, I should call him. And I had told him that I lived with my cousin. My mother was my cousin, really, but for the owner of the house she was, you know, I was a sister and here I was a cousin.

Anyway, I called him and he came and I said, "Look, I am in trouble. You know we are from out of town. We're not from this area. And some *Volksdeutschers* suspect us as being Jewish. And you know what happens to people who are suspected. We have no close friends that could vouch for us that we're not Jewish. And you know what the Gestapo will do, will take us to, send us away and we couldn't prove that we're not. And so can you, do you have a way of helping, you know?"

And he said, "That's ridiculous! You are Jewish? That's ridiculous!" And when I think of it, it was quite a *chutzpah* to go to a German officer, to tell him, "Help me, because somebody suspects I am Jewish, which I am not." And that's what it really amounted to. So he said, "Come with me. Show me where this woman lives." And he had never met my mother before. He just knew that I lived with a cousin. And my mother, you know, I went there. I called my mother out. My father was hiding under the ground in the hole at the time, and my mother came out.

BZ: Under the ground of the house?

EM: And my, yeah, because we had dug out that hole which also was quite a job because we had a little tiny shovel and spoons and everything. And at night you had to go and put it in the forest, you know, so as not to show any dirt or [unclear]...

BZ: Put all the dirt in the forest, yes.

EM: Put all the dirt in the forest. But anyway, we went with this German to that woman. And she, what I always say, she is a *Volksdeutsche*, but she didn't know any German. And he started to speak German with her. And here she's, "Huh? Huh?" Not a word. And she didn't know any German. He got real mad. Well, maybe she understood some, but anyway, he got so mad. And he said, "If you ever, ever accuse these people of being Jewish, I'm going to take you personally to the Gestapo and accuse *you* as a Jew! And you'd better apologize to these ladies!" And she threw herself on the floor, and started to kiss, well, first she grabbed my hand and I put her away. Then she threw herself on the floor. Then my mother gave her a few little kicks [laughter]. I never forgot it. My mother gave her a shoe. And she was just all over the floor, kissing my mother's shoe. And she said, no, she never, she never, she didn't really mean it. It was just a joke. And I'm Polish. And I was the one to translate it. And he says, and he kept on and said, "Maybe *you are* Jewish! You say you're a *Volksdeutsche* and you don't know any..."

BZ: German.

EM: German and so on. Anyway, when we came out of her house, he had this, he came with his bicycle. And we came out of the house. The, his bicycle was full of flowers. All the Poles around there, they really hated this woman, because she was denouncing them and you know, whenever something, there was a, whatever they did that wasn't quite legal, she would always denounce them to the police and what not. So they really hated her. So when he came out [unclear] his bicycle was full of flowers that the Poles put on it. And we never had trouble from this woman any more. Well, not directly, but I don't know if she didn't pass the word to other ones, because we did have trouble later on. And as I say, we had to abandon that place. [tape off then on]

BZ: How long were you there, in this particular house?

EM: Well, I think since, oh, about March of '43 till about May or June of '44. I don't remember the exact dates. As I say, we were there and then we moved somewhere else. My father [unclear]...

BZ: March of '43 till May or June of '44?

EM: Mmm hmm. And then we had, well, at one, I think in April of '44 we had one very bad experience there. And that was when some Poles came and, early in the morning, and they walked in. And my mother could see them come. Somehow they, she suspected. I think that some dogs started to bark, because the house was in the middle of like a field, there was like a farmhouse. So there was a lot of fields around and you could see who approached it. And a dog started to bark. And my mother looked out and saw these Poles come. So my father immediately jumped into that hole that we had dug out.

BZ: Out of what, out of the living room floor? Was it in the living room?

EM: Yes, it was in the, there were actually only two rooms. One was a big kitchen. It was like a farm kitchen, which was just about all taken up with that coal that I dragged back in. And then there was one room. And that served as a dining room and a bedroom and everything else. We also had trouble, there was a toilet, the toilet was outside of the house, was an outhouse. And well, my mother could use it. But this farmer who lived in a house, a couple of, maybe 100 yards away, had no idea that my father was hiding there. So my father couldn't use it. So my father had to go on a potty and at night my mother had to use, run to empty it. You know. But anyway, this, we had dug a hole in the middle of the floor. First we cut out the floor. It was just a wooden floor. And my mother and I had prepared that place before my father even left the ghetto. And we dug that hole with a little shovel and spoons and everything and then emptied the dirt in the forest at night. And then we made a cover for it. And so we weren't carpenters, really. So it wasn't like a trap door. It was just another big piece of wood made out of boards. And, which we put on top of that. And then we had one, a little rug. And we put that on top of that, and a table on top of that. And the table had a long tablecloth that reached just to the floor, so you couldn't even see that the floor was uneven. And that was the hiding place in case, once in a while the farmer came or so. My father would hide there and we all, we had the doors bolted, you know, so it would always take a while before you opened the door and you pretend you were washing. There was always some water and, we didn't have a sink. The water had to be taken in from a well. And so my mother always kept some water in one, in a washbasin. And the farmer is the only one that we couldn't see approach because the house was in the back. So, but whenever he came my father would, my mother would first ask, "Who is there?" And then she would splash water and pretend that she was just washing. I don't know. He must have thought she was very clean because she washed whatever hour of the day or night. And then in the meantime my father would hide. But he didn't come very often. And, but this one time when they came, and I had another place, the one that I, the one that was connected with this apartment, you know, the one that I had mentioned before...

BZ: Yes.

EM: This Polish administrator. So, I spent my time partly with my parents and partly with, in this other place, that I kept. And when we suspected that somebody is

suspecting us, my father would come to me and also stay, and stay under the bed, just as he stayed with that prostitute. I don't think I mentioned that before.

BZ: No.

EM: When he first came out of the ghetto he was hiding in Warsaw for several weeks—I forgot, nine weeks or something, I forgot how long—with, in the house of a prostitute, which we thought would take the money for it. And he had to hide under her bed and it was not, she never wanted any money.

BZ: And she was no member, was she a connection from the underground? Or you just approached her because she was a prostitute?

EM: No, well, we got her name through this friend of mine. She wasn't a member of the underground. But I guess maybe the underground had used her before, because we didn't have many connections with prostitutes!

BZ: No, but she was willing to help.

EM: She got the name, yeah, she was willing to help and I suspect she, my father wasn't the first one or the last one that she helped. A matter of fact, she would take clients in while there were people hiding under the bed. And she didn't want any money. On the other hand, I had, when my father first came out of the ghetto, oh, even, gee, I forgot so many things. My father first escaped the ghetto in January of '43. And...

BZ: And you escaped about October of '43?

EM: I, beginning of November. And my mother escaped, I don't know, I think it must have been December. And then my father came out in January. And we were hiding in one apartment. And somehow, and I swear I don't remember how, I mean, I have a complete block, we got word from this Neumann, who was a director at Schultz, that he knows where we are and that if my father doesn't come back to finish this accounting for Schultz, he will denounce all of us, you know. And I had forgotten about this incident completely until the other day we were talking with my mother about it. Anyway, my father went back to the ghetto, because he was scared that they would really, oh, that he was told to come back and that Neumann promises him he is going to see to it that he gets out in time. And I guess at that time we already knew that, you know, the ghetto will be liquidated, because the first resistance, there was an action in January, too. So, my father went back into the ghetto. And I don't even know how he went back. And I wouldn't be surprised if he didn't go back by car. That they sent for him. And he went back in the ghetto because he was doing all this accounting that, all these crooked accounting for Schultz. And, but then he wanted to come out and they didn't want to let him out. They wanted more. And it was getting very bad. And that's when he again came out through that same truck, with that same truck that I came on. So he came out, I think in the end of February, anyway, before the uprising.

And between then and until we moved them into this farmhouse, he stayed with this prostitute. But while he was still in the ghetto, I went to a friend of ours, "friend," somebody that my father was very close to. It was a business associate. And he used to

come to us and play chess with my father and we had him over for Sunday dinner very frequently, him and his wife. They were Gentiles. They were Poles. And they were always very, very Polish, such Polish patriots. You know, nobody was Polish enough for them. But my father considered him as a friend. He didn't even suspect him of being antisemitic or anything like that. He was a highly-educated man. And I learned that while we were in the ghetto he became a *Volksdeutsche*, like so many Poles did. And he was a big shot. And I learned where he was. So I went to him, with the idea, you know, if he could help to get my father out of the ghetto, and if he could help later to set us up somewhere.

And he was very nice. His wife was on winter vacation. This was in the winter so she went somewhere on winter vacation, to Swi-, well I don't know where, but skiing. And he was alone in the house. And we were talking and it got late and he said, "Well, why don't you sleep over?" And I consider him a friend of my father. He was my father's age. And I knew him from the time I was a little kid. And there was, a curfew was on. So I said, "Fine," you know, and I went to his, he had this son who was somewhere in school or something. Anyway, I went, he told me which bed to go to, you know, [unclear] bed. He did have a maid in the house, who slept in the maid's room. Anyway, I went to bed and no sooner did I hit the sack when he came in and he wanted to lie down with me. So, I ran out. I wasn't even dressed. I just got my clothes and ran. And then I stayed the whole night in the, on the steps on an adjacent building, because I was afraid to walk. It was late. I couldn't walk in the street at that time. So I slept on the steps. So that here on one side was my father's very good friend who wanted to rape me or sleep with me. On the other hand there was that prostitute who didn't even want any money.

Tape three, side one:

EM: So there were always experiences like that. And I had one experience that, as I say, that building that I moved into was, belonged to a Jew. And he was shot. And the owner.… And that Jew [she meant to say building] was administered by this Pole. And I, we found this family, and the one that we were helping out, the name was Silver. And they were hiding in a farmhouse not far. And they were the owners. The father was shot, and there was the mother, a daughter, and two sons. And one son was free. His name was Paul. And he was, you know, he didn't look too Jewish. He was the one that I gave the identity card and he ate it or something...

BZ: Oh yes.

EM: The Gestapo, he didn't survive. And this other brother looked very Jewish, so he never left the house. And he was the one that, well, they were the ones that I would always help, always bring food in and bring coal and give them the identity cards and what not. But before Paul was taken to the Gestapo he knew of some gold watches and some money that his father had buried, not far from the house. And, but he was afraid to be seen there because he was the son of the owner. You know, and he, they knew that he was Jewish. But since I lived in this house, one night he asked me to come out. And we went into the garden and sat on the grass and pretended that we were, he knew where that was. And we pretended that we were lovers. So we were, when somebody walked by us, so it was getting, it wasn't curfew time yet, but it was getting dark. So we pretended to kiss and what not. And somebody walked by and when the coast was clear, so to speak, he was digging. And he dug that, these watches out and some money. And I'll never forget. He gave me as a "payment," he gave me a pair of silk stockings. You know, which were a big thing. And I had never worn silk stockings until then. And I was saving them and saving them and they survived till long after the war when I wanted to, finally wanted to put them on, they all fell apart! They all fell apart. So, anyways. So that was kind of funny.

But this man, this son, the whole family is, well, not the whole family, but the mother and the two kids, survived. And the younger son had a brewery. And then they were very rich people. And they had a brewery in Lublin. And then after the Russians marched in, he gave my father his first job after the war, [unclear]. It wasn't even after the war. The war was still going on, but we were liberated by the Russians early. And after we were liberated we made our way to Lublin, and that's where this Silver family had a brewery. And although it was taken, it was nationalized, he, since he was the son and he knew the brewery business, he was a big administrator and he gave my father a job in there, in the brewery business. I don't know what happened to them later on.

I don't know. What else? What was I talking about? [unclear; tape off then on; noise] I am afraid the whole thing is pretty disorganized because I mixed up. I'll tell you what comes to my mind. There was one incident that was quite tragic for me personally. I, well I worked at a railroad station. I mean, I worked at the railroad translating things and

doing office work. But to make some extra money, on Sundays I would go to a, other little resort town, which was quite popular, over the weekend, and was selling tickets. And frequently at that time, well first of all I got paid for that. The pay was good. But in addition to that, very frequently when people were buying tickets, and they were in a rush to make the train or they were in a good mood and they were high, they had some couple of beers under their belt, they wouldn't wait for the change. Or they would give you a good tip, you know. The ticket was, I forgot how much it cost, but let's say if it cost $2.20 they would give you three *zloty*. That wasn't so much *zlotys*, whatever it was, the change, they often they didn't pick up the change. And if they were in a good mood they would even leave some really extra. So it was a good way of making extra money. And I had a very good friend who was kind of connected with the underground. And I was very close to him. I, anyway, he usually accompanied me to that railroad office, to that ticket. And this one Sunday we were walking to that station. And I remember I found a penny. And I picked it up. And I wanted to give it to him and he said, "No, that's for good luck." Now, it wasn't that day.

Anyway, one day while I was at the, all, at the, selling the tickets, I noticed a girl with whom I went to school. She was a Gentile girl. And she must have recognized me, because she looked and she looked and then she asked a couple of questions as if to try to hear my voice and maybe recognize me by my manner of speaking. And they were stupid questions, so I knew that she suspected something. But I pretended that I didn't know her. And I did look a little different. My hair was bleached, and I was a couple years older. And, yeah, and my, af-, in that evening I told this friend of mine that I think somebody recognized me. And he said, "Please don't go again, because she might report you or, you know." And I said, "Well, that's silly. I never had any fights with this girl. We weren't that friendly, but I certainly, you know, I mean she's just a classmate and she has no reason to really, to denounce me."

And he begged me, but I didn't listen. And the next Sunday I went and as we were walking I found that penny and I remember, I tried to give it to him for good luck and he gave it to me for good luck. And I finally forced it into his hand for good luck. And I went, walked into that little ticket office, and as I, and as I was selling, I heard this commotion and, on the side of that little building. And somebody burst into the office that there are some Germans fighting with this boy. And it was his way of really alerting me that there was danger. Apparently they came, they were in German uniforms but they weren't real, they weren't even real Germans. I think they were either Ukrainians or somebody but they were in uniform. And I saw her, this girl, who was standing to the side. And I heard this shuffling of feet and fighting and then I saw that one guy with a gun drawn. And he was kneeling right in front of that little window where I was selling the tickets. And I saw the gun and a minute later as they, the two of them were fighting, they came out from behind that wall and there was a shot and he was shot.

And there was a lot of commotion. And people who were there surrounded these Germans. That was in July of 1944 when, and the Russians were approaching. So at that time there was more resistance already among the Poles, and more hatred and open resistance. So they surrounded these Germans and yelling at them. And I just ran out to this, to the boy. And he was dead. Because he was shot right in the head. But his fist was clenched and I opened the fist and here is that penny. Ever since then I don't like to pick up pennies. And...

BZ: This boy wasn't Jewish, was he?

EM: No, he wasn't Jewish. Anyway, he was dead. And I ran off. And I guess the girl got scared later on, because I didn't go back to this office. And I, because I was afraid that they would, you know, find me and they'd come, the Gestapo would come anyway for me. And so I went and escaped to Warsaw. And my parents had this blackmail a couple of weeks earlier and they had moved to Warsaw. So we went to, we lived in Warsaw and I just didn't go back to work at all any more and I just hid. But even then in Warsaw, two weeks later we had a very bad blackmail. And some Poles came in and they said that they knew that we were Jewish and that they're going to report us. And they already, it was a terrible, terrible night. And then finally they didn't report us, but we were, well we threatened them. We said, "If you will report us, we have friends in the underground." And something, and they know that if something happens to us, they know who would be the ones. Because it lasted the whole night. And we told them that we wrote down the name and put it in a hidden place that only we and the underground knew about. So that we put down their names of these, we knew these people who were blackmailing us. They were neighbors. So if something happened to us, the underground would get after them.

And then we escaped, again, over the roof. And my father was in pajamas. And they took everything. And we escaped and went back to that other town and we just had to find hiding places. But we had a few prepared and, as I say, we did have some friends who were willing to help us for a night or two nights. But soon after that the Russians marched in. And actually, it was good. I mean, that last blackmail was a, in a way it was a blessing in disguise, because if not for that we would have been caught in Warsaw, and we wouldn't have been liberated for a half a year or more because of...

BZ: Oh my. Boy, that's a long time.

EM: Because of that blackmail we made our way back to that first town, in Swider and, oh, we hid there and I was hiding my father there in this little room that I had. And that's when my father was sleeping, you know, under the bed.

BZ: Under the bed.

EM: And my mother was hiding with the Silver family. We went to the Silver family and was hiding there. But we knew that it was bad already because they, we could hear the Russian artillery at that time. But that's the reason we were liberated in July of '44, rather than maybe in January or later in '45, because the Russians stopped on the eastern part of Poland. They didn't cross the Vistula River and didn't take Warsaw. And

the uprising started in Warsaw, the Polish uprising, started in '44, the end of '44 in Warsaw. And many, many people were killed. And so, I don't know if we would have survived if we hadn't had that one blackmail that made us go back...

BZ: Hmm, that is really—how did you react to liberation?

EM: Well, with a depression, I guess, because there was no reason for living any more after the Russians marched in and we were free. Of course we couldn't believe it. I remember I, yeah, I walked in the street and I found a friend of mine with whom I went to these secret course, you know, in the, went to school and she was a ghetto friend of mine. And it turned out that she was in hiding a couple of miles away. But the whole family looked Jewish, so they never left that place. But they were quite wealthy and they paid that farmer to hide them. But anyway, I met her in the street and I couldn't believe that she survived. I mean it was my, I was extremely happy. Well, we embraced and then we cried and then we wrote down all our thoughts of why we survived and our feelings about the whole thing. And we couldn't see any reason for really living. We couldn't really. We wondered what happiness was and, you know, again, this was one of those friends who was in that intellectual-philosophical circle. So we tried to find a reason for living. Because there was no reason any more. You know, after.

And then the Russians opened a med school. They established a med school, Curie Sklodovska University. And both this friend of mine and I were enrolled. So we studied medicine for a year, yeah, in Poland. And her brother also studied. We all started medical school at the same time. But then after, when the war ended, we heard that in the U.S. Zone of Germany, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Organization is supporting students while they go to a university. And I made my way out of Poland and studied in Marburg. So I [unclear]. And after the war I made my way and studied in Germany. And this friend of mine, she went to England and from there she went to Australia and she lives in Australia now.

BZ: She went to Australia.

EM: Mmm hmm.

BZ: And you had a friend that when you were in Poland, in these secret schools, you had a friend who was killed [unclear].

EM: Yes. I had, well, one whole group was found out and shot on the spot. And one girl from this sec-, from this school, when I made my way out of the ghetto, she came and she got out and I remember bleaching her hair because she had dark hair and we bleached her hair and we tried very hard to make her look Gentile. And she didn't look too Jewish once she had her bleached hair, but she couldn't take the pressure of living outside the ghetto.

BZ: The double life.

EM: And, the double life, because every time somebody looked at her she thought that they suspected her and she just found it too hard. And she went back into the ghetto. And I understand that she was active in the underground, in the uprising. And she

was killed during the uprising, but supposedly with weapons in her hand. So, but she, maybe I didn't say it, but she chose to go back, because she couldn't take it. At that time she wasn't active in the underground, you know. She just couldn't take the pressure of living outside of the ghetto. So she went back. She felt more secure. She had lost her parents and everybody. She was the only one that was left. Her parents were taken to an *Umschlagplatz*, and I don't know if they survived, but they were taken away and so she was the only one left. But she couldn't stay outside of the ghetto.

BZ: Now, during the uprising you were passing as a Christian.

EM: Yes, during the uprising...

BZ: On the other side.

EM: I was passing as a Christian, and I was working at the railroad station and we knew about the ghetto burning. And the only thing that the Poles regretted was that there were still some buildings that still could have been used, but there was never a bit of sympathy for the Jews. There was only the, well there were some buildings that they were, they bemoaned the fact that some good buildings might have been destroyed, but never for the Jews. And there were incidents of, well, the antisemitism showed through, like once a forester came to the railroad station and asked me to go out for some, well, for a drink. Because I had to pretend I was a Pole and you know, pretend that I drink with them and what not. And I asked him what the occasion was and he said that he, there were "seven heads." And I couldn't understand what he meant by "seven heads." Then, and so he almost looked suspicious at me and then it dawned on me that he had just denounced seven Jews that he had found and he got enough money for it from the Gestapo to buy himself a good bottle of whiskey.

So, but, and I had a deal going with a woman who had a concession at the restaurant there. So I told her that whenever I come with somebody and they order whiskey, vodka, you know, which is colorless, she should give me a glass of cold water instead. And I got a reputation that I was, had a good head on my shoulders, that I could drink; I never got really drunk. Sometimes I pretended I was tipsy so they wouldn't know, you know. So I pretended. I started to act silly. But this woman was very grateful to me because she was giving me water, charging for vodka, and I had to live the way they did. You know, they would drink vodka and eat a piece of lard with it and just, it wasn't even bacon. It was just like a piece of lard or kielbasa or whatever. But I had to, I was a railroad girl. So I had to pretend I was one of them. So, that's my, I don't know. There must have been more incidents, but.…

There was one incident when my mother was trying to save her sister in Lvov after I came back and I was unsuccessful, or at least I didn't get into the area, really. So she decided to go with the same faked letters and identity card. And as she was walking up the steps at the railroad station in Warsaw, a German, she accidentally bumped into some German and he kicked her down the steps. And she was all bloody. Blood was running down her face. And she ran and she just hopped on the, the train was leaving. And the trains

were very full, so she was able to just, she jumped on the train while it was moving on the last, I don't know what you call it, the connection with, between cars. On the, you know, on that...

BZ: The interlocking...

EM: Yeah, the interlocking device. [coughing] And she sat on that.

BZ: Oh!

EM: And there was some railroad man sitting right next to her. And she felt as, since she was injured, you know, blood was gushing down her face, so she couldn't even see very well. And she was still all dazed from that fall. So he was holding her while that [coughing] was shaking. And she was on it. And she thought that that was, well, she had a little suitcase with her, and that she had clothing for her sister because, you know, decent clothing. Because anybody who came out of the ghetto was in rags. And she, and this train had to pass through the railroad station where I was working. And so she says she only prayed to God to let her fall off and get killed, *after* she had passed that railroad station, because she knew...

BZ: Oh, so you [unclear]...

EM: So I wouldn't know. Because she knew that if she would fall before, they would bring the body, if they found the body they would take her to my railroad station and I would see her. So she only prayed to hold on long enough to, you know, to fall off later. But then the train stopped somewhere. And this railroad man, who was very nice, he opened the door to the car. It was just packed full like sardines. Nobody wanted to let her in first. And then he started to yell and he said, "In the name of Christ, let this woman in! In the name of Christ let her in! Don't let her," you know, "just die here on that outside of that train." So they took her in and she stood on one leg because there was no room for two feet, you know. It was so crowded. So she stood on one leg. There was no place for her to put the other, to put two feet down.

And well, she had an address of somebody who was a real *Volksdeutsche*, and whom somebody knew where she probably could get the address of my aunt, you know. Because they were all moved around in Lvov. And, but she couldn't, she didn't know where to find her. So somebody had told her to go to some central registry office and to ask for this one woman. So when she ran to that registry office, which was staffed by Poles and Ukrainians, the woman who was in the office suspected her of, probably of being Jewish. So she says, "Okay, I'll tell you where to go. Go to this other office where they will know where this particular woman is." And she scribbled an address on a piece of paper and gave it to my mother. And my mother walked up there and it was the Gestapo office. And my mother was so, you know, she couldn't think straight and she just saw this very, you know, office building. And she should have realized that it was a German office. Well, she got the address, so she thought it was a registry, maybe there are many Germans. So she walked up there and there was a big entrance foyer or something and steps up. And she walked up

and the Gestapo was standing there and said, "You stinking Pole!" They didn't know that she was Jewish. And she said, "I have to find out [unclear]."

And so he kicked her down the steps. But he thought that she was a Pole. But otherwise he would have probably taken her. So my mother actually thought that that was the office where she was like a register or something. And so this woman, in the first office, just sent her straight to the Gestapo. And then my mother found out where the Jews were being, were kept, and, but apparently she came too late, two days too late.

And she, but she walked up there and there was a guard. And she walked up to him and she showed him that fake letter that I had given and he said, "She has to find Erna Koch" [name of her sister] is the, and he read the letter. And then he said, "Look, don't fool me. I know that's, you know, it's just a fake letter. I happen to know Erna Koch, so come in the evening to such and such place that I tell you." And she isn't here any more. You know, he told her that, what I tell you. And my mother did go to him and he was a, he was a guard. And he apparently was a decent man because he, you know, he told my mother that he knew my aunt. And she was taken on the, on a truck. And she was completely out of her mind. And she was screaming. My mother does not know, but he was in a guard's uniform. Or maybe he was a *Volksdeutsche*. She didn't even know if he is. And, but he didn't denounce my mother. You know, and he decided, he read the letters that said, you know, terrible things happen here. And when she went to him, he told her that she, my aunt, was on the truck and she was completely out of her mind because she had just gotten over typhus and her head, she had lost all her hair and what not. And she kept yelling, "It's all a mistake. My sister is coming for me. It's all a mistake." And then we got the letter. Well, and my, this other aunt of mine back in Poland, shut this off. [tape off]

Tape three, side two:

EM: Well, we got a letter recently from Poland where one sister who survived, one of my mother's sisters who survived, had it and we don't even know how she got it. But it was a letter written by this aunt in Lvov that we tried to save, to my mother, just before she was taken. And so I don't really know how this letter came to my other sister's possession or, you know, when we got it or, I don't remember any—but it's a terrible letter, begging to please come and save her. At that time she had lost her husband already and she was my mother's favorite sister. They were very close. So apparently there was some way of getting mail back and forth. And I don't even remember how they did it, but there must have been a way.

So that's, the other, my other two aunts, my other, my mother's other two sisters, were killed in a concentration camp, killed in Auschwitz. We found out recently that one of them was lining up, she went for a shower, to get a regular shower, not a gas shower, early in the morning, and was five minutes before that shower opened. And she was standing in line in the middle of winter to go to the shower and a German guard yelled at her. He said, "You dirty Jew! Don't you know that it's too early? It's, you still have five minutes," or something, or whatever it was. And, but he used the word, "You dirty Jew, don't you know it's too early?" So she told him, she said, "If I were a dirty Jew, I wouldn't stand in the middle of the night trying to get to take a shower." So he beat her so mercilessly that she died the next day. And my other, her sister, who was with her, I mean, after this one died she didn't want to live any more and she just let herself go completely and became one of those, what do you call it?

BZ: *Muselmann*.

EM: Yeah, a *Muselmann*, and was taken, you know, to the gas chamber soon afterwards. But, up till then, if it were, hadn't been for that one incident, they might have survived, because some other women, who were in Auschwitz with them, survived. They were their, you know, their friends. They were strong, young women. And they might have had a chance of surviving. But just because she was in a, standing in line, you know, standing early to be able to get a shower, she was killed. It's the only thing, you know, that I know that. I know that my grandfather was killed on a walk to Auschwitz. He was a old man and he was weak and he couldn't walk fast enough. And they were walking them. So he couldn't walk fast enough. So of course he was beaten and then just, beaten, clubbed to death, really, with a rifle butt.

BZ: Had he just had an operation? Was it he who just had...

EM: Yeah, it was, he had, an operation on this, I don't know, this was like a cancer. He had an operation. As far as my father's family goes, I know of one uncle who used to be a lawyer in a small, very small town in Galicia. And he was the only lawyer.

And when the Germans marched in, they made him head, or whatever, a *Judenrat*[5] that they made him because he was the only man there with any education. He was a lawyer and he knew German. And the next day they came to him and they demanded a contingent of laborers, of workers, of Jews for labor. But he had known already about things that were going on in the surrounding communities and maybe what was going on in Poland. Because that part of Poland was taken later. You know, the first, the Russians were there. Anyway, he told them, yes, he would get them the men they wanted if they give him in writing a receipt and assurance in writing that the same number of men will come back in the same condition as they left. And they shot him on the spot for that. Because, you know, he was, but he, and I am very proud of him. I understand that in Israel some people who knew about it, I mean, wanted to make some special, I don't know what they do in Israel, you know, for these, the Righteous people, because they felt that he was killed just trying to protect them because he did say, "I'll see to it that you get these men for labor, but you have to give me in writing [tape off then on]."

Well, coming back to the idea of God, I guess I believe it's just a universal idea or spirit or feeling that unites mankind. And you just turn to that idea when, you know, when you're in trouble, mostly when you're in trouble, I think. And then when things turn out all right, you say, "Well, that's what it was." But I think the value of it is still the same, you know. You know, if the old saying, if God created people or people created God. I think it really doesn't matter, as long as the idea contributes to their, to better behavior of people. It's a, okay, that's...

BZ: And all the values that you attribute to your God are intact, as well as your God, but I, you know, a set of values really.

EM: Right.

BZ: And your values are still intact.

EM: Right.

BZ: Whether you...

EM: So I don't know if it, you know, if He can influence my life or something outside of me, or if the idea that originates in me can influence my life or my behavior.

BZ: How about your parents? Have their ideas about God changed?

EM: Yes. I guess my father doesn't believe, although he still wants to be buried in a *tallis* and I don't think he likes the Reform services. In a way he likes the sermon. I took him to Reform services. He likes the sermon. But he still is shocked by some modern ideas, modern way of conducting the services. So he says he doesn't believe in God. He is bitter. But yet the first thing he did when he came to this country is buy a *tallis* to be buried in.

BZ: Is that right? The first thing.

EM: Yeah. And I think my mother believes in God.

[5]Jewish Council.

BZ: She had so many close calls.

EM: Yeah.

BZ: And...

EM: Yes, she did.

BZ: And you told me one time an incident about when she was in a puddle of water.

EM: Yeah, well when she was...

BZ: In the middle of...

EM: She was just getting out of the ghetto and she joined, I don't know if we talked about it.

BZ: No, that wasn't mentioned. You told me that privately.

EM: Oh. Well, she was in the, she was escaping and she joined a bunch of smugglers, and, but they, pretending that she is also a smuggler and that she lost her usual group with whom she crosses the wall or you know, her usual hole was, wasn't there and so she joined another group. And they...

BZ: Were they supposed to be Jewish? Or Gentiles.

EM: No, Gentiles, yeah.

BZ: Yeah, Gentile smugglers, yes.

EM: As a Gentile smuggler. And all of a sudden there were, well, there were noises, and you know, they knew that the Germans were near. Anyway, the other smugglers knew where to escape and she was all alone and so she started to run and there was a half-burned-out building or half-demolished building. And she knew she was right near the, border between the ghetto and, you know, and the Aryan side. But anyway, she ran and she fell, from a broken wall or half a wall and she fell maybe eight, nine feet, and, right into a big puddle of water and mud. And she was lying right near that wall of the building and the two Germans came and they were with a flashlight. That was at night. And so they were searching. And the flashlight just missed her, you know, and, because she was so close to the wall and they didn't lean over. Anyway, she was praying, she says. She says, "If there is a God, please help me and don't let them see me." And she was, so this was like a miracle that they, that that searchlight just missed her toes by inches. And they never saw her and she was lying there very still and then, and they left. And she got up and so, you know, that was a close call. And she always says that God helped her there, because she was praying. So I think in all she has a much stronger belief in God than my father, than I do, and certainly than my father. Yes. My father is very strict, I mean, I had a very good Jewish background. He went to a *cheder* when he was only three or four and whenever I wanted to, you know, well, when I wanted to give the kids a feeling of what Jewish education has meant**,** that is when it is Pesach, when he reads the *Haggadah*. And I, he reads the whole *Haggadah* in Hebrew without one mistake. And, you know, just so fluently. And yet I know that he doesn't know it by rote or doesn't, but he really reads. Because once in a while he would get stuck on the word, and repeat the word, or look again. So I know he

reads it. But yet it's like a second, I mean, it's just so fluent, the whole thing. And he knows everything what to do, and in what order and so on, that I'm very impressed because I know that for years he didn't read the *Haggadah*, you know, it was just years and years, almost a lifetime, that he didn't. And yet when he picked it up he knew exactly what he was doing. And, any prayer, any Hebrew, he just reads perfectly. [unclear] The same he can read from the Torah very easily, you know. Because the way they were brought up, I mean they were four years old they had to read. You know? And so he could never really understand the business with *bar mitzvah* here, you know, the big party and the little, the very little that the kids had to learn, especially in the Reform Temple we belong to. And he just thought it was atrocious, you know, that you, the kids can't read the Torah but they get a little piece to study up for and not really that they're being called up and can pick up at any place and read it. And so he just thinks that Jewish education is way behind here.

BZ: And he's interested in seeing it preserved?

EM: Yeah, in a way. But I don't know if it's, I don't think it's because of a belief in God. It's just because of a strong feeling for the preservation of Judaism as an idea, and maybe because so many suffered for it. And I guess I, in that sense, I feel the same way, you know? It's a uniting cause and I wouldn't think of turning away from it. But I don't think that belief in God, I mean, it's paradoxical. I mean [unclear] exists because Judaism is the belief in God. But yet it's, to me it's something else. I mean something that can be separated from the idea of a...

BZ: Well actually it's...

EM: A God that, you know, is, as represented in the Bible history.

BZ: Yeah.

EM: But...

BZ: Religion was so concerned with acts that it really, you know, you can really, as long as you're doing well, you know, you don't have to believe. I mean, I think that, you know, there certainly is a valid experience there.

EM: Yeah, you just don't know if you do good deeds because of religion or belief in God or just because it's just in you. And maybe that process is in you, makes you do good things.

BZ: [unclear]

EM: Empathy with other people, like that.

BZ: Yes, your daughter was saying that your parents have so much empathy, that, you know, when terrible things are cited on TV, terrible accidents and so forth, she's almost immune to the statistics. And your parents just see each, you know, each individual when they hear any statistic announced on, you know, TV or the radio. They can really feel, they know those statistics are individuals. They get very excited. She was telling me that. Did you have a hard time adjusting to America?

EM: Well, yes and no. I guess the life was, I had a hard time adjusting to American values. And I don't know if I would have had the same values had there not been

a Holocaust. Because after all, I did grow up in a upper-middle-class family. But maybe my values would have been the same as the American kids and teenagers or young adult values. But in a way I doubt it. I think there is something very superficial here that I didn't have there, and certainly which the experiences of the war prevented me from having. And in that sense it was difficult. I also didn't really feel at home here. You know, I still don't. I still feel like a stranger. And I feel like I'm a rather unwanted stranger. And I don't think that feeling will ever leave me, no matter how many years I live here. And I, somehow I feel that American Jews also fool themselves when they think that they are completely integrated into the society or just as important for the general society, important citizens as they think they are. I feel that they always will be a strangers here. And they just don't see it and realize it, partly because they usually are surrounded by their own kind, that they, at least the older generation. They lived in close communities, you know, surrounded by other Jews, where the only time they really talked or really got the feeling, was with other Jews. And they could try to convince, or think, that they were accepted citizens. But I feel that the outside, the non-Jewish Americans, really never considered them true Americans. And I think with Israel they even have more doubts.

BZ: Divided loyalties.

EM: Divided loyalties. And they probably feel it more now than ever before that the Jews are not real true Americans. And that, I mean it's just a feeling I have. And yet I know that there are many American Jews don't think that that's the case. So, it's not, *they* think of themselves as Americans. And, but I don't think the outside world [unclear]...

BZ: Regards them.

EM: Regards them as always strangers.

BZ: In your opinion, should the Holocaust be taught?

EM: Yes, definitely. It should be taught. Sometimes I have my doubts of how much good it will do. But I think it is important to teach it. I don't know if it really penetrates very deeply, if it's remembered, if it's really. I hope it contributes to a better understanding, but, quite frankly, I don't think that many people care, non-Jewish people, they care.

BZ: And you've been engaged as a speaker...

EM: Yes.

BZ: For quite a number of years. And you always were very well-received.

EM: Yes.

BZ: And yet you feel it was...

EM: Well, I think it's something of a fleeting, they're impressed, they're impressed maybe with a personal story more than, that's why the movie *Holocaust* made such an impact. I mean, if you show documentary films and you can show, you know, pictures, and talk or write about concentration camps in the newspaper, it's, describe it or statistics, and yet it doesn't really have much of an impact. Many people say, "Oh, isn't that terrible. Yes, it's bad," or, "It's horrid." But then they go about their business and

that's, it's just water over the dam. When you see a movie like *The Holocaust*, well, then it's an impressive story and maybe it touches them for a little longer. And the same thing when I go and speak about it. And I think it's mostly my personal experiences and it's, you know, it's hard to be, they feel with me. They sit quietly. They listen. And maybe they discuss it for ten minutes afterwards. But I don't think it really makes a big difference. But I still feel it should be taught. If for no other reason I think we owe it to all those who died. But I don't think it's going to change humanity! Maybe I am very cynical. I guess I am. But I have just seen too much not to be cynical.

BZ: Well, do you ever, do you get much response when you mention, you know, the antisemitic acts that you've encountered and, you know, and that you point out are the reasons that the Jews could so easily be singled out? Do you get any response, you know, to that, as though, maybe they should do some re-thinking, really? Evidently not.

EM: No.

BZ: Evidently you don't get...

EM: No, no, I do not.

BZ: Any real response.

EM: A matter of fact I think that if the conditions were right it would happen just as easily here. And I think that American Jews who now say, "Well, isn't it awful that the European Jews, that the German Jews didn't emigrate sooner," that they didn't leave everything and go, you know, that they were attached to their material goods and wealth, and they think that that kept them. I don't think that's the case. I think American Jews would have, even if they saw the writing on the wall as close as it was in 1935 or '36 in Germany, they wouldn't leave either. It's, because you just thought it was something that would pass, something you disagree like you disagree with the policies of one president and not another. You wait for the next president and it's going, something will pass. And German Jews felt that they were, maybe in fact even more than the American Jews, that they were German citizens with their rights. And they just didn't see any reason why somebody else would have the right to expel them or right…. You know, and I think the American Jews would do the same. And yet I feel that in America it could happen just as easily as it, as it happened there, in spite of the Holocaust or in spite of teaching the Holocaust. And I don't think that there is really any more love for the Jews or understanding of the Jews because of the Holocaust or because of the knowledge of the Holocaust. I'm sorry to disappoint you!

BZ: No, no, no, you have to...

EM: But that's...

BZ: You know, this is what we want to know, how you feel and your experiences.

EM: I mean, when you see your people whom you considered as friends and probably much closer friends than some American Jews have here, you know, as far as Gentile goes. My parents were, as I say, they felt they were Jewish yet they were very well-

integrated into the non-Jewish society and had many Gentile friends. And yet it, things happened that just shook your belief in, you know, for what friends really are, how well-accepted you are. On the other hand, there is no denying that many Poles, or some Poles, helped, like that prostitute that helped. And it was just out of the goodness of her heart. I don't think it was because she wanted to help a Jew, or because she believed in Christ. It just was a good person. And I had, you know, many close calls and incidences where I did get help. And I think it's because they were just good people, but not because they felt, well we have to help them because the Jews are being persecuted and it's not right. I mean, they would have felt the same way about helping any other person, or an animal for that matter!

BZ: And when they were willing to persecute, it was because they were a Jew, and it was all right.

EM: Right. Exactly. Exactly.

BZ: I want to ask you, before we finish, I don't think we went into the *Judenrat*. And, did we go into the *Judenrat* in the ghetto? I think you shared your opinion.

EM: I [pause] don't really know that much about it. I think it probably had its, well, it definitely had its function in the beginning. I think, for instance, the idea in Warsaw, when the *Judenrat* was established, and when they tried to organize these labor battalions to go outside of the ghetto, it was a better idea to have it on a organized type way rather than having the whole population, Jewish population, in constant fear of being caught and sent out without even knowing where they're going and so on. So, in the beginning, when they were established, when they tried to bring some kind of an order into the chaos, the chaos of things, you know, when people could, younger people could go to work, where older people either could pay their way out or were excused by, because they knew somebody, you know, I mean certainly there were some injustices committed. But by and large I feel it was a pretty good system, until the later days when the unscrupulous people got in. Or maybe people in the *Judenrat* got more frightened of what's happening. And they became more, more unscrupulous. But my beef wouldn't be so much with the *Judenrat*. I don't know much about the *Judenrat* in other cities or towns. And I think they tried to do a job and by and large I don't think they did such a bad job. I mean there were other people like the, well, let's say the police. I mean, here I feel that, and there was more, you know, there was cruelty there and—then there were the smugglers. There were some people who became very powerful in the ghetto. But I don't think it was really the, maybe I'm mistaken. I just don't know enough. But I don't think it was so much the members of the *Judenrat* who became so all-powerful. It was more other people, the big smugglers and people who were making money in the ghetto. And they were much more powerful than the *Judenrat*. The *Judenrat* did try to give out as many work certificates as they can, you know. And some people had to pay money for these certificates and others, some did not. By and large I, I don't even know if taking that money, I mean, you can always argue that it wasn't just to give a certificate to somebody who could pay for it. By the same token you

couldn't, you know, just give them out completely and indiscriminately. And the money that they collected, they did turn to good use. And so I don't, you know, I just don't know how they could have saved more people by giving out certificates in this community. I mean, how do you judge, you know? And that's certainly human nature being what it is. And you know, money was everything. And I think…

Tape four, side one:

EM: I think they were trying to do a job. So you, maybe it sounds like an apology for people who could buy their papers. My father certainly didn't, because he didn't, you know, didn't get any work through the *Judenrat*, and we didn't know anybody in the *Judenrat*. But from what I hear now and maybe what I heard there, you know, somebody got papers and probably paid for it. How do you judge who should get the papers? And how many papers can you, there, I mean in the end none of these papers were worth anything. But they just prolonged life for a little while. I think they were trying to do a good job as far as bringing in food and, you know, exchanging goods with the Aryan side or with the Germans. Conditions were just too hard for anybody to do a perfect job. You know, you might expect them, well, the *Judenrat* was there, they should have saved everybody. But it was impossible. So, and I don't know what was going on. I certainly feel that there were many people who were unjust and cruel—you know, Jews—and took advantage of other Jews. I know that my father supposedly had, in the beginning, was introduced to somebody who could have gotten papers to get out of Poland, you know, some visa to a South American country. And I know my parents lost almost all their money because they gave their money to this man who was supposed to get the paper. And he got the paper, but for himself, and left! And we were there without, you know, but certainly it was dishonest, was awful. Yet this guy, he figured, well, he can get the money so he could get out!

BZ: But on the whole you really felt that...

EM: On the whole, I am not, I hate the police or what it turned out to be later on. In the beginning there was a need for police in the ghetto even, because even for the traffic, even, you know, but then they turned out to be very, so subservient and so afraid for their own skin that, you know, they turned out to be very cruel. Once again, it's human nature that, you know, they were so afraid. And I, I mean, I hate them. I hate them as people. And I don't know if there were different leadership in the police, if it would have turned out any better. And certainly many people, you know, the, only the, kind of the dregs joined the police! Because...

BZ: Yeah, people that considered themselves honorable wouldn't want to.

EM: And because they want to consider themselves honorable wouldn't. I know one guy who did join in the beginning but after a couple of months, I think two months, he got out of it, because when he saw what was going on. In the beginning he thought it was a good idea, you know. But maybe, and I don't think he joined, at that time, they didn't join for their safety of the thing. Because it wasn't that dangerous yet that, you know, you had to have a paper, or be in the police to, in order to stay in the ghetto and not to be shipped out. So he just joined because he thought there was a need for it, you know. Maybe he thought he could do a good job. But when he saw what it was turning into, he got out.

BZ: By and large, I'm sure you feel it for, the suffering went on, that went on, and that more people really rose to the heights of goodness rather than descended.

EM: Yes, in general I do.

BZ: In general.

EM: In general, yes. Naturally the other cases just stand out...

BZ: Yes.

EM: Much more forcefully. But they were, I don't know, I [pause] feel in my case, it was almost, since maybe through luck we were able to survive the initial selections and, you know, be sent out, and then it was just a matter of, almost obligation to stay alive, because of the other part of your family needed you, you know. I, if, I'm sure that if my parents had been taken, I would have thrown in the towel and not tried to survive, you know, so hard. But you knew you had an obligation. It's very.… Well, it's a funny feeling that you have. You had to stay alive because you knew that the other, that your mother or your father needs you. Or, you know, and so you stayed alive for each other as much as for, to show that Hitler is not going to win, that in spite of everything you're going to stay alive. And I think that's why so many people kind of gave up, because when one part of the family went, they just didn't see any reason, you know, to fight back, or to try to escape, or anything like that. And in a way, I don't know if I mentioned it, but I have a very strong feeling about the lack of resistance in the ghetto, for which we are being blamed, you know, in the beginning. It was just because in the beginning we felt so strongly that it's a matter just of waiting and surviving. And you didn't want to take the chance of, well, the responsibility of having somebody else killed because of your desire to resist. You know, if you kill a German, and then your family or your neighbors are taken and shot, you just didn't feel you had the right to have them suffer or have them lose their lives because you feel like resisting. And in the long run you knew that your resistance would just amount to maybe killing one German or two Germans. And yet you knew that at least 50, 60 or 100 people will die for that. And since you believe that most people will survive, that it's just a matter of time, you know, you just didn't feel it was right to take that chance, that risk, or take the…. Even if you didn't care if you die while you kill a German, you did care, you didn't feel you could subject other people to jail or to being sent out to a camp or to being killed because you didn't feel like living any more and you felt like taking a German's life.

BZ: To whom do you suggest the Holocaust should be taught?

EM: To ev-...

BZ: To all age groups? Or to specific age groups?

EM: I would say to all age groups. As I say, I don't think it's going to make much of a difference. I think that these people will still write books that it never happened, and people who want to believe that will believe it no matter how many films they see, how many pictures they see, or how many books on the Holocaust they read. If somebody will come out and say that it's all a Jewish propaganda or, then they still will believe it never happened.

BZ: Do you feel that your children are more sensitive to you and to others as a result of your experiences and losses?

EM: Yes. I, yeah. I know they are. But I don't think they really long to talk about it too much. I don't know, maybe they don't want to talk about it because I, well I really don't know. But there aren't many questions.

BZ: They're not asking you.

EM: No, no. And maybe they're afraid that it might upset me too much. But there aren't many questions.

BZ: What does your daughter want to do? Does she have a specific area in mind, you know, in her studies in Harvard Law? Is that...

EM: Kind of...

BZ: Or, either of your, either, or any of your children, in other words. Are they seeking, you know, their life's work in a way that will contribute to society? You know, are they...

EM: I certainly hope so!

BZ: You know, are they geared to that, in other words? Have they...

EM: Yes, I think both of them have a strong feeling that they want to contribute to society and do something good, or worthwhile with their lives. I mean, it's not for them a matter of trying to make a good living. And that's certainly not their goal and I think it's on the bottom of the list. The most important thing for them is to do something worthwhile for, well, for my daughter, for humanity. And for my son, maybe, for science.

BZ: For science, which of course would benefit humanity.

EM: Well, I guess, I hope so.

BZ: Yes.

EM: So, he wants to go into medical engineering now and I hope he does. And I, I don't know, Diane wants to help people. So we'll see what comes.

BZ: Does she still want to go into international relations, is that, international law?

EM: Well, I don't know. Sometimes she says yes, and other times she feels there is another, a lot to do right here, that she can help other people who need help. So I don't know. Right now she is studying or doing some research on the impact of desegregation on education. She is working with some professor. And so I wonder what she will dig up.

BZ: Please feel free to complete this interview by elaborating on anything you've said, or adding anything that you wish.

EM: I don't really have much to say except that I think what you are doing is worthwhile, or I hope it is worthwhile, and I appreciate the opportunity to tell my story, such as it is. I hope it will do some good. But I don't know. I just hope. Well?

BZ: Thank you.