

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

MINNA PERLBERGER

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Selma Brothman

Date: March 26, 1987

© 2008

Holocaust Oral History Archive

Gratz College

Melrose Park, PA 19027

This page left intentionally blank.

MP - Minna Perlberger¹ [interviewee]

SB - Selma Brothman [interviewer]

Date: March 26, 1987

Tape one, side one:

SB: This is March 26, 1987. Selma Brothman interviewing Mrs. Minna Perlberger. This is side one, tape one. Okay, Minna, let's begin again. What year were you born in?

MP: 1918.

SB: 1918?

MP: And listen, I am born in Tyczyn, Tyczyn is T-Y-C-Z-Y-N, Tyczyn and it was over there like by 300 families, Jewish families, and this means by over 2,000 Jews because every family had had four, five, six children, my uncle had six children, you know, and so, so every--it was three synagogues, you know. One was a Hasidic and one was a *shtibl*, and one was a *shul* more, a more, so not religious very over there, so it was three synagogues. And we had a store and my father was working very hard because the antisemitism in Poland was very big and they gave very high taxes to the Jewish merchant, merchants. So, but we were living a comfortable life but a hard working life.

SB: How many brothers and sisters?

MP: I had two brothers and one sister. And my parents were very, very fanatically religious. I had, they didn't approved of marriages of love. They, they, they were matching the marriages for the children and I was rebel so I told my mother, I will never make you--, no I will never do you with some harm with the family, I will always give you, the *mekhutanim* [parents of the spouse] I will match you, I promise you that I will not go with a lower family. And I did so even after the war. After the war and they wasn't around, I remembered my promise and I wouldn't marry somebody in a lower family because I, I remembered what I promised my parents and I was sorry that I didn't, that I didn't do what they want when I knew that they will be killed, I would marry even a Hasidic boy only to please them but I didn't know this and I hadn't made it, and later I had very much misgiving that I didn't give them the *nakhes* [pleasure] to see me married to a really, a Hasidic boy, you know. But after the war, you know when I married my, after the liberation when I married my husband, I was thinking about his family, when not I wouldn't marry him if he were to be from a lower family because I remembered I promised my parents.

SB: Well, you kept your promise.

MP: I kept my promise.

¹nee Glücksmann.

SB: You kept your promise. Tell me what life was like before the war, your schooling.

MP: My schooling was public school in Tyczyn. And then I went for business schooling in Rzeszów, and I took private lessons in philosophy and literature, this was private lessons in Rzeszów. I was mostly sleeping by my grandparents [unclear] and came only from when I went in business school.

SB: How far was it between the towns?

MP: It was, by walking, by one and a half by two hours. So, it was by bus, it was a half hour, not quite, so it was near, yeah. Rzeszów was not far from Tyczyn. We were halfway from Lwów and Kraków. It was halfway, Rzeszów was halfway, you know.

SB: Rzeszów was halfway between Kraków and Lwów?

MP: Between Kraków and Lwów, yeah.

SB: Okay, and okay you were starting to tell me earlier what happened when Nazis came to Poland.

MP: So, when they marched in, the first thing, they didn't, they didn't start all the terrible things like later, they started only to catch to work mostly boys and they kicked them, they hit them but in the beginning, in 1939, they didn't kill. We heard only that on the way to Poland, they burnt Jews in the, in the synagogues, they closed them up and they burned them, this everything we heard but, and they closed right now the synagogues because the synagogues were they closed right away and it was the Jews came together to pray in private homes, you know. By us, because we were living like in a suburb from Tyczyn, so they asked, they made *minyens* [quorum of ten men needed to pray]. And it came Rosh Hashanah so we didn't know blow the *shofar* [ram's horn] because we were scared to blow *shofar*.

SB: To attract attention?

MP: Yes, because it was in private homes and it was danger when they find out that it was, that it was a *minyem* some place. On Yom Kippur...

SB: This is 1939?

MP: 1939. On Yom Kippur--they marched in in September to Poland--in Yom Kippur, they gave a order, the Gestapo gave a order, everybody has to leave the home in 24 hours. It was a tragedy to leave to go, to go to Russian Zone. It was a tragedy how you can leave your own home where you had a home, our own home what were built eight years before the war, how can you leave everything and go. So, the, the from our, you know, how you call, like here the Jewish community, it was one he the head of the Jewish community, he went to the Gestapo, he talked to the police and they let us stay. When they would not--because Russia took half Poland and Germany the other half.

SB: Right.

MP: Because they made an agreement to take half-half. So, when the Russians took half Poland, we were only 16 kilometers from the Russian border.

SB: So, you were on the German side then?

MP: I was on the German side. So, they said we have to go to Russia. So, we didn't go because in the Russian then, the families that they were over there, they wasn't killed off, they died from hunger, they died from cold but still the families lived, one died, two died, but here we were thinking then that they took, they took, did us a favor that they let us stay but this would be, this would be when we go, we would leave the whole family maybe, you know, and we were in the family, it wasn't only we were a very close family because three brothers lived in one city, my father and two brothers, so the cousins and everything was very close and it wasn't only this family, it was second cousins and this from my mother's side, from my mother's side family was almost the whole family in Rzeszów. So, it was by over 200 people. When I made the tree of life, only the names that I remember but I don't remember everybody, it was over 200 in the family.

SB: Over 200 family members living in that town.

MP: Not in that town, in Rzeszów, near Rzeszów, in Lanso Rzeszów, near.

SB: In the vicinity.

MP: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SB: Okay, in the area. So, you mentioned something that there was a Jewish organization in the town?

MP: Yes. We had...

SB: What was this?

MP: We had a B'nei B'rith. We had like here a B'nei B'rith, you know and we had *Shomer Hatzair* [a Zionist youth organization], and we had also Akiba [B'nei Akivah²], in the Akiba I was the leader of Akiba I made speeches and this. So, it was a disgrace for my parents, because it is a Zionist organization and they were thinking only the *mashiach* [Messiah] should lead us to, to Israel. When I mentioned that I will go on a *hakhshara* and I will go to Israel, they said, "Over my dead body," because, and I wouldn't go, because really it would be a disgrace for them.

SB: What's a *hakhshara*?

MP: *Hakhshara* is like here you go preparing yourself for the...

SB: *Aliyah* [immigration to Israel]?

MP: *Aliyah*, yeah, this means they teach you, you know, work in the fields and this, you know.

SB: Farming and skills that you could use in Israel.

MP: Farming, yeah. That's right.

SB: I see, so your parents were disappointed.

MP: No, no, I wouldn't go because I saw it as it, it was impossible.

SB: Did you join this youth Zionist organization on your own or was it a friend or...?

²B'nei Akivah - (Heb. for *Children of Akivah*), a religious Zionist youth movement, was founded in Jerusalem in 1929 with a philosophy of *Torah Ve'avoda* - a fusion of Orthodox observance of religious commandments and Zionist pioneering. (Jewishvirtuallibrary.org)

MP: On my own. I was the leader,

SB: [laughs]

MP: I concentrate everybody for this. [laughs]

SB: You were a trailblazer?

MP: Yes, I was a rebel in the family, you know.

SB: I see, okay, now, we'll go back to 1939 as you said.

MP: In the beginning, in the beginning it wasn't so bad. So, my father said, "*Gott wird helfen*" [God will help]. In the meantime, we hear France declared war, England declared war so we were thinking that he will be swallowed, and everybody was optimistic.

SB: That Hitler would be swallowed?

MP: Yes. That Hitler would be swallowed, that it is impossible in French and this. Then, France gave in right way and then, and then it started that here they killed a person, here they killed a member of the family without reason, only just single-handed, you know. And it was a tragedy and this was a small town. Every person that disappeared it was a tragedy. They caught people, they sent away, we didn't know where. They caught my brother in the beginning and they sent away and we found out in two weeks where he is and then, then I went over there and I brought him some food. But they kept him over there only six weeks.

SB: Over where?

MP: Not far from Tyczyn but in, they built over there some bridges and they took, they just caught from the street and they took my brother.

SB: Oh like forced labor?

MP: Yes.

SB: In other words, they captured him and they made him go?

MP: Yes.

SB: I just want to go back again. As far as the Jewish organization, did they realize what was happening and did they have--you know, did they try to convince the community [unclear]?

MP: No, nobody tried to convince, everybody wants to remain, they didn't believe that Hitler will succeed. Nobody believed in the beginning that Hitler would succeed. We were thinking it was only, only temporary, you know, and then in 19--, so so, they closed right now the Jewish stores, no store was supposed to be open.

SB: This is still 1939?

MP: Yeah. Right away, they gave a order that Jewish people don't have to go to school. So, my sister was only 12 years old and she had, she came home crying that she, she can't go anymore to school. So, it was the Jewish people were excluded from public school and no education and so we taught each other, you know, how much we could and then it started to be they took out from the stores. My uncle had materials and the other uncle had shoes and leather, so they took out everything, not everything but the better things and then, it came Sunday so they throwed out from the Jewish stores in the street

and the people what went from the church, the Poles went from church, they could take anything. So sure they like this, that the Jewish--that they could take without money these things. But first they took the better things out with trucks and then...

SB: They meaning the Germans?

MP: The Germans.

SB: The Germans came and they raided the stores and they put things in the street and it was free booty for anybody that wanted to steal.

MP: That's right. Sure, and the Poles straight from the church, they went in straight they started to grab things, you know, and we couldn't tell nothing. It was not a crime to take from Jews. The police, the Polish police, could come into every Jewish home and take, "Oh, this I like it or this I like it" and take it. And nobody could object.

SB: Nobody objected, nobody resisted for fear of...?

MP: No, we couldn't. The Polish police came in and took everything from the Jewish homes what they like it. If somebody got married from the Polish police, they had everything, they didn't have to buy. So, sure, the antisemitism was growing more and more. They were rather pleased with this situation because they can grab things and they don't have to pay. So, this was everything the beginning, it wasn't still too bad, you know. Still hopes that maybe, maybe, maybe. We could go to the Russian Zone because it was not far. And many people went from the youth. My brothers wanted to go but they didn't want me to leave but I didn't want to go because I didn't want my parents to leave. So, they stayed altogether, the family stayed together and nobody from our family--and it was many people, they went over there to the Russian Zone and they came back because it was very, very bad over there, they didn't have the facilities and everything it was very tight over there and it started to be winter and people were sleeping in the synagogues because it wasn't even--so they came back to the family.

SB: Excuse me, at this point, they had a choice to go to the Russian Zone or not?

MP: Yes, we could go.

SB: You were able to go if you chose?

MP: Yes, but we didn't because everybody had their own home and how you can live without nothing to go and to be over there in a synagogue sleep, you know, so we stayed. We had--this was unlucky that we had a comfortable home. This was very unlucky for us. Sure, sure, we made business with the *goyim* [non-Jews] because we had to live but we made business but it was forbidden but we had to live and so we did. The Poles, who wants to buy this, who wants to buy this so we made business but it was not in a store, private in, in like black market.

SB: Black market?

MP: Yeah. So, it was forbidden for Jewish people to go out after nine.

SB: There were curfews?

MP: Curfews. In the morning, only by 8 o'clock, from 8 to 9, then no Jew was supposed to be in the street. Then, it started to be forbidden to go to another city and we had to put on our armband.

SB: When was that, do you know? Was that the same year?

MP: 1939, and the beginning of 1940, we had already to put on our armbands. It was white with blue, with the blue *Magen David* [Jewish star], so if somebody would go without a band, it was death sentence.

SB: You were still living at home at that time?

MP: Yes. Then, it was catching to work, harassing the Jewish people. Then, later, they took girls also to work, catching from the streets, coming into the homes, to the homes to take to work. And then, in 1941 started the war between Russian and Germany so it was near, we heard it, we were happy that the Russians will come in and we will be in our home and Russian will come in and we will not be harassed anymore. So, but then we heard the shots farther and farther, the war was--because Russia was going back and then, in 1942, beginning, yes beginning 1942 it was in winter time, it came in Gestapo to us, to our home with revolvers and they brought a paper that my father has to sign that he gives the house free willing to the Germans. I don't know for what they need to sign because they could take it anyway but somehow they want my father to sign, my mother here. They asked who is the owner of the house, mother and father. So, they had to sign that they give [unclear] free willing to the Germans and in five minutes, we had to leave my, our home. And already stayed one Pole ready to take the keys to go into the house. We were six in the home, six people. The revolvers were pointed to us, and they look and they watch how much you can take, what you can take in a hurry. You take the unimportant things and the important things you forget because the revolver, we only looked that somebody is not killed, you know. We went out from this home and the Pole took over the home. Everybody from the--because we were like in the suburbs, everybody, every Jew from the suburbs had to go to the center of the city. So, it was terrible because it started to flow in so many, so many Jews and everybody had to share the, the, the apart--they had two or three rooms they had to share with the families that came in, you know.

SB: Where were you staying in the town? Where did they put you up?

MP: So, they didn't put us up. Only the Jewish community gave the rooms. They just told us go. So, we were in one room between the whole six of us with a tiny little kitchen.

SB: Do you want to get a drink?

MP: No. It started to be very tight with food because we were, we were, we couldn't go to no village, no nothing. It started to be very tight then it came out a law, that every Pole has--we have to give back if you owe a Pole money, you'll have to give back but if the Pole owes a Jew, you don't, he doesn't have to give back. One Pole came to the Gestapo and they told that my father owed him \$100. Dollars, you know, not *zlotys*, dollars. And this wasn't true and he doesn't want to give back and then, they say, they say-

-and he said when I will go to--he said to us, "I will go to the Gestapo," so my father says I have the Gestapo and you in here, you know, and this wasn't true. Everything wasn't true.

SB: It was all a lie?

MP: It was all a lie.

SB: Did you know this Pole?

MP: Yeah, he came to our store but we never owed him money.

SB: You never owed him money. So it was a lie.

MP: So, sure, the Gestapo came for Daddy. Daddy ran away because we found out already that he's over there and talking about us so we knew that they would right now kill my father so I volunteered, I will go. I went--the Pole didn't know German and I knew German so when he talked, and he told what he told, so I told to the Gestapo very nice, calm, "My father is not at home, he's in a Rzeszów by his sister because she got sick and so I am here, I know everything. He doesn't have, we don't owe him nothing." Only you see when it came out the law, they wanted to take advantage and they still just let, let somebody go to him and see how he lives with many children that he doesn't have \$100 to borrow to somebody, only he makes up this story and he started to scream, he didn't know what I am talking, you know, because he didn't understand. He started to scream and they got very upset with him with the screaming and they told him go out from here.

SB: The Gestapo threw the Pole out?

MP: That's right. They let me go, you know. And the whole Tyczyn, when I went under the Gestapo, you know one side and the other side with the rifles, they were thinking they will never see me again and when I came back, everybody was hugging me and kissing me because they, they expected that I will never be back, you know. So, this was a law and then they say everybody has to give the jewelry, everybody has to give what they have.

SB: Excuse me, did you father--was he away at that point, he ran away?

MP: No, he came back. He wasn't running away, he wasn't in Rzeszów, only he ran away to hide to other Jewish family because, because he knew that he would be killed right away. He had *brut* [phonetic] and *peyes*, he had beard and side locks so he would for sure be killed, you know. So then came out a law to give all jewelry, then all fur collars, this fur. Every time another law, you have to give this, this much contribution, this much contribution and everybody was drained out. Then, it was *Pesach*, *Pesach* [Passover]. The first *seder*³ what we spend, the first and the last *seder* what we spend together. So, we were all in one room and I saw the first time in my life, I saw my daddy crying by this *seder* and everybody had the same question in, in their mind, will we be together next *seder*, you know and we wasn't. Then, right now after *Pesach*, they told all the Jews have to go to the ghetto because in Rzeszów was already a ghetto.

³*seder* - the ritual Passover meal in which story of the Exodus from Egypt is told.

SB: They had already established it?

MP: Yes, it was already a ghetto all fenced around with five walls. And all people from all the cities, from all the towns to Rzeszów, to the ghetto. It started like a, like a ocean, the people with children, with small children, with this and you see, and then we didn't see the uncles, we didn't see--we only saw the six people together, everybody was holding together. The Gestapo was hitting in the way to Rzeszów, hitting people and it was going on here, they killed here and we saw blood here, we heard Mommy this, it was going on like, like hell.

SB: Which year was that, '41, '42?

MP: This was in '42 right now, after, after *Pesach*. So we went to the ghetto, in ghetto again we were--it wasn't space because in the ghetto was only four or five streets and they pushed in 20,000 Jews--200,000 Jews, in this five, six streets, so you imagine they pushed in two, three families in one room. We knew--so, we went to the Jewish community and everybody went to get a room. People were in the streets, sleeping, putting everything in the streets, it wasn't room enough and then it came out that everybody has until the evening, everybody has to be in a room, nobody in the street. So, you imagine we got on an attic, in an attic room over there with one family and from the attic, we had a window and what we saw out from the ghetto, out...

Tape one, side two:

SB: Just continue. You said that you could see above the, beyond the ghetto?

MP: Above--beyond the walls that was surrounding the ghetto I could see and we were accidentally, were against the Gestapo, the Gestapo was out from there but we saw them at nighttime, you could see them very clear because over there, light. We were scared to make light because it was close from the Gestapo. We didn't make nighttime light.

SB: They could see into your attic?

MP: Sure, they could see the light so we didn't make nighttime light. We saw everything the Gestapo what is going on, singing and this. In day time, we saw how somebody was watching in the ghetto, they didn't know that over there is the Gestapo because it was the wall. They shoot the people like hunting and laughing and every time fall other victim because they were shooting from out the ghetto to the ghetto when somebody was passing. You imagine to see how everybody, they didn't know what was going on because they were low and we were high and we saw and we couldn't even tell them because it was far away, we couldn't even tell them don't walk here because and we saw how many daily, maybe by 100 were shot, you know.

SB: Were you allowed to leave the ghetto?

MP: No.

SB: You were not.

MP: We were not allowed to leave the ghetto, death sentence. Then, it came out a law, everybody has to register, where they lived, to register. To register where they lived, how many people and everything. We went to register so they knew already how many people. It was over 200,000 people in this ghetto, on this few streets. I don't remember how many, maybe five, maybe six, maybe seven streets, I don't remember.

SB: Did people work in the ghetto?

MP: No, not yet, not yet. Then, it started to register to work. So, we went to register to work, the young people. So, then, we went to register. Then, my brother, one brother was caught from the street and sent away. We didn't know where they will send. And he was staying in line to be sent away and my mother--they caught only boys so my mother and my sister and I went to see my brother. We knew that he was caught and we saw him from far away standing under the Gestapo and the rifles and my mother, we took a knapsack with some food and some clothes to give him and my mother went to the Gestapo and begged, "I want to see my son, I want to give him this, this and I want to give him a kiss." He hit her over the head with a, with a horsewhip, you know. He hit her over the head, she fell in the street and she started to cry laying on the street, "I wanted to give my last kiss to my son." She never kissed him and she never saw him again. They sent him away. Then, it started to be transportation, transports. I and one brother and my sister

got jobs. So, my mother and father was thinking, "Thank God they have jobs, they are saved."

SB: What did you do? What kind of jobs?

MP: Right now, we are on a register and we get the middle parts for guns. So, my father and mother were thinking this is the card to life so my mother says, "Thank you, God, that my children are saved." We didn't know where my brother is and then started the transports. This street they came. This street they came. We saw my aunt with the six children, the youngest was six years old and the oldest 14 and we saw her already staying to--because we were very high, you know, we saw her staying already to be sent away and we didn't know where they are sending. They said to work. They called this a resettlement. A resettlement they called this a fancy word, resettlement. So, they sent away, this every child had a knapsack six years old, a knapsack on them and then, it was a law that everybody has the knapsacks to give on a truck. They throwed on the truck the knapsacks and then they took them to the cattle cars, to sent away to gas chambers, later we found out and this time we didn't know.

SB: You had no idea where they were being sent?

MP: No. They said on a resettlement. So, we saw, after they left, after they went to the train, we saw how the Poles and the police and this are catching from the knapsacks everything and we knew that they will never have the knapsacks back, they will go with nothing over there because we saw what was happen, we saw from the window what was happen, you know, because we saw behind...

SB: You saw beyond the wall?

MP: That's right.

SB: So you could see exactly what was happening?

MP: Yes, they were laughing here they took out clothes here, they took out food and, oh my God, it was like hell. Then, my mommy says, "*Reboyne shel oylem* [Master of the world], help, help the Jews, look what is happened with things, they go with nothing, they are sent away with nothing. Here, they steal everything." And then it came, the time on, on, that they started to take us to work. This means at the gate of the, of the--my brother was in a separate place working and I with my sister in a separate place.

SB: Outside the ghetto?

MP: Outside the ghetto. They took us by, with in the front was one Gestapo and in the *zeit* [side or rear] Gestapo and a whole row with women went to work. This was so, and then they separated the old ghetto and the new ghetto. The new ghetto is the people what they work, the old ghetto is the people what they don't work. So, my parents were already in the old ghetto, we were in the new ghetto.

SB: So, you were moved to another spot outside that ghetto?

MP: Yes.

SB: Into really another ghetto?

MP: Yes.

SB: And those people worked?

MP: This means, because--no, not another ghetto, the same ghetto, but they already cleared up the streets with people because it was already one transport after the other.

SB: So, they put you in a different area?

MP: That's right.

SB: So, you were separated from your parents?

MP: Yes, they made a wall between us but we--but when I went to work, I took things and exchanged with the Poles by going to work, even the Gestapo was, but we looked a minute when they looked away, we exchanged things for food and then we brought back the food to my parents to the ghetto. We asked sometimes, let me see my parents because they will send them away and we want to see them. Sometimes, we met a better one that he let us go in, so we delivered to my parents food.

SB: Were you able to go see your parents or somebody else would take it to them?

MP: We sneaked in sometimes.

SB: You found a way to sneak in to see your parents.

MP: Yes, we sneaked in to see my parents. And then, it came the time when they...

SB: You didn't say what kind of work. You said they took you to work.

MP: To work, we worked in the fields, we worked on the, on the railroad over there putting the railroads and...

SB: The women did that, too?

MP: The women, sure. I went only with the women. My brother was working in a factory. He came--every night, they took us back to the ghetto and every morning, they took us out, 5 o'clock we had to be already at the gate. Then, it was, it was--we were, yeah it was always, we had to register to the, we had to come, it was a law to come to the *Sammelplatz*. *Sammelplatz* this means the gathering place to register again to reregister. So then, they select even from the working people. They select, this left, this right, this left, this right. This was for going away, and this was for staying, you know.

SB: So, they were already doing selections?

MP: Selections even from the working people. So, in the meantime, my parents were sent, when they sent away, I knew they are going to send the street where my parents were so I didn't go to work and I went into the ghetto over there. We went in all to the ghetto over there and we--to say goodbye. My mother, I wrote about this, goodbye Papa and goodbye Mama. My mother said to me, "Don't cry because I made a promise to God that if I will cry, I will not cry, only let them save my children. So, help me, I don't want to cry. I want to keep the promise to God. I want to save my children." She made a bargain with God. So, my father cried. A Gestapo, a Gestapo was hitting him over the head. Go, *schnell, schnell*, this means quick, quick, go to the *Sammelplatz* over there. They

were already sending him away. It was over there. So, I didn't go to work. I--my sister went, my brother went and I didn't go and I stayed over there and I went to the Gestapo and it was so silly. Now, looking back, it was so silly. To the head over there what I said, "We are all working, we want to save our parents, we are all working and we will keep our parents, we can support our parents, we are all," and I show to him the card and he says, "*Raus* from here" which means out from here and he hit me, out from here and I still went to other ones, I still hoped that I would save my parents and then, it was no use. I knew later it was no use that it was silly. I only wonder why they didn't kill me. I skipped many things because I went out from the ghetto, I with my sister, and we went to a Gestapo and pleaded to leave my parents. I'm--it was so silly things what we did, what we hold. You know, silly things, looking back it was so silly.

SB: Well, you tried everything you possibly could.

MP: And I don't know why the Gestapo didn't kill us because we took off the bands because we went out from the ghetto, we sneaked out from the ghetto. So, I don't know why he didn't kill us. It was--you see, you looked every day the dead and you died a thousand times in your life. It was like, like dying a thousand times in your life and to say the goodbyes and this everything to say, to describe it is impossible. Because the families were very close, it wasn't like here, but every family was very close. So, my parents were sent away with my grandmother together, and with the aunt, with the other aunt together.

SB: At that point, did you know where, what was happening to them?

MP: No, no.

SB: You had no idea where they were taken?

MP: No, we were locked out, no mail, nothing. We didn't know what was happen outside. We knew that they said a settlement to work but still, we, we said goodbye because they were--and we didn't know when we would see each other. We still didn't know where my brother is, you know. Then, then, they already--we didn't have the parents. Then, we found out that my brother is some place not far from Rzeszów, working in, by the airplanes. And he got, he let us know that they will send him away, he doesn't know where, to bring him some food and some clothes. So, I took off my band and my brother says I want to see my brother, the last time maybe they will send him and I will not see them again, I want to go, too. We dressed very nicely so we took off the bands and dressed very nicely, I in a hat, gloves, and the Jewish people weren't dressed so and he in a beautiful raincoat.

SB: Did your sister go, too?

MP: No.

SB: Just you and your brother?

MP: Yes. So, we went--because she had to go over there to work. When they called Minna Glücksmann because my name was Glücksmann, not Perlberger yet. Perlberger was after the liberation, but Glücksmann. When they called Minna

Glücksmann, she answered, "Here, I am." And Sabina Glücksmann, "Here I am." You understand?

SB: Yes.

MP: So, it was like I'm not missing.

SB: She answered for both of you, so you weren't missing, okay.

MP: Yes. So, I wasn't missing so she had to go. So, I went, I went to--but in the way, I want to buy for my brother some food. In every store when we went into the *goyish* [non Jewish] stores, they didn't want to sell us, they recognized my brother, he's a Jew. They recognized him. Even, he didn't have *peyes* [earlocks], he didn't--he was very nice dressed, was very sophisticated, they recognized the black eyes, the big, black eyes, were so, set eyes and they recognized. Me, they didn't recognize because I had green eyes and somehow, I didn't look so Jewish like him. So, I told him, listen, you can't go on the place over there to the airplanes because they will kill you. You see, they recognized you like a Jew, so I left him, I left him in the fields and I went. I went and I didn't know where I am going, I had to ask where this is, this was Jasionka, where is Jasionka? I never was over there. So, they told me here, not far. I came over there and I saw one, one Jew, he was like leading to work people. I went to him, I saw he has a band. I went to him and I told him, listen, I am Jewish, I want to see Nusyn⁴ Glücksmann and I came here, I sneaked out, please let me see him. I didn't have no food for him. I took out from the fields, I steal, stole, stole some carrots out from the--to bring him food. Food I couldn't get because they didn't want to sell us because they recognized that we are Jews. So, I went on with this, with money, and with the clothes. Then he said, I can give you only for five minutes, I am a Jew, too. I will try to get him over there to tell that he will work for me something for this place where I am working, that I needed him and I will bring him but make only five minutes because I am in danger, too. So, I told him okay. And he was with barefoot, thin. When I saw him, I burst out crying and he saw me and he started to cry and he knew already that the parents are sent away, you know, because he heard that it was transports, that this street was already out. So, he cried and I cried and we hardly talked. I gave him the two carrots. He started to eat with the dirt, oh my God, and I was thinking. He said, "I am like an animal." He said, "I am eating grass here." And you imagine, I couldn't talk. The five minutes, we were only crying in each other's arms. We didn't talk. Then, I had to leave and then, I didn't remember where my brother--I left my brother in the fields over there between the weeds, you know, and I didn't remember and it was, it took so long and I was thinking I will not see him anymore, probably he is caught. I was thinking it's over this place, I called, "Henu, Henu⁵," no voice. He was thinking it's so long, that I was killed over there, you know.

SB: He thought he lost you. And you thought you lost him.

⁴Nickname for her brother, Nathan.

⁵Probably a nickname for her brother, Hersh.

MP: Yes. So, then, at least we found each other. We fell in each other arms. We started to walk home. I didn't tell him in what condition I found his brother. Then, we started to have a cheerful face because we were walking between the gentile people. Then, Gestapo, a Gestapo carriage with a Gestapo and a Pole, was, was, no, riding.

SB: He was riding in the carriage?

MP: Yes. Something he told to the Gestapo and I told, "Henu, he told that we are Jews." So we started to walk on the sidewalk and then, we hear under us, behind us, "*Jude stehen bleiben*," which means "Jew, stay." You know, they readied the rifles to us, pointed to us. So, we went back and we--I said, "The first time in my life I am called a Jew, I never knew that I am a Jew because I was never a Jew. We aren't Jews." He said, "You aren't, but he is." So, I told him, "Look good at him and look at me, you will see we resemble each other," because we resembled each other, only he had black eyes and I had green eyes. They say, "You have some identification?" What I am doing? I had my powder case. In the powder case, I had my mother and my father and the beard, under the powder you know, and they looked in my pocketbook. I was nice dressed. They looked in my pocketbook. They opened the powder case. Accidentally, this was under the powder and they didn't see. When they opened, my heart was jumping--that's it, they will see my father with the beard. So, this was one, then I heard, he says, "We will look in his pants," so I made believe I don't understand German because the Poles didn't understand, but I heard we will look in the pants and we will find out whether he is Jewish because over there, only Jewish people were circumcised but not the Poles and I knew what they are going to do. And he is a Jew. So, he says go away. I thought why I should go away. So he pushed me and he pushed me and I fell in the dirt, in the dust. My hat fell down and opened only my mouth, I told, "What hatred you have," in Polish, now one, he understood Polish because I made believe that I don't understand German. "What a behaving you have, you Germans. First find out whether I am Jewish and then push me. Come with me to my home." I didn't have a home. "Come with me to my home." They asked him what his name was. When they pushed me, they asked him what his name was. He said a Polish name and I heard what he said. My ears were over there and I ran straight back because I didn't want him to look in the pants, you know. And I say, "What behavior you have, you Germans [unclear]." "What is your name?" So I told the same, the second name, Joshka Jobianca. I don't remember. I told the name what he said, I said, so it matched. So I told just take me with your *Droschke*, with your carriage, take me to my home, to my father and mother and you'll see, first ask and then behave, so then push a girl. You know, I opened such a mouth that they knew a Jew will not open such a mouth. They believed me and they let us go. They let us go. And my brother was angry he says, you know, "You shouldn't do this. One of us they told you already, you're not a Jew, you should go away, never do this again. You know we have a little sister over there alone, what, you didn't think about her? One of us has to be alive to take care of this little sister. Why you did this?" So, I told him it worked, so he says he says in Jewish, "The foolish thing was

working one time but it will not work a other time and don't do it again. Yeah, I would be killed, but at least one would be alive to take care of a little sister. Think about her." "But I saved your life. Are you sorry that I saved it?" His life, you see that he had, you know, you read this. I was later sorry that I saved his life. So, then, we went back, we came home. That's all. We came home to the ghetto. Then, one day, they said from Jasionka, from this place where my brother was, they sended back to the ghetto.

SB: Your brother came back?

MP: From dead. We were already all four together, thank God. He came, so, so...

SB: Which year was this, this whole thing, is this still in '42?

MP: '42, still '42. It was hell, the few months were hell. Then, it was again selections. They already got rid of the people that they didn't work, now they had to get rid of people what they worked, so selections. Left, right, left, right. My brother said, "She can't go."

SB: Excuse me, at this point with the selections, you had no understanding of concentration camps or anything like that?

MP: No, no.

SB: Just that people were being sent away to some place, resettlement, still then.

MP: That's right. We didn't know nothing. So, my brother says, "No, you can't go with her because her they will send away. They will kill her, she's a little girl." She was only 14 but she was looking like 10, 11 because, because the circumstances and everything, she was looking even younger than she is. "So, you will hide and I will hide you." The brother what was in Jasionka hide all three. So, the boy, the boyfriend from my brother, he said, "I will hide too because I am left alone from the whole family and I want at least to carry on the name. I will hide in the same place." It was a cellar over there.

SB: So this is all in the ghetto.

MP: In the ghetto. It was a cellar and it was like a little hole so we went into the little hole and my brother put a china closet over the hole so it was covered, the hole was covered. When they will find, everybody has to go out, if they will find somebody hidden in the home and they didn't go out, they killed right away. So, they started to look after everybody went out in the *Sammelplatz*, in the gathering place. They started to look and I heard screaming and heard they shoot one. I heard the shooting here, how they shoot the people what they were hiding and then they came to the cellar where we were. I was thinking that they hear my heart beating you know, and they--*Hier Leute* [Here are people] *hier Leute*, in German, *hier Leute*. I saw through the cracks from the china closet, I saw the light, you know, and I was thinking that's it, they found us, they will kill us all.

Tape two, side one:

SB: ...the interview with Minna Perlberger and Selma Brothman. Okay, you were just continuing about how you saw the light through the cracks of the china cabinet.

MP: Yes, I saw the light but they didn't find us, they went out. Then, we sat over there until we heard people started to come from work, so we went out. We moved away the china closet, we went out, we looked for our brother, no brother, he was already sent away to Treblinka.

SB: How did you know that?

MP: Because later we found out that they sent mostly from Rzeszów, the ghetto to Treblinka, you know. So, we knew that he--but we didn't know where he was sent.

SB: You just knew that you couldn't find him, he disappeared and he was taken away.

MP: That's right. So, we knew he went with the transport. It was again a tragedy, you know. So, one tragedy, you get rid from one tragedy, you didn't get rid from one tragedy and you went into another. Then, after a while after the transports one after the other, they found out that it is left 2,000 Jews already in the ghetto. My brother somehow found out that they are going to liquidate girls and women. Liquidation means kill, you know. So, he says I will not let myself anymore, tear apart, you know, no more. I will, I will, from now on, I will try, we will run, we will run away. How you can run with girls, you have to have a place so he, with his boyfriend, went to look for a place for them and for us. After two weeks, they came back, till we saw them, our heart was here because we were thinking that's all, two weeks.

SB: Those two weeks, you stayed in hiding in the ghetto?

MP: No, no.

SB: You went back to work?

MP: To work, yes. We went to work. From work, my brother ran away from work, sneaked away and the boyfriend, too, from work sneaked away and they went to look for a place for us. They came back after two weeks and they say they have a place for us and they have a place separate for them and separate for us because the *goyim* didn't want to keep four people together because the cooking and everything, it will be suspicion, you know. So, he, we started to run away. How? When we went from work, we took off the bands and sneaked into the gentile section because we were going always not on the sidewalk, only where the, where [unclear] you know, on the road we had to go but not on the sidewalk, we sneaked into the sidewalk. First I, then my sister and my brother from a other place, we talked where we meet, where we will meet. It was seven, seven of us what ran away. This means three from a other city but we met all under the, behind Rzeszów, you know, we told here we will meet.

SB: You made a meeting point outside of the town?

MP: Yes. So, we met over there and we started, the three went in the other place because they went to a other city, to a other town and we went to a village where they--and I was never in this village, we wouldn't be able to go over there, it was in nighttime, we were walking in nighttime in through the fields. We ran away the 15th of December.

SB: 1942?

MP: Yes, 1942.

SB: The 15th of November, my brother was sent away--a month later.

SB: It was a month after.

MP: Yeah. After we run away. So, they brought us to this, first to this place where we have to be, the boyfriend from my brother and him. They brought us first over there. This *goy* had five children. The small children, they shouldn't know that we are over there, you know. He had to...

SB: This was a Pole.

MP: Yes.

SB: How did you know this man?

MP: I didn't, they knew him.

SB: They made arrangements with him?

MP: Yes, they made arrangements, because they were hungry, they didn't have money, the children were hungry, so he kept us for money, he took us that we will pay him. They made over there arrangements how much they will pay monthly and then...

SB: How were you going to get the money?

MP: We had money.

SB: Oh you did have money.

MP: Yeah, we made already money. So, in the meantime, we, we, we managed to sell things to this, because, you know, people were sent away from the ghettos, you know. They left in the homes, all kind of things, you know. We took the things and sold, you know and this way we were living. Because, when we wouldn't take, the Germans would take, so everybody took from the empty rooms, you know. We were selling things so we made already money.

SB: That kept you alive.

MP: Yes. And then, and we made already to go away money because we knew we will run away. So, we had money ready for days and then, then my brother and this boy made a hole the enter was from the stable, and the hole was so deep that we had to go down with a ladder and over there was a cave--we couldn't stand up, we had in this way to go in.

SB: You had to crouch.

MP: Yeah.

SB: You had to crouch down.

MP: Yeah. We couldn't get up from, stand up and it was long, maybe by 1 ½ yards, wide maybe by 1 yard and tall that we had to crouch, but this was work, about two weeks work to take out this, this...

SB: Earth.

MP: Dirt to take out and they gave this on the roof, on the attic of the house, you know, in nighttime, they were working, you know.

SB: Oh they worked at night.

MP: Yes, because the children shouldn't know that we are over there.

SB: Did the Pole know that you were digging this hole?

MP: Yes.

SB: He did.

MP: He was taking the dirt.

SB: He was carrying it up.

MP: Right, carrying it up. Then, my brother when they made the hole already and everything, they went to their place. Their place was by our walk.

SB: Which their place?

MP: Their place they were hiding.

SB: Oh, they had a different hiding place.

MP: Yes, because the *goy* didn't want to keep four people.

SB: He would keep two.

MP: Two and two, they had a place for themselves, too, in a other place. So, so we were in this hiding place 20 ½ months and no air to breathe. It was lack of oxygen. You had to breathe very hard in a light, a candle couldn't light up there because there was no oxygen, only a [unclear]. So, we were hiding in this place and my brother over there in the other place but they were in the stables the whole time because over there wasn't small children so they wasn't scared. So we were on, in the--they were over there.

SB: How did you...

MP: Once a month, because we couldn't communicate because this *goy* didn't know where they are and the other didn't know where we are. If they are caught, not for us to be caught. If we are caught, they didn't have to be caught. So, the *goy* didn't know where we are, you know.

SB: Who brought you food?

MP: The *goy* gave us food for, for...

SB: Money.

MP: Yeah, but he gave us very little food. I will tell you later, but in the meantime, my brother and this boy once a month they came to visit us at night. It was to go through a forest, you know. I told my brother, it's danger, don't come. Sure, I was happy to see him because I didn't know the whole month what is happen to them and they didn't know what has happened to us, because no communication. But, but I told him, you can be caught but he said Germans are not here at nighttime in the forest. Nobody can see

us, we are going always when not when the moon shines only when the moon doesn't shine. They will not catch us. So, they came once a month to us. The third time when they came, they were caught. The *goyim*, you saw how, 19 Poles, one was seeing in through the window and everybody knew us because they came to the store, you know. They saw them through the window and they gathered together 19 Poles and they made hunting for these two boys. They were five minutes before, before, close to us, but they ran in the opposite way because they didn't want lead them to us, they knew they were already surrounded so they went in the opposite place and they started to, to, first, they catch my brother and my brother, they cut his throat but they didn't cut him to death, the whole blood came out, they hit him, they put him on the floor and they hit him with heavy poles, you know, and the boy could run away the other, but he heard him so he had a revolver and he made believe that he will shoot them but somehow the revolver, because it was in the damp, it didn't work and this, and one caught him from the back and they, they knocked his out the eye, you know, it was hanging, one eye, from him and so they chained them and in the morning, they delivered them to the Germans. Because they knew that my brother has two sisters, they told to the Gestapo that they have some place, two sisters hidden, you know. So over there they were tortured before they were killed to tell where the sisters are, sure they will not tell, so, so they were tortured before...

SB: How did you find out this story?

MP: The *goy* what we were over there, he looked, he went over there because it was five min-...

SB: To see what was happening?

MP: Yes, and he saw everything and you see, Tyczyn, they took them to Tyczyn to Gestapo, this was a village. They took them to Tyczyn and Tyczyn, they heard the screaming from them, how they screamed when they were tortured, and then they took them to a cemetery, over to the Jewish cemetery another day they killed them and they, they were both buried together. This was in March, 19th of March. I have the memorial.

SB: It's 1943?

MP: 1943, yeah. So, they were only three months hiding. Because of us, they were killed, you know.

SB: When they came to visit you, you came out of the hole at night?

MP: For nighttime, we came to the stable to sleep when the children went to sleep.

SB: So, every night, you would come out to sleep in the stable?

MP: In the stable with the cows, with the chickens, and with the rabbits, everything was in this, in the dirt and on straw, we were sleeping on plain straw. So, imagine. Now when they caught them, we were ready to go out with them to die, but we were scared that the Poles would rape us. We heard what they are doing to my brother and this boy. What will they do to girls? They will rape us, they will dirt to us and then, they will take us to the Germans. We were scared more from the Poles than from the Germans.

The Germans would kill us, that's all, and we didn't care about life anymore, you know. Then, I told my sister, you have to write a diary so she says, "For what? Do you know what they will do with our diary, they will kill us off anyway and people will kill us off anyway, we will not live through so what will be with the diary, they will use this like toilet paper." I told her, "No, just don't lose hope." I want her to write because I was scared that we will go out from our mind. It wasn't a day that we wasn't crying. It was, we were thinking and we were only two left from the whole Judaism, you understand? Then, then we started to write the diary. Over there, the *goy* was very religious. He went every, every Sunday, they went to church. Once a month, they went to confession, you know. By the confession, he told, he has to tell everything the truth. He told the...

SB: Priest.

MP: ...priest that he has two Jewish girls. But this was in town the same town that we were. He knew my father. He says who are the Jewish girls? He said Naftali Glücksmann's daughters, so he says, they will--because he was very religious, we promised him that after the war, we will convert to Christianity. After the war, I didn't believe that we will live and after the war, I don't have to do it, but, you know, but for him not to kill us, so I was thinking a future Christian he will not kill because he is religious. So he says they will convert to Christianity. This priest knew that my father's children will never convert to Christianity. He said to him so, crime will be forgiven but if your five innocent plants will go from this world, you will be always in hell. You know what he told him, crime will be forgiven. This means when you kill, it will be forgiven but if your five children will go from this world because of the Jewish girls, you will always be in hell. You understand what he told him?

SB: If he kills you then that would be forgiven.

MP: That's right.

SB: But if he hides you and...

MP: And his children will be killed because of the two Jewish girls, he will be always in hell. But he didn't tell five children, five innocent, innocent plants. He came home, he started to starve us. Go to cholera. Cholera, you know what it is?

SB: Cholera.

MP: Go to cholera from this. We made believe that we had a revolver, we didn't have, but we made believe, you know. So, I told him how we can go, where we will go? The ghetto was already liquidated. This means they killed all the Jews, the 2,000 that was left, they took on one grave and they killed and the *goyim* were telling later that the grave was up and down moving three days because some people wasn't killed off so the grave was up and down moving.

SB: Moving, the grave was moving.

MP: That's right. And...

SB: The bodies were...

MP: Yeah.

SB: How did you know about the confession? Did he tell you this?

MP: So, listen. He didn't tell me but I knew he went to a confession and I knew that the priest must something tell him that because he, he was...

SB: He was very upset.

MP: Terrible. This was 1943 right now after my brother was killed so he started to starve us. Then, the Russians started to move forwards because from Stalingrad, they moved back and forth, back and forth, you know. When they started to move forward, he started to be better for us because he was thinking the war would be over soon. So, I told him, "Listen, tell"--and I knew it would be the other confession, you know, so I told him, "Tell me the truth, what the priest told you about the confession?" He repeated word by word and I knew that he was too primitive to make up a story five innocent plants. It wouldn't even come to his mind something like this, you know. So, I knew this is not his words because he didn't know how to write, he didn't know how to read, he was a very primitive farmer, you know. So, I knew what the *galekh*--what the priest told him so I looked at my sister and my sister looked at me and we knew that the priest didn't tell him kill, but he said the crime will be forgiven but he didn't understand what he told him. I told him, "Listen, you see I was carrying Jesus and this on the chain," and I told him, "You see, the mother of God, she will save us. You don't believe, I believe in this. I am a future Christian but I believe and you don't believe and you are a Christian, you don't believe that this Mother will save us?" So, I told him and "I believed that a priest is a God's son, and I believe in this but he's still human. Try other priest and I told him what town and it was the same direction, this means the same distance. Go to the other priest and I knew the other priest doesn't know us at least. So go to the other priest and try over there to be"--I knew the confession would be in one week. When he goes back, he will hear that he didn't kill, he will tell him to kill. So, I told him, "Go to the other priest. He went to the other priest. From this time, he went always to this priest. This other priest gave him all kinds of rosa...

SB: Rosaries.

MP: Rosaries for us and gave some bibles and this. I paid for it, I have to pay for this. And I had to accept this and pay for this and he says, "I will come right after the war, I will come to convert them but now I can't because if they are caught, the whole city will go of us so I can't do nothing now but right now after the war." And he came with this *tsores* [troubles] told, right after the war. Then, he told me, "You know I have for you a boy, such a good boy." So I told him, "Okay, but don't be a fool, don't tell now about me, tell after the war." [laughs] This I needed, a boy over there. "So, tell after the war because you see, your five innocent, innocent plants can go from this world." So, you see, he was such a primitive *goy* but he was--then the Russians was again back and we were so over there suffering under this, we didn't have air to breathe. The whole day, we wrote the diary. I made my sister to write and I was writing. We wrote the diary.

SB: Did you write the diary at night or did you write it while you were down in this hole?

MP: While I was down in this hole by the [unclear], you know. Not upstairs, upstairs, it was the cows, and we couldn't make light upstairs because somebody would see it from outside. We just put our heads down, we were sleeping. If we could, if the cows didn't make maa, baa, you know, but we were--in daytime, we couldn't sleep over there because we couldn't breathe, we didn't have air enough. At nighttime, in nighttime we couldn't sleep because the cows were making noise, you know. So, it was hell 20 ½ months, you imagine. 20 ½ months we didn't see even the air, nothing. One time, he, she wants to hit us, the wife. So, we knew when they start to hit one time, we will be hit every day, you know, because they were antisemitic. They only kept us because they needed the money. They were scared because it came out later a law, if a Jew will be caught in a *goyish* home--later came out a law, they will be killed together with the Jews.

SB: How often did you pay them? I mean, did you pay them all...?

MP: Every month.

SB: Every month, you gave them some.

MP: Yes.

SB: Did they try to steal your money?

MP: No, we had this in our hiding place.

SB: I see.

MP: I left it overnight over there, the money and he was scared to go down the, the--it can fall down on him, you know, and we were sleeping near the enter so we--and also, we had things what we--oh, it is a whole story--when I tell you, you would never believe. We were sewing by hand from, from, from sheets...

SB: Sheets?

MP: Yeah. We were sewing skirts, blouses for sale that he...

SB: Down in the hole?

MP: Yes.

SB: Who brought you fabric? Where did you get the fabric?

MP: Not fabric, I told you, from old sheets.

SB: They gave you old sheets?

MP: I had.

SB: You were able to bring all this with you?

MP: Little by little, my brother brought and I brought.

SB: Oh, I see.

MP: You know, we brought it little by little, the things.

SB: You brought things in over a few trips?

MP: No, no, no, no. So, we had the old this and I told him I want to make myself a dress so bring me dye. So, he brought me blue dyes. I told him, I don't like this dye,

bring me other dye. He brought me red dye, brown dye. I made, so I made from *damas*, pillows, I made scarves for the farmer girls to sell and we embroidered over there.

SB: All done in this hole.

MP: This hole everything. We embroidered, we gave for sale so he could sell and he brought money for this and you know? So we lived 20 ½ months. When I tell you this story, I remember, I want to tell you so, so rapidly everything. So, after this, so he, he sometimes he gave us bread, sometimes only he gave us potatoes or black coffee. Sometimes, he gave us milk. We paid for everything separate and still we give him mostly for keeping us, you know.

SB: After your brother was killed, though...

MP: He was very rough to us.

SB: How many months were you in hiding when your brother was killed?

MP: What?

SB: After how many months that you were in hiding?

MP: It was only three months when he was killed and the rest, 17 ½ months, we were still there.

SB: So, after he was killed, you had no source of anything really, any contact with the outside?

MP: No, no, nothing. Then, then one time, she wants to hit us. And we made believe that we had a revolver, so they were scared a little for us. When she lifted her hand to hit, my sister made believe she was reaching for the revolver. She ran out from the stable so scared. My sister was making believe that she was reaching for the revolver. We didn't have the revolver but we made believe that they should be scared for us, you know? So, it was, what I can tell you, it came before Christmas, we had to sing with them Christmas the hymns, the Christmas songs. Oh my God, what I can tell you.

SB: Tell me.

MP: Oh God, what we went through over there, hell, really hell, because they were antisemitic, very antisemitic, but they kept us because they were a little bit scared for us and they kept us that they were thinking they will have heaven that they converted two Jews and then, also....

Tape two, side two:

So, one time, the Gestapo came to this village, you know, so he got scared. He wants us to take out to the forest so I told him--and leave us over there. I didn't know over there. When he took us out to the forest, I wouldn't know even how to go back to his home so I told him, "Okay, I will stay in the forest if you stay with us." He says, "So what, do you want me to be dead over there, too?" "So, you see, you tell that we can be dead over there, you are scared too, so I will not go out. Till you will not stay with us, I will not go out over there." So, he didn't want to stay with us because he was scared so he let us stay, he covered us, because for daytime, they covered the enter with board and on the board dirt and stones so the children, when they come in, they wouldn't be able to pick up the dirt or something to, to reach to us, you know, so they covered with big stones and with dirt and we were over there without air, without nothing, you understand? So, so he wants us to take out, we didn't want so he had to keep us and we, like we had to always to be on guard that they will not start to hit us and when they start, we are helpless, you know, they would hit us every day, to like--they didn't like us. So, we had to make believe the whole time, we made believe that we had a revolver, that's all. What I want to tell? What I saw in the ghetto. I saw in the ghetto--I go back, I saw in the ghetto one time, teared out from a mother, a child, by the foot and throwed on the concrete and the whole brains went out from the ghet--from the child. The mother was going crazy, she fell and fainted and they killed her. So, I was thinking a good thing they killed her because at least she would not get insane. It was a blessing that they killed her after this. I saw one woman to, to be shot in the belly because she was a woman, she was like 20 years, 21 years, just married, so she was pregnant. They, they killed her and then, it starts to move in the belly, they killed in the belly, they shoot the belly. I saw boys, boys, little boys, 8, 9 years, and we were working then on the tracks, you know, by the, by the train, and these boys were hungry, already without mothers. Their mothers and fathers sent away and they were someplace kept, not in the ghetto, some barracks, and they were very hungry. One time, I had some food and I gave the--they all grabbed the food, you know, going to work. One boy couldn't pick up the heavy tracks, you know. This was iron. He couldn't pick up, he was kicked between the feet from the Gestapo. He sat down and he was so frightened and I went to him and I wanted to give him my lunch. He says, "I'm not hungry, I want my mommy." He was so--I heard so much. He was so crying. We all were crying because we were working next to them, we were all crying seeing this boy, probably who knows what he did with such a kick with such a heavy boot. In a while they disappeared to--probably they were sent away or killed, I don't know, they disappeared, too. In ghetto you saw many things what I can't tell this in such a short time, you know. So everything, these pictures, stay with us, you know.

SB: When did you--was it when you were in hiding that you found out about concentration camps?

MP: No.

SB: Or you didn't know?

MP: We didn't know.

SB: When did you...?

MP: When I, when I--you see, Russian came in--Tilden Pitzar [phonetic] came in 1944. The *goy* didn't tell us that the Russian are already here because he probably wants us to convert, you know, but I saw he was not scared anymore. He let us out in daytime in the stable. He didn't put us to the grave over th--I called this grave--he didn't put us to this hiding place so I was thinking why is he not scared? I started to be scared for the Poles, you know. Why he's not scared, why doesn't he put us--because as soon as the children got up, he put us over there, before they got up. So, he gave us for a whole day, potatoes, black coffee and put us over there. So, I, you looked through the small window because in the stable was a small window. From far away I saw a Russian. I saw this and I knew this is not a German. I knew the Germans' uniforms. I knew this was not a German. I told my sister, "You see, this is a Russian, this is not a German." So, we looked to the track from the door and he came out from the home in the hallway, you know. So, I knocked a little bit to the window and I told him, when he came in, I told him, "Why you didn't tell us that the Russians are here already?" He says, "What, you have here bad?" He was talking so with a jargon, what the Poles say, "What you have here bad? What's your hurry to go out?" I told him, "Listen, one thing, I see that you are not scared anymore, you let us stay here. I saw a Russian and I know why you are not scared but you know from Stalingrad, the Russians go back and forth, they can go from here to back and then your five innocent"--always I--"and the Germans can come back." So, he says, "What do you want me to do?" So, I told him, "Listen, at nighttime, take your wagon, put full of straw on the wagon and we will go under the straw and you will take us out hidden under the straw and you will let us down in, I told him in Błażowa, you will let us down and over there...

SB: What's that, a town, another town?

MP: A other small town, yeah. "You will let us down when you see the Russian army." So, he got scared. I told him they can back, come back the Germans, you know what will be, you have to be scared. I scared him because I was scared for the Poles, you know, and I was thinking maybe he wants us to convert now and I didn't want to convert.

SB: So, you knew the war was over.

MP: I knew--not the war was over.

SB: But you knew the Russians were there.

MP: The Russians were here but the war wasn't over in 1944. It was over in 1945.

SB: Right.

MP: But we were already--we could all go out already. So, in this time, the Russians were our survivors. They survived and they were our, no...

SB: They were your saviors?

MP: Savors, yeah. So, he did so. At nighttime, he took us under the, under the straw. We took our diaries with us.

SB: You both kept diaries?

MP: Yes. We took our diaries and we went in--and I told him, don't uncover us until you don't see the Russian army. In a forest, it was already day time, he uncovered us. I told him he has seen the Russians, he says no, it's the partisans. The partisans, they can search the wagon. They will find you and they will think I am a spy or something. Oh, my God, I was scared for the partisans because the Polish partisans killed Jews, too, you know. So, I took off my straw and from my sister and we sat down and then, it came the partisans to us and they asked us, "What's your name?" We told them Polish name, you know. "From where you come?" "From Rzeszów, under Rzeszów." "What is over there?" "They fight over there," because I hear the fighting, you could hear the, "so they fight over there so we ran away because it is over there." I talked good Polish, so we ran away because over there is danger. So he says, "What is your profession?" I told him a teacher. "Your sister she is going through in school?" You can see she is a little girl, but we ran away because--"You have some identification?" I told him I forgot to take because it was very danger, I didn't take my identification. How they didn't recognize, I don't know, because we were all yellow-green. We didn't have any--the face was not with, you know, from under the ground 20 ½ months, you imagine, so thin we were. So, then, in this town, it was a principal from school that she was a neighbor from us. I was thinking to go to her. So, I told him, take me to her. I went to her and she says to me, "Minu," because she called me Minu, "Minu, how you look. When your mother stays out from grave and sees you, she will run back," and I was thinking she already buried my mother. I was hoping still I will find my mother and I will find my father. And she already buried because they knew what was going on. I didn't know, and I--and she says listen--I told her, "Can I be here?" So she says, "No because on my garden, I don't want to be a witness of your death. On my garden, the partisans killed three Jews. So the partisans are killing Jews and I don't want to be a witness." This time I was thinking she--I was disappointed, I was thinking she doesn't want us, you know. She doesn't want us.

SB: Yes.

MP: I was thinking she doesn't want us. So, I was, I was thinking, I was very disappointed in her, an intelligent woman. She was my teacher and she doesn't want us and she was a neighbor, too. So, but then, he, he got scared to death, this *goy*, so he took us to the Russian army and he let us down over there. Over there, I was asking about the *Evrei* [Jew]. *Evrei*, this means, I knew this one Russian word. *Evrei* is Jew. I didn't know Russian. So, they told me Captain Birnbaum and I remember still the name. I came to him, a young captain, and I came to him and I told, "I am a Jew and I am scared from the Polish partisans." He says, "What?" He was a Jew but he didn't know--he only knew that he was a Jew but he didn't know nothing about Judaism so he says what, they are going with us, they are fighting the Germans, they are going with us. So I told him, "Listen, you

don't know but I know, they killed my brother, the Poles killed my brother, the Poles are looking for us to kill us too. So, let us stay overnight here." So he says, "Okay, stay here." They gave us food to eat and then, he went to the office and the office was light and he left us over there. It was Russian girls, it was Russian--everybody was soldiers. I saw the Russian girls, they, it is going on with the soldiers, my God, and I got scared to death. I with my sister went to the office. Birnbaum asked me, "Why don't you lay down over there and sleep?" So I told him I like to sit down, I will here sit. So, we sat in the corner in the office and they gave us chocolate and he started to laugh, he understood why I came here, you know. He understood we didn't want over there expose ourselves to something like this so we came over there. In the morning, I was asking where is the Red Cross. They told us. Over there, I was again asking about *Evrei* so they told us, she is a Major--Major Rappaport. I remember the name because I stayed with them eight days. When we came to her, she knew Jewish, she knew, she was already in the forties, she knew Jewish. And she said, "How do I know you are not a spy, I can't keep you here, it's very high security and everything, I can't keep you, I don't know that you are not a spy." So I asked her, listen, in Jewish, "Do we look like spies? Do you saw a spy so yellow-green?" And I showed her my parents' pictures from the powder case I took out and I showed her my parents' pictures and say, "Look good. My sister looks like my mother, I like my father. Look good and you'll find out," and I showed her our *Meldekarte* [work card] this means...

SB: The work cards.

MP: The work card from the Germans, from the ghetto. Then, somehow, after talking for a while, she, she believed us. We had over there wonderful eight days. When we walked down, the partisans were right now under us. "We will take you, we will take you here." I knew where they would take us, they would kills us right away and we were scared later to go out a minute. Then, then one night after eight days, I saw--they went to a meeting, it was one *Mussulman*, they were all high ranks. She, the whole time she was talking to us to be Communists to go to Russian, over there we will not be persecuted, over there, everybody is the same. I told her, sure, we only intend to go to Russia. I want to be over there. I was scared from the Poles. I was thinking it is only left we two Jews, no more in the whole world, you know, in the whole Europe. So, I promised her I will go to Russia. [laughs] Over there, I promised I will convert. Over here, I will go to Russia. [laughs] So, then, after eight days, I see they are packing they went for a meeting and they started to pack. They started to pack and I thought I'll go, too, so she said, "I can't take you, we are not allowed to take civilian people." So, I thought we will go with the Russian soldiers. Where they will go, I will go. You know, it was the middle of the night, I will follow. I saw they are going already forward so I knew that Rzeszów is already under the Russians. So, we will go, we will go with them, you know? We were walking, nobody wants to take us on the trucks because they are not allowed to take civilian people so we were walking near them, we were scared to go away walk from them. So, we came to Rzeszów, it was already day time. So, we looked or we will find some Jewish people. We found a home,

a Jewish home, what they took over. Eight Jewish people from the whole small towns and everything, some came from concentration camps, some of them from under the ground, from hiding places.

SB: That's where you found out about the concentration camps?

MP: That's right, then I found out what was happened to the people. I still was hoping that my brother--he was so strong, a strong boy, that he will survive, you know, I still hoped that he will survive and so in 1944 we were already liberated. My husband came with the Russian army. I will tell you about my husband another time...

SB: Alexander.

MP: ...because it is, it is--his story, he already in 1938, he already lost his brother in Staunschwein [phonetic] concentration camp. He had quite a story.

SB: Okay, we'll tell his story another time.

MP: Then, I met my husband and he was in Russian, in Russian uniform and he came looking for Jewish people and this was the home of Jewish people, he met us. It was three girls, three?, four girls with us together, four girls left. Then, it came later the nine boys or 10 boys, something like this. So from then, we were, we were together and he wants to marry me but it wasn't a rabbi to give, it wasn't a rabbi, no rabbi was left so then, I told him I don't want to marry, I was scared. I told him you are still in the army, they can send you but he says no, I am a captain and they need me because I am training the Polish soldiers to fight against the Germans, they will not send me away, and if they send me away, if I will know that I have to whom to come back to, I will fight for my life and so I will not care about my life because I don't have nobody left, you know. So, then we took like by a judge, the wedding.

SB: You had like a civil ceremony?

MP: A civil ceremony. I wasn't satisfied. He was from a very fine family. His grandfather was a rabbi and from Kraków and then, I was already by two months pregnant, it came out they took already Dembitsa and from over there came a rabbi so we took, took our Jewish marriage, you know, with this rabbi. So, then, then I had two marriages.

SB: The second one you were pregnant.

MP: Right, I was already pregnant when I got the second.

SB: You're very modern. [laughs]

MP: [laughs] My mother would kill me or my father after the civil marriage I had, I just was like husband and wife.

SB: How old was your sister? How much younger was she than you?

MP: She was already 17 years old when the war started--when she was...

SB: When you got married, she was 17 years?

MP: Yes, 17, yeah. Then, later--what was happened?--later I was already two months pregnant. When I got married, I wasn't two months pregnant, I was one and a half. Then, later they sent him to the worst fight on the Oder-Neisse [Rivers] and then they

made, the Poles made a pogrom of the Jews, they threw under the synagogue eight children dead, killed children and they said that we killed⁶ them for *matzo*.

SB: This was after? This was in '44.

MP: Yes, in '44, that we killed them for *matzo*, you know. No this was already '45 because my husband went--I was already pregnant, my husband went and they made a pogrom of the Jews. No, the, the--and there was no mother and father to claim the children. The children were probably Jewish children what mothers and fathers gave to hide, you know, because no mother and father claimed the children so they killed and they told we killed them for *matzo*.

SB: These were the Poles?

MP: Yes. But the Russians stopped them but it was--we run away from Rzeszów already. We ran to Kraków. In Kraków, we were in Kraków, I got a very nice apartment in Kraków because my husband was in the war so they gave us, the Russians gave us a very nice apartment and over there we lived, we lived over there. My sister started to go in *gymnasium*.

SB: How long were you and your husband separated?

MP: My son was born in July, 1945, after the war and I still didn't know. He was born--my son was born at home, not in a hospital, on a kitchen table. The water went out so I had to give birth, and he wasn't even, it wasn't even, just eight months.

SB: He was premature?

MP: Yeah. A Jewish doctor, the hands were shaking, but he was from under hiding but I was scared to go to a hospital because it was not cleared up right now after the war, if somebody *Volksdeutsche*⁷ or something, they can kill or me or the child, you know, so I didn't go to the hospital and three nights and three days, I--and then, he was taken with instruments. The doctor was shaking...

SB: Forceps.

MP: He had a *Hebamme* [midwife] to help him, you know a midwife to help him...

SB: Deliver.

MP: Deliver. He was before the war a very good doctor, but he was hiding for six years. [unclear]

SB: So, your husband was still away?

MP: Still, I didn't know where or I gave birth to an orphan or I gave birth to--I still didn't know because it was from the whole platoon, 15,000 soldiers was left, he was then already in the Polish army because then they changed to the Polish army, you know.

SB: The Russians became part of the Polish army?

⁶The blood libel – allegation that Jews murder non-Jews, especially Christian children, in order to obtain blood for the Passover or other rituals.”(“Blood Libel,” www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org, accessed 9/19/2007.)

⁷*Volksdeutsche* - ethnic Germans.

MP: Yes, but no, no the Russians were the Russians but the Polish people--he was Polish so they, they changed him to a Polish uniform, you know.

SB: I see.

MP: So...

SB: The platoon had 15,000?

MP: It was from 15,000 left 7 people.

SB: Seven people.

MP: Seven, because under Oder-Neisse was a real massacre, you know. So, I was sure that I give birth to an orphan, I was crying and I asked the rabbi to give the name after my husband or after my father. He says you don't know after your husband till you don't have death certificate you can't give after him, but you can give after your father. But my boy was born four pounds, they couldn't circumcise him because he was premature. And I was two weeks laying flat, I couldn't even nurse him there, I was laying flat after this, it was three days and three nights and with instruments they took the baby out. And he's now a lawyer, he's published two books. Then, I was laying already two weeks, it came the first letter. He left me in Rzeszów so the letter came to Rzeszów. The Jewish community sent it to Kraków. In Kraków, everybody was registering. I went to register, I am Minna Glücksmann from Tyczyn, daughter of this and this, you know, because now I am Perlberger and I live here and here because maybe some family will come and look up so everybody registered from where they are, who they are and so the families can find each other if somebody is alive. So, I registered over there and the letter came over there so they delivered and I knew that he's alive. It was already after the war when my boy was already two weeks old. So I found out that he has a father but I couldn't get in touch with him, I wrote to him. Because it was already after the war, I could write. So, I told him that his baby is already born. He was thinking that I was still pregnant.

Tape three, side one.

MP: My boy was born, he was born an eight month baby and so, I had to have a nurse over there coming in because he was, he had to be in cotton, in cotton...

SB: Had to be kept warm because he was a premature baby.

MP: Yes, he was premature, he weighed only four pounds. Then, after--so, I had to go to make money somehow with my husband was over there still, they didn't let him out. It was after the war but they didn't let him out still. He even didn't see the baby. I had to write to him that the baby had already arrived because he was expecting him in a month to be the baby arriving and when he came to the mayor to say that he wants to see the wife, so he didn't let him go. He has to see the baby, the wife. So, he told me to write him a letter, a telegram that I am dying so they would let him go, they would release him for a few weeks because he wants to see the baby.

SB: Where was he stationed?

MP: He was stationed in near Friedland, Friedland he was over there, made a mayor of the city, in Friedland.

SB: How far was that?

MP: This was far, this was in Germany.

SB: It was in Germany?

MP: Yes, Friedland, and he was over there, a mayor, and they didn't let him go. He was still in the uniform even though it was after the war so he went to the mayor and he says, he showed my telegram that I am dying so he says, "Let her drop dead, it is many women in this world," and he didn't let him go.

SB: Were there many Jewish soldiers?

MP: In this, in this army where he was, it was four, but it was left only two. One was from Kraków, too.

SB: What was life like for you living in this apartment? There were other Jewish people?

MP: No, you see, it wasn't Jewish people. How is can be Jewish people, the Jewish people were mostly dead.

SB: Yes, but you said...

MP: It was few people, but I was buying the merchandise not through, not from the Russians because they came always in nighttime because they, this was black marking so they came always in nighttime and because we were only three, three oh and females, I couldn't let them in at nighttime so I bought from second hand. I took on consignment and I went to the market to or sell or bring some food, because I didn't have money and I had to pay the nurse what was by taking care of my boy.

SB: Did you experience antisemitism during this period of time?

MP: Yes. When my boy was one month old, they made a pogrom again in Kraków. Again, they throwed some children under the synagogue, they said we are killing them for *matzo* and then, they made again a pogrom but the Russians stopped them but it

was very scary because just my boy was born and I was scared, just he was born and he can be killed right away. Antisemitism was always in Poland. After the war when I was walking with my sister, they say, oh they thought behind us, they said, they thought that all Jewish girls are killed and it is so many still because they saw us and it was only five girls in this Rzeszów so my sister turned back to them and she says, "You should see how many we are left, we are left hundreds. You don't like it, we are left hundreds," she says, and there were only five girls left that came out from under the ground. With us, together five girls. This was in Rzeszów. Then, I was in Kraków when the war--when again was a pogrom because in Rzeszów was a pogrom and I ran away to Kraków and in Kraków was a pogrom again.

SB: Wait a sec, the pogrom in Rzeszów was when?

MP: I told over there, the pogrom in Rzeszów was in 1945, before the war--in wintertime, before the war was over. The war was over in 1945 in May.

SB: This is 1944?

MP: No, 1945.

SB: Oh, still 1945.

MP: Yes, 194-, because my husband wasn't anymore over there, he was already back.

SB: Oh, that's when you left to Kraków?

MP: Yes, we ran away to Kraków. And in Kraków, we got an apartment.

SB: Okay.

MP: So, I was making money and my sister was going in *gymnasium* over there and the *gymnasium* was supposed to pay the Jewish, the Jewish committee over there, but one time I stayed a half a day over there and when they came already to the cash, it was such a big line, they didn't have any more money so I didn't go because I lost going--I, I, when I stayed over there, I will make some money when I go on the black market over there in the marketplace. So, I didn't go anymore and I took from my pocket for her for school.

SB: You didn't want to waste the time waiting in line for pay. This way you could make money on the black market.

MP: That's right, it didn't pay me because I stayed a half a day and then when I came, when I was already before the cash, they were out from cash so I didn't want anymore, to stay over there. I paid for my--and I had to make money for this and for this and the apartment I paid together half, she paid the--Perlberger, what I took her in in this this apartment, she paid half and gas and electric, she paid half and I paid half and we had to make for this money. Also, we gave out like suppers for the single men, for the survivors. She was cooking and I was going--the cash was together. I was going over there to make money on the market and she was cooking. She was, she had two children and I had my sister and the nurse what was eating, so we had leftovers, from the suppers

and we had leftovers for our suppers, three suppers for us, and three suppers for her, you know, so the suppers were--but we had still to make for breakfast and...

SB: You were paid to make these suppers for the survivors?

MP: They paid for every supper.

SB: They paid?

MP: They paid for the suppers and we had so much profit that we had six--it wasn't many it was by six, seven, eight, but at least we had six suppers left over.

SB: I bet it kept you fed, too.

MP: That's right. So, the suppers were lunchtime. Lunchtime was the big meal. This was like the dinner in lunchtime. Then, for breakfast and evening, we had to make money.

SB: Okay, now did your husband get the leave to come see you?

MP: So, my husband when he told him let her drop dead because there's more women, he went, he took a chance, he went without release. They would kill him when they meet him, but he was so angry, two months the baby was old and he didn't see the baby and he want to see the baby so he came without a release and he didn't go out because he was scared, he was in uniform and they can ask him for a release that he didn't have in Kraków. So, he didn't got out and in the meantime, he got over there the release when he was already here. He got over there and the boyfriend, the Jewish boyfriend, sent him over the release to the apartment. So, the last week, he had already the release so he, we went to the theater, he took me to the theatre, you see, something to give me enjoyment. He brought with him some money, he brought with him some clothes for us so when he came, because he saw at least he left me a little bit of money and what he had over there and he went back, he had to go back.

SB: So, how long did he stay with you?

MP: He stayed only two weeks.

SB: Then he went back?

MP: Then he went back, he had to go back. He had only for two weeks release. So he had to go back but when he was--after a month later, they released him.

SB: A month later, they released him completely?

MP: Yes, they released him. So he came to Kraków and we went to Lenau [phonetic], over there, to the German Zone because over there, we could get a house after the Germans and we got a bakery, the Germans bakery they gave us so we had a nice living.

SB: They gave you a bakery?

MP: A bakery and a house.

SB: And a house.

MP: The Germans, after, the Germans.

SB: Oh, the Germans left?

MP: Yes. No, the Germans had to go out from this house.

SB: Right.

MP: Because after the war, they had to go out. My husband made them, made them also, when he was in the army over there, when he took over the Germans...

SB: When the Russians took over?

MP: With the Russians with the Poles, so he made them also "Out from your home," and he threwed them out in nighttime in the rain and he told them in the mud, to sit down over there and he gave them--because he wants revenge because his whole family was killed and everything so he wants to revenge them so he gave them over there, the same taste, you know, not the taste that they killed them, they didn't kill them after the war, the Germans, but he throwed them out and gave the Jewish people their houses, you know. And they had to go and join with the other Germans that were in the houses. But then he was released and they gave us a bakery and a house so we were over there but they started--they killed one Jew in nighttime and you know, the Poles killed one Jew in nighttime and we got very scared. We went to Reichenbach [also Dzierzoniow], we ran away over nighttime because we were scared so we ran away to Reichenbach. Over there was more Jews. We left the bakery with everything and we ran and with my sister, with my baby and we were in Reichenbach waiting to go out from Poland because we didn't want to stay in Poland, I was scared from Poland to stay. Also, it was--the *goyim* [non Jews] what they caught my brother, the 19, they knew that I know their names so they--when they find out that I was over there, I with my sister, they knew that we know the names, they would kill us at nighttime. It was in Kielce, was also, they killed a newlywed, Jewish couple. They were killing after the war and nobody knew who because they did this in nighttime so we were waiting until my boy will be one year old so we can go out from Poland because we were scared. And we smuggled out from Poland. No, we smuggled out--we took only just what we could take with us, diapers for the baby and...

SB: When was this?

MP: This was in 1946.

SB: 1946.

MP: Yes, he was one year old. We waited only until he will be one year old that we can travel with him so we went through the--smuggled from Poland to Czechoslovakia.

SB: Czechoslovakia?

MP: Yes.

SB: So, the Russians wouldn't allow Jews to leave Poland?

MP: They wouldn't allow nobody to leave Poland--illegal.

SB: You had to smuggle out?

MP: We had to smuggle through the border and we came to Czechoslovakia. And in Czechoslovakia, we were waiting for...

SB: How did you smuggle? At night?

MP: No, no, no in day time, but we smuggled like Greek Jews. It was over there, no, from Israel, people what they came after the war to take out the Jews from Poland so they told us not to tell that we are Jews, that we are Poles, only we are Greek Jews, you

know, and on, on the border, we make believe--we told all papers to throw away, all legal papers. Do you know that I threw away my diary and I came--my husband didn't know, I came back for the diaries and I put this under my boy's--under the carriage, and I took a risk because I didn't want to lose my diary, you know.

SB: So, you came to the border and you came without papers basically because you told me you threw out all the papers?

MP: All the papers.

SB: And when they asked you who were, you said?

MP: A Greek Jew.

SB: That you were a Greek Jew, okay.

MP: Yes. So, we came to Czechoslovakia and in Czechoslovakia, I, we--I smuggled out my husband--I didn't tell my husband because he would be scared, his pictures from the army, I brought too, you know, with me. This army man run away from--you know, it would be--so I took a chance I couldn't leave this, you know. Many thing, my report card from the business school, I took with me and I didn't tell my husband. When we passed already the border, I told him I have this everything. He says, "This is crazy." It was crazy but it was, that's all. Over there were waiting for us, cattle ca...

SB: Cattle cars?

MP: Cattle, no, trains. Yes, they were waiting for us already to take us farther.

SB: This was all organized by?

MP: This was all organized. I don't know by whom but I think it was Jewish...

SB: It was a Jewish organization that organized to rescue?

MP: That's right, everything was organized. And they took us till Vienna, but I nursed my boy and I couldn't and I was ashamed because we were all sitting on the floor in the cattle car so, so I was ashamed and he was hungry and he cried and I was ashamed to nurse him over there so my husband says, "My God," he says, "the baby is dying, you will be ashamed." I said, "I can't," I just couldn't uncover my breast, so one--she was from Hungarian, also smuggled out from Hungaria, and she saw that I am ashamed and so she says--she was by the wall sitting so she says, "Take my place and sit here and I will go on your place because we were very tight sitting so I turned to the wall and I started to nurse him and from then we got very friendly with this, with this Hungarian couples and we were--everywhere where we came, we were saying that we are sisters because we didn't want them to part us because they gave us in some rooms, you know, with strangers and we want to be always together.

SB: So, you went to Vienna?

MP: Vienna. In Vienna, it was already the Joint waiting for us.

SB: The Joint Distribution?

MP: Yes. It was in--you know, the Sound of Music...

SB: In...

MP: Oh my God, over there, they gave us the palace.

SB: I'm trying to think where it is.

MP: I have on my tongue but I forgot. So, over there, we were in this palace. We came--the Joint Distribution gave us breakfast, lunch and we stayed in the, in the line to get the breakfast, the lunch, supper. In the meantime, they gave farina but it was so hard when I gave it to my boy, he got a stomachache. I came over there to the Joint and I asked for tea, for tea. I told my boy got sick from the--so it was over there, a girl, she was in her forties but she wasn't married, you know, an old maid, she says who told you to have children, you could, you could wait with the children until you are in place and it is now closed, the kitchen, I can't give you tea, you know.

SB: Was this a Jewish woman?

MP: Yes, sure from Joint, from United States, so I told her, "Are you married?" She says no. "So that's why you don't understand the child is now crying here from a stomachache from this farina, it wasn't cooked good, it was too hard and he has a stomachache." So, she says, "Too bad, it's now the kitchen closed." So, my husband got so angry and he took a chair probably from the palace, who knows what, how much the chair was worth and--it was a royal palace, he knocked this in pieces and he made a fire outside to boil water for the child to have for him for the stomachache so it was some things what were funny, some things what was--it was, to stay in line for every meal, you imagine how this was.

SB: How long were you in Vienna for?

MP: In Vienna, we wasn't too long. By two months, one month, something.

SB: And then where did you go?

MP: And then, we went to Germany, to Germany because over there was U.S. Zone, you know. So, we went to Germany and in Germany they gave us in tents and it was already autumn, you know.

SB: So it was getting cold?

MP: Very cold. When I had, when I had to change my baby's diapers, it came out like, like damp, you could see the damp.

SB: The steam?

MP: The steam. So, he got bronchitis. He got a cold, he got bronchitis, so they took me to, to Frankfurt to a hospital, to the, to a German hospital, to Frankfurt and my husband--they transfer--no, from the barracks, they gave us to, they want us to give to, to, no, to barracks from the tents to barracks.

SB: They wanted to move you to the barracks instead of the tents?

MP: Yes, and this was already in U.S. Zone.

SB: U.S....

MP: U.S. Zone, the American army was over there. They treat us like dirt, you know, even over there, after the war. So, so they want us to give to barracks, we started to strike we didn't want to go down from the train, we started to strike. In the meantime, my boy had bronchitis, he had forty, like 103 fever. So, they took us, me and the boy, to

Frankfurt to the hospital. Over there, they want to separate us, me and the boy. I didn't want to trust Germans to give my boy so I thought I will not trust you, I don't want to trust you, you killed my whole family. I was scared to trust them with my boy. So they say, "But here is not allowed only children." So I told them, "I don't care, I will not trust you my boy." So they said, "Okay, I will give you over there in a hospital together." They gave me a room over there in a other, near this hospital but other building. But what I want to go out, yeah, the doctor came in and he says, what I want to go out, the boy started to cry, he wouldn't let me, he was scared, you know, he was one year old, he was scared. So, I didn't go out. In the meantime, the doctor came in and he says, he put a compress here, he gave him medicine.

SB: Compress on the chest?

MP: Yeah, and he gave him medicine. Then, he says who is sick, you or the boy. I told the boy is sick so I don't understand why they let you in this hospital, this is only the very sick.

SB: The very sick?

MP: The venereal sick.

SB: The venereal sick?

MP: Yes, when I heard this, my God, I took my boy, and it was very cold--a venereal disease, you know, when I heard this, I took my boy and I said, "You murderers," to this doctor, "You murderers, you want now to give me a sickness?" and I took my boy. He said you can't go out. I took my boy, I gave him my winter coat and I ran to this other hospital and I was over there screaming, you murderers, you where you gave us, you want me to put my boy there then let me go out, when I go out in the toilet, I will catch venereal sickness. So, I told him, you want me to trust my boy, you killed my whole family. This is all German doctors, you know.

SB: The Americans sent you there? Right? That's where the Americans told you to go.

MP: To this hospital, but they didn't know what they would do with me, you know, and I thought I want to go to my husband and they say, we can't transport you to your husband. "I will not stay here, I don't trust you anymore. If you want to give me and my baby venereal sickness, I don't want to trust you anymore, I don't want these doctors." So, they--I was screaming and all people from outside heard this, you murderers, you. And I didn't even--you can't imagine how I felt in this time. When I was thinking what they gave me, you know and this was already in U.S. Zone, you know. So, they couldn't make me quiet so they gave me on a truck to go to Babenhausen where my husband was, where I left my husband to strike because we, all survivors were striking, we didn't want to go in barracks. I am not anymore a prisoner, I'm not anymore in concentration camp to give me in, in barracks but we didn't succeed, they gave us the barracks so when I came with my boy over there, he was sick. It was one doctor, she was from Russia and she took care of him and he got well.

SB: He got better.

MP: But my husband made in this barrack, he made fire in a little stove day and night, we were putting to keep warm, you know, for the baby. She gave medicine, some medicine, and I came to the--over there, no, over there was the army, the U.S. army, so I came to them and I told them what they want to do; they didn't care. It was--I'm telling you this was after the war, after the surviving, after this. And then, they sent us to Dieburg, to the displaced persons camp.

SB: How long were you in the barracks?

MP: Only a week or something.

SB: Okay, and then, they sent you on...

MP: Then, they sent us. And everywhere we told that the Hungarian, that this couple that they are sisters, because with babies, they sent away early because winter is coming and she because she is my sister, they sent her together.

SB: You went together, so you left the barracks together to go to this displaced persons camp which was in...?

MP: In Dieburg.

SB: Dieburg, Germany.

MP: Germany, yeah. Over there, they gave us one room for the whole family, one room.

SB: So, it was you, your husband, the baby, your sister....

MP: No, they had a separate room. But me, my sister and my baby one room and a kitchen, only two fireplaces.

SB: Two burners?

MP: Two burners. It was for three families. This was, this what they treated our survivors in the U.S. Zone, you know in Germany and the Germans were living nicely in the houses, you know. But they gave us such conditions. In these conditions, we live three years. We registered right now to the United States because I knew that I have here my father's two sisters and I want to have a family, I want to belong to somebody because we didn't have nobody left so I want to go to the United States so we registered and wait three years to be called to the United States. When they called us, before when our quota was ready to go, they gave us an examination, such, such strict like through a microscope, like if somebody had only a little spot on the lungs or something, they didn't let in. This was the justice that we had after the war.

SB: So you must have been pretty angry about all of this.

MP: Oh my God, oh my God, you can't imagine how we were enraged. You seeing, over there, the three years, also the Joint...

SB: The Distribution?

MP: Distribution. It wasn't enough to live, it wasn't enough to die, you know. But then, I wrote to the United States to my aunts to send packages so they started to send

every month, I got a care package. So, the luxuries I exchanged with the Germans for things what I needed, cigarettes, coffee, what I got in the care packages so I...

SB: You exchanged with the Germans for, what did they give you in return?

MP: I needed clothes.

SB: Blankets.

MP: Uh-huh [affirmative]. I needed eggs, I needed--because they--I needed more meat because they gave only for the whole family, two pounds of meat a week, you know. A week, two pounds of meat, you know, so I--when they sended me the package, the cocoa I didn't use, the coffee I didn't use, you know, everything I exchanged with the Germans for eggs, for, for meat, for these things that we need for the living.

SB: Did you experience--these conditions were really very, very difficult but were you also experiencing antisemitism even in Germany?

MP: No, in Germany, they didn't show, they were very scared they didn't show, they didn't show the antisemitism because they were very scared. They want to, they say, "It is not our fault. It is only Hitler. It is only Hitler." I never met Hitler but I had treatments over there he thinks in everything in killing, I didn't see Hitler but they were doing and one was over there a professor, she was a professor of philosophy, her husband was in jail for--he was also a professor from college and he was in jail for a crime for--and she had many Jewish things what I recognize it is Jewish things. You see I had to, to change with things for I needed blankets, I needed--I did not have nothing--blankets, covers, pillows.

SB: How did you spend the days and what did your husband do during the day, those three years?

MP: What, we do?

SB: Those three years, I mean how...?

MP: We were, we were busy staying in line for food over there, staying in line for food. The Salvation Army helped us very much.

SB: They did?

MP: Yes, they sent so much clothes, they sent and we don't have clothes so they sended us clothes. This was a very big help for us. We spend the days, we couldn't, we couldn't work, because if someone works--we are a displaced persons we couldn't work, we couldn't make business because we are not, we are on the black list, they would not let us in. So it was very bad, very bad.

SB: Were you allowed out beyond the confinement of the camp?

MP: Yeah, yeah, we were.

SB: But that's just where you lived.

MP: Yeah, yeah. But it was so--in the meantime I got pregnant again and I had a boy. And the boy was living only three and a half months, because he was born with the kidneys, not sick the kidneys, I think it was because after the war, one boy I had eight months baby, one boy I had so the kidneys didn't.

SB: They weren't functioning.

MP: This means the holes were closed. So it was not a sickness, a sickness you can heal. But this was bad builded.

SB: It was congenital problem.

MP: Yeah. So he was living with transfusions, with blood what we transfused, with penicillin. Then he was immune to penicillin and he died three and a half months old. We, we--he was buried in Frankfurt, in Frankfurt. He died in [unclear] time because on 12th of April I will have the memorial for him, so he was living only three and a half months, the whole time in the hospital. I was pumping my milk and giving to the hospital every day. My husband gave blood for the baby. I gave blood. We didn't know, we didn't want to believe that he will die, but he died, and we buried him, he was in the papers to go to the United States even and then...

SB: What year was this?

MP: In 1949. And he died two months before we, wait, in June we came and he was, he died in April. And a day before we went, we put a monument for him, for the last money we came here without one penny. And this was--my husband got sick, he had yellow jaundice over there.

SB: Jaundice?

MP: In Germany, so we were busy, believe me. My boy had three operations before he came to the United States. He had two ruptures and then the tonsils we had to take out because he was, this boy what he is a lawyer--so we were busy with sicknesses also.

SB: Did you go to German doctors? Was it German doctors that you went to? Is that all there was, no American doctors?

MP: No, no, no.

SB: There was no Americans?

MP: Yeah. German doctors, that's all. But we asked the doctor or he had such case as mine. So he says he had fifteen. This is the fifteenth case. So I told him, did he live? So he says, one, one lived one survived. Because he didn't want--but after he died, so he told me all were died but I wanted to give you a little bit of hope. You see when he had sick kidneys I would be able to save him. But when he had that built sickness...

SB: He is born with a structural...

MP: Yeah, that's right. But you see now he would live, because it is transplant the kidneys, you can transplant, but at that time you couldn't. So you want me to tell you now the United States, too?

SB: Well, okay, tell me when, so you got your papers after three years?

MP: So we went with the ship. Eleven days on the ship, and on the ship the Hungarian he, he recognized one Nazi, what he went to the United States on the ship, the same ship, so he says, "I know him. He killed many of my friends. So his name is not this name," only this name he told what name...

SB: You know the name?

MP: I don't remember. No. So the wife says don't do it, because we were already on the ship. You know what they did? They put him in jail, not in jail, you know, in here...

SB: In Ellis Island?

MP: That's right. They put him for one week.

SB: Like a detention.

MP: Yes. Not the German.

SB: They put this Hungarian gentleman...

MP: ...the Jew...

SB: ...who accused this man to be a Nazi.

MP: That's right. That he falsely accused. And he in the meantime disappeared in the United States. Then they let him out, the wife was so scared, she was thinking they would send him back to--but they helped the Nazis to come in--and they knew about it. The Captain from the, from the ship knew about it. He put *him* in jail. And *him* he let him disappear, you know.

SB: So you came here in 1949.

MP: In 1949, in June.

SB: In June. You came to New York, right by your family?

MP: You see I did not say that I have a family because I was thinking when I say I have a family they will throw me to the family. And I want to have a family. I did not want them to have to look down to me. And we were young. We came here young. We were new. We will make it without help. You see Hitler killed in us everything, but the pride he didn't kill in us. So I didn't tell that we had family. They put us in a hotel Beleclair in New York on Broadway, Hotel Beleclair, the Joint...

SB: The Joint Distribution put you up at the hotel.

MP: That's right. They gave us fifty dollars for a living. Fifty dollars to go out to eat. In hotel you cannot cook, so it was not enough for three people. My sister came because my sister did not live with us in the hotel because my cousin sent her the papers she went to my aunt. But they didn't know I am her sister. They did not connect us with this, they did not know that I have here a family.

SB: When you are talking about "they" you are talking about the authority.

MP: The Joint.

SB: The Joint didn't know that you had family.

MP: No, the international organization brought us here. The international organization paid for our trip, how do you call this? I knew how they called this, but the international organization brought us here with the ship, here, then the Joint took over.

SB: Minna, thank you very much for sharing your experience with us. We really appreciate it and I hope that it has been a worthwhile experience for you. Thank you again.

MP: *Kol tuv.* [All the best.]

MINNA PERLBERGER [3-1-42]