

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

JEAN SPITZER

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Mary Costanza
Date: September 27,

1993

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Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

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JS - Jean Spitzer [interviewee]

MC - Mary Costanza [interviewer]

Date: September 27, 1993

Tape one, side one:

MC: She is a survivor of Yugoslavia and Italy. This is Jean Spitzer, who has very kindly come to Gratz to be interviewed for the Oral History Archive. Jean, would you please tell me where you were born and when and a little bit about your family?

JS: I was born in Vienna. We moved right away in 1919 when I was born, we moved right away to Zagreb where we really originally came from. My father was an insurance agent for the Riunione Adriatica Di Sicurta and consequently he was posted to Trieste, where my sister was born, and then to Vienna where I was born. After the First World War was ended we went back to Zagreb where he was still employed with the same company which has changed its name to Jadranko Osiguravajucé Društvo, and we lived in Zagreb all the time. My mother was an independent business woman. She had her own store, which was very well-known in Zagreb in the old city. And my sister and I went to school to the *Lyzeum*, ended up in the *Lyzeum*, which was a girls' high school.

MC: Well, like what was your life like before the war?

JS: Our lives were really quiet, peaceful, Jewish. We belonged to the community. We belonged to the synagogue. We had our friends. We vacationed on the Adriatic. It was a normal life, with no way of anticipating the horror which came, of which we had, didn't have an idea. And then when, when the Germans, which were not too much in, the Germans actually were not there in person. They did not need to be there. They had their Quislings. They had Pavelić¹. They had people, the fascists, the Ustaše, Artuković², who did their deeds. They did not have to be there. And when the first notices went out to the Jewish community to congregate in their Jewish Town House to register for, of course, they had all the registration there of the older Jews in Zagreb because you had to pay your taxes. And we were all registered at the Community House, the Jewish community. So, they all had the lists of all the Jews. First it was, "You give your gold." And then it was young people up to 17 would have to congregate and they will have to go to labor camps. And people went. I met my friends on the street. They were buying first aid stuff and they were buying, and they were, had backpacks. They were buying backpacks and heavy shoes, because they were going to a labor camp. I know, I met school friends of mine. And, of course, prior to that we had to move

¹Ante Pavelić, Croatian politician, founded and headed fascist ultranationalist Ustaše.

²Andrija Artuković, Minister of Internal Affairs.

from one side of the city to the other side of the city. And you just do things as they come along. You think that this will take care of it, and then this will take care of it. And you will, you're not allowed to have a dog. So what, so you don't have a dog. You move from one side of the city to the other side of the city. And you take that in your stride. And then the young people leave and then you never hear from them again. And then you yourself feel that maybe you ought to leave and get the false papers. And that's what we did. And when we said good-bye to my parents we thought we will be like back in six months, or maybe in a year. Nobody, I mean if people say, "How could you not know?" Well, I did not practically know until I came to this country, properly, in 1947, what horrors were awaiting us.

And then, when we got the false papers, Italy was like a beacon of hope to us and we were trying to get to Italy. And we took the train and we went to Fiume and we tried to hide but we were caught. And we were taken to the, to prison. But we weren't maltreated except that of course it was dirty and it was full of petty thieves and prostitutes and bed bugs and roaches and everything. But you can survive all that. We weren't maltreated. And the next day or the day after-- I forgot if we were there one night or two nights-- we were just let go under police protection to go to Bakaratz, which is on the Adria-, on the occupied side, not to Italy. Italy was out. We just could not do it. They wouldn't let us go. So we went to that seaside resort. First it was Bakaratz [Bakar], and then Crikvenica. And in Crikvenica we stayed in boarding houses and hotels. And we had to, we had to go to the local *Gendarmerie* to report. But it wasn't a hardship. We swam in the Adriatic. We lived more or less a normal life.

But then came the Italian occupation forces, which were there all the time, but they came to the leaders of the, of the group. And there were about 1200, 1200 Jews. And they said, "Tomorrow the *camiones* will come, the trucks. And you take all your belongings, you'll get on the *camiones* and you will be transferred to a camp." The camp was Kraljevica, or Porto Re in Italian. And that was a camp which was first occupied by Slovenes. And they were in a bad shape. But when we came there there were barracks, separate for women, separate for men. And, but there was no, during the day or eve-, you know, you could intermingle. There were husbands and wives and children and there were 1200. And we had our food, which was not much. But then the Italians didn't have much at that point either. There was a lot of frater-, fraternization between the Italian soldiers and officers and the inmates. And there were also some marriages afterwards. And all in all, I must say that the very fact that I sit here today, I have to thank the Italians. And they were just wonderful. They were really, it is easy to be humane when you're a victor. It is not easy to be humane when you are downtrodden. And the Italians were at this point, really, on the edge of a disaster. And they didn't have much, and they really treated us like human beings, let's put it this way.

And then from there they took us to an island, which was called Rab or Arbe. It's a lovely island. Many of the Jews from Zagreb had villas there. But we were taken to inland to a concentration camp, which also was abandoned by the Slovenes. They sent them someplace else. There was a lot of dysentery and typhoid. But when we came it was cleaned up and we were in huts like, little huts, not big barracks. And then in September, and then that was also, in September, 1943 the Italians just threw off their arms and opened the gates and said, "Go. Go..."

MC: May I ask you, was it the Italians who took you to Arbe?

JS: Yes, yes. And they said, "Go. We are through fighting." And we went back, we went into town, and there was those villas and some people felt that they would like to stay. But we didn't feel comfortable because we knew that along the Adriatic coast the Germans were coming in. So some people who had money, but not *dinars* [Yugoslav monetary unit], gold, they were able to hire boats and throw themselves over to the Italian side. We, my sister and my brother-in-law and I and my husband we didn't have that kind of money. And so we took a fisherman, I mean a fisherman who took *dinars* and the one night he threw over back to Yugoslavia, because the partisans were, were there. But they could not secure, secure the towns. They just, like made a raid there, they raided the towns. They threw some bombs. They upset the railroad tracks, they, the buses. But they had to pull back all the time when the Germans came.

So one night my sister and my brother-in-law went, and we were supposed to meet in the morning, the next night. Well, when we arrived, they were left, they had left already. They left already and they went to a inland. So we went inland, and we never caught up with them, never, because as soon as we crossed the, the mountains, which is the Lika, which divides the Adriatic from the inland, the, the peasants would say to us, "You can stay here a night but we know that the Germans are in the next village, so you better keep on going." And some people who were hoping that their children are in Greece-- that was like a story, like stories do go around, and they were there, they have survived and they are in Greece-- heard that nobody survived. And they just stood, you know, they just stayed back and that was the end of that. And also the people who stayed in those villas in Rab were also taken to Auschwitz.

MC: Now Rab is also the same name as, Rab is also...

JS: Arbe.

MC: Arbe.

JS: Yes, same name. So we were, we kept on going. And then like Glina was a, like a town, a small town. And the partisans were in charge in that small town. So we stayed there a while, maybe a week, no more. And, and then it came through the news through the parti-, and by that time my sister was already across

the Sava River. And the partisans held that part where she was. Matter of fact she gave...

MC: The, the partisans held that part?

JS: Held that part across the river, in Croatia, in Slavonia. And a matter of fact my sister gave birth to her daughter in an underground hospital, yes, of the partisans, underground hospital.

MC: Now were these partisan Yugoslavians or were...

JS: Yes, they...

MC: ... they mixed Yugoslavians, Italians or...

JS: No, no...

MC: No Italians.

JS: No Italians. Serbs...

MC: Serbs.

JS: And some of the Croatians, a very few, mostly Serbs. And, because the Croatians were Ustaše, were the fascists.

MC: Yes.

JS: Like they were and like they are today. You can take my word for it.

MC: The Croats are, you're saying...

JS: Yeah.

MC: Are the Usta-...

JS: Ustaše, and today also. Just like I, I don't want to, to say that on the [tape off then on]...

MC: Did your family experience any antisemitism before the Hitler period, while you were living in Zagreb?

JS: Not really, not really. There wasn't any outward antisemitism. So of course we Jews really did not join the army as a career.

MC: Well, I was just going to ask you, did any man in your family belong in a national army?

JS: No, you did not, they, this wasn't desirable. Jews were just, of course they were drafted during the 10-day war, as my cousin, who is now in Israel, was drafted. He was a chemical engineer and he was drafted and he was an officer and it was only a 10-day war. And he was sent to Niš, all the way down in southern Yugoslavia.

MC: Yes.

JS: And the war was over. And he took his uniform off immediately and he tried to act like a peasant, which was practically impossible. You know, he didn't look like one and he, and the Germans caught him.

MC: Oh.

JS: He got typhoid and he ended up in a German military hospital. And then since he spoke fluently German-- we were all bilingual-- the German doctor

said he knows he, who he is, but then, of course, he was an officer. He ended up in a *Stalag*.

MC: Uh huh.

JS: Officer's camp.

MC: Yes.

JS: Prisoners of war camp.

MC: Yes.

JS: And this saved his life because he was there four years.

MC: Because he...

JS: Yes.

MC: Do you remember how your family reacted when Hitler was made or appointed Chancellor of Germany? Did you have any reactions about that?

JS: Oh absolutely. We just knew. We just knew. We had, we really did not have a conception of what, of what it is to come. But we knew when Hitler was appointed Chancellor. We knew when he marched into the Sudetenland. We knew when he took over Czechoslovakia and Poland. We knew all that. But matter of fact, I was in Vienna in March 1938. I came in September to spend a year in Vienna. I, it was really like a finishing year, after school. And I was supposed to learn a little more about my craft. And in the meantime I took a lot of theater in and opera and everything, which was wonderful. And then I got homesick and I wrote to my mother to come and visit with me. And she came and we stayed together for a week or so. And then she left for home and I was supposed to stay. And then in March 1938, Hitler marched into Vienna. And you, no one, no one could imagine who hasn't seen-- maybe the movies-- the enthusiasm of the Austrians upon seeing the German troops marching into Vienna. Flowers and champagne and absolutely a, a, a fantastic outpouring of, of love and enthusiasm for the Germans. And nobody can tell me today that Austria was a victim.

MC: No.

JS: Austria was not a victim. They were very glad to support the Germans in everything, as long as they are victorious.

MC: Where were, were you that day when he marched in?

JS: That day I, I saw them march in. I was on the Ring [major Vienna street] where they marched in. And I just felt that, that this is something which will affect us all, because we were just next door. We were like the last country where refugees could come --Yugoslavia-- where refugees could come and wait for their visas and leave. We were the last country. Hungary wasn't because there was Horthy. There was the fascists there. As a matter of fact the Hungarian Jews, if they could, they left, too. And they, we were just like, my former husband, he came from Vienna. And he stayed in Zagreb. He wanted to go to Israel. In that time it was Palestine. And we were friendly. We were dating. And he decided to go to

Israel. He went down to Kladovo, which was on the Danube, where a boat from Vienna came to go to Palestine. They had to go, of course, through Bulgaria and Turkey to the Black Sea. When that boat was stuck, stuck with about 700 refugees, in that little village in Kladovo, which was like a tripartite country-- Romania across the Danube, Bulgaria ahead of you. The Bulgarians wouldn't let you in, the Yugoslavs wouldn't let you back. So you sat there. And he felt that, and I went down there to visit, and he felt that he, that, he was really prescient, he, he didn't prophecy, but he knew that this boat is not going to go anyplace. They took their passports away. And he escaped. He escaped and came back to Zagreb and we got married. And when we got married he wasn't allowed to stay with me. He was supposed to be in a suburb. That wasn't too much of a hardship either, because the suburb wasn't that far, maybe an hour. I don't remember. Samobor it was called. And he lived there. He took our dog with him, because we weren't allowed to have a dog. And then we decided to leave eventually. But this was the, the story of, up to that moment when we left.

MC: Do you recall any uneasiness about the Soviet-Nazi Pact of 1939 in your family, among your friends or...

JS: Really no.

MC: It was, you said.

JS: No, we were like outside that, the loop.

MC: Yeah.

JS: You know? It's like some people, first of all, I was very young. I was always interested in politics, but local politics. And this, I guess, was just another event which we probably thought that it will not affect us one way or another.

MC: Well what about when Prince Paul in March of 1941 signed a pact with Hitler? Did you know about this?

JS: Oh yes, yes, yes. We were, we were rather, you know, taken aback, that he would just give away. And then of course the royal family went into immigration. They didn't stay. Yeah, and that was just a momentary thing that he thought maybe he could stay as a regent for his, for his nephew, I think, Peter, Peter the crown prince. But that didn't really work out at all, not at all.

MC: Where were you after, oh, you'd already told us where you were after the conquest of Yugoslavia. Oh, no, you didn't tell us on tape, though, but, would you like to tell me that story again?

JS: Well, after the conquest of...

MC: After the conquest of Yugoslavia.

JS: Yugoslavia...

MC: Where did you go and where did you, where, let's see, and just tell us what happened.

JS: Well, after the conquest of Yugoslavia I was already in, after the

conquest of Yugoslavia we just tried to get away from Zagreb. This is, this was in the essence. The young people were taken away. The next thing we thought would be the one in between, the community was rallying. Every day there were some calls to come to the community and, to the Jewish community and register and, or-. My husband at that time, he walked into the-- we had of course, we had yellow signs.

MC: Oh you did wear the yellow stars?

JS: Oh yes, yes. We wore yellow signs with a *Ž*, *Židov* [Jew in Croatian], yeah. And my husband walked in the streets and they picked him up. And they took him to a police station and they told him to wait. And he sat outside and waited and nobody came. He got up and walked out. And this saved his life at that point. And then we left. We left for a few, May, I think I did speak about it before. And from there we went to the Yugo-, Italian occupied Adriatic. And we stayed there, first as free people and then interned in the two concentration camps...

MC: Which were?

JS: Which were Kraljevica, Porto Re, and Arbe or Rab.

MC: Oh.

JS: In 1943 in September the Italians opened the gates and told us to leave. After that we left and the only way to get away from the Adriatic where the Germans were moving in was to go back into the inland of Yugoslavia. And that's what we did.

MC: And you, then the partisans helped you there? You stayed with the partisans?

JS: And then, yeah, the, we stayed, it wasn't actually we stayed with the partisans. They liberated a certain...

MC: Yeah.

JS: ... area, and we stayed there.

MC: Right.

JS: And the moment they had to move away we had to go to, with them, or behind them, or whatever. It was winter. It was a lot of snow. And, but we survived that, too. And then finally there came a decree that if people are married or if foreigners are there, they will be able to be repatriated to Bari [southern Italy]. So at this point we weren't together anymore, my husband and I, but I took that as an indication, because he was an Austrian citizen. I said, "I'm Austrian too, and I want to go to Bari. So, one night we took, went on to a truck a *camione*, and we went through Zara (Zadar), down to the Adriatic. And there was a naval vessel which was empty, to throw us over to Bari. And we went there. And there we were taken in by the British which already had liberated the foot of Italy. And we were taken in to the *Carbonera*-- which was an abandoned mine or something, it was just barracks-- and registered. And some people registered to go to Palestine. And

some people registered to go to other countries as long, until, they registered, but, of course, you couldn't go right away. So they offered jobs and the jobs were mainly with the British, because the Americans were not there. It was the British who gave you the job if you wanted it. And this is what I did.

MC: And what did you do with them?

JS: Well I, at that point I didn't speak English. I didn't speak Italian. But a woman who held a job prior to me interviewed me, and she said, "I know your mother." She said, "You have to take that job." She said, "It's a wonderful job. It would have been a housekeeper in the naval officer's mess. I have been here and they are wonderful people to work for. You have to take the job." I said, "But I don't speak the language." She says, "You will learn. You will learn. They will help you." And this is what I did. I took the job as a housekeeper in a naval officers' mess. And I must say they treated me well, not because I was a refugee or a Jew, but because they appreciated my work. There I bought myself a dictionary, an Italian-English dictionary, which I didn't know either language. I learned from the help, which was very helpful when I had to give them menus or the laundry or something, so as I went along I learned the two languages. And I hope I learned them well.

MC: You speak beautifully.

JS: Thank you.

MC: You express yourself very well.

JS: Well, this is really *The New York Times* and the *New Yorker* are my college education. And so, and then when, that part of the foot of Italy was liberated there was no need, Cassino was still in contention. And, but there was no need for the Navy anymore. So they went back to Messina, Sicily, which I visited for just like sentimental reasons a couple of years ago. And they went back and there was no need for a housekeeper anymore. There were no officers' messes. So they wrote me a very lovely letter to the YWCA War Services in Naples: would they employ me? And they said yes, they needed somebody also as a housekeeper. And so I went to Naples and we had a requisition *palazzo* right across from the Galleria. If anybody was in Naples they know that that is the heart of the city. And we served tea in the afternoon to the WRENS and the WACS, yes. And...

MC: The WACS are American though.

JS: Not the WACS, the WRENS and the APP, the Ameri-, the Auxiliary Force. Well I don't really know...

MC: That's all right.

JS: What it stood for, but it was the British War Services. And...

MC: And what year was this to?

JS: That was in '40-, beginning '45 before the end of the war, '44 I think it was, more the end of '44, because Cassino had not fallen. So, and the Germans

were not thrown back that far. And I was there. Then I was posted to Sorrento where I did their books. I wasn't a housekeeper anymore. A wonderful group of women, and beautiful Hotel Victoria. And it was really just beautiful.

MC: But were you still employed by the British at this point?

JS: Oh absolutely, to the very end, yes. When Sorrento closed up they sent me to Venice to help the foreign-born wives of British soldiers, which there were many, put their papers in order to be able to be repatriated to their husbands' countries. There was Ceylon, there was a lot of foreign countries. I mean the countries, exotic countries, India, Ceylon, Zimbabwe, and then many of them married Italian girls. And many of them unfortunately had their wives at home already. So there was a lot of tragedy, too...

MC: Sure.

JS: Because there was families. There were children...

MC: At home.

JS: Of their, those unions. And it was tragic to tell that wife there is just no way she can go to Ceylon. Because you have, first of all the man has to have land in order to bring in a bride. And secondly, he has a wife already and a family. So those are the side effects of wars...

MC: Yes.

JS: Which affect individuals to that extent. And then in November, 1947, finally I got my visa.

[Tape one, side one ended.]

Tape one, side two:

MC: Did you know any Jewish people who married to the enemy, like the Ustaše or the Germans or...

JS: No.

MC: No.

JS: No. I only knew that the, a school friend, two school friends of mine, in the camp, married Italian men, in the army. And one went with her husband to Mantova [Mantua]. I don't remember what happened to the other one. So, but I never met anyone who married a German or an Ustaše.

MC: Did you know, did you have any experience with the Red Cross at all?

JS: No.

MC: No.

JS: No. The Red Cross did not...

MC: Did you know anything about the...

JS: Impact on us at all. There were no packages. There were nothing. The Red Cross did not come to our rescue, if that's what you mean. It's, actually, I think that we really didn't expect anybody to do it. There is a little aside which I would like to tell you. My husband taught himself Italian in the camp by reading *Corriere della Sera* [daily evening newspaper]. We did get the papers. And one day...

MC: Wait, now where, which camp is this?

JS: That was in Kraljevica.

MC: Right.

JS: Porto Re. And one day, he was a shoemaker there. He learned that craft...

MC: Just let me for the, Porto Re and Kry-...

JS: Kraljevica is the same resort.

MC: Are the same, yes.

JS: It's a resort town on the Adriatic. And one day he came all excited and he says, "Look!" And in the back there was just a small notice that the Allies have bombed Lublin. And we thought that for sure that within six months the war will be over, which of course it wasn't. But those were the little hopes we fed upon in the camp.

MC: Oh surely.

JS: We also had a death in the camp of a young boy who was about 12 or 13, who had, was a blue baby, who probably under normal circumstances would have survived. But first of all, 50 years ago there was no technique to sew up a child's heart like today. And so he died. And we had a lay rabbi who was also a

lawyer, Dr. Gottlieb. Because every lawyer in Europe is a doctor. And, of course, here he is an Esquire but in Europe...

MC: Yes.

JS: Every lawyer is a doctor. And he conducted the funeral. And he quoted from Heinrich Heine. And he said, "*Ez gibt*" this is in German, "*Ez gibt zwei Ratten, die hungrigen und die satten.*" You understand German?

MC: Some of it. I know Heinrich Heine.

JS: Yes, well, this the quote is, "There are two types of rats, the satiated ones and the hungry ones." He wasn't going to speak against the Italian occupation forces. But he did indict them too, with that quote.

MC: Sure. Yes.

JS: And others say that child would have died regardless, even probably if he had stayed in Zagreb. But it was, that was one of the tragic things that happened.

MC: Now he...

JS: And we had births, too, there.

MC: Sure.

JS: We had also births. We had babies which...

MC: Sired by husbands or by...

JS: By husbands, yes by husbands.

MC: So the camps were mixed then. There were women, children and...

JS: Oh absolutely. The camps were about, the 1200 were divided in maybe four barracks. Two men...

MC: These were...

JS: Two women...

MC: 1200 Jews from Zagreb?

JS: 1200 Jews from Zagreb and the provinces. Not many survived in the provinces. It is amazing to me today to remember how we went to the fairgrounds in Zagreb, when they brought the Jews from the provinces. It was a big fairgrounds. And they like, they put them into those fairgrounds. And we knew, because we had relatives from Veraž-din and Čakovec and Sambor and all those small towns which had viable Jewish communities, which were people who were engaged in commerce and people who lived normal lives, raised families. And those were the people who were there. And they were aunts of mine and we went there to take them food, never thinking that this is the last we're ever going to see of them.

MC: Ohhh.

JS: Never. At this point, we really didn't know anything. And maybe, I don't think the world knew, I really don't. At this point, in 1942, I don't think the world knew what was going on. Because there just were no witnesses. Now we see, we saw *Shoah*, we saw, we read books, we see documents. And we see with,

how meticulous the Germans had figured everything out.

MC: Yes.

JS: With a thoroughness which is beyond anything. I have just come back from Terezin. I was in Prague. And when I read, in their museum, the status of some of the prisoners and also where they came from, how old they were, it's amazing to me that the whole world just looked on. At that point they knew. They knew.

MC: Oh they knew at that point.

JS: They just knew. It's, people came out. Some people, Gentiles came out from Poland to tell people what was going on.

MC: Did you ever go back to Yugoslavia?

JS: No. No, I would not go back to Zagreb. I went back twice to Dubrovnik. First I went back in '73. It was a quasi-reunion of us, some of us survivors and school friends, very few. That was a 30th reunion. And then I went with another friend who lived in Britain and we went to Macedonia. Because I've never been there and it's a beautiful country. And when I read and hear what's going on today, I remember that when I was there, I never knew who was who except I would know if a Muslim would wear a fez or the wife would wear those baggy pants that they are Muslims. It was a wonderful living together. I was in Mostar. I was in Cetinje. I was in Ohrid. I was in Skopje. Of course there were no Jews. The Jews were completely obliterated, by the Bulgarians who came in. They came in.

MC: They just...

JS: They took care of their own Jews, but when they came into the occupied territory on their border, into Skopje and Bihać and those communities where there were Sephardic Jews from the sixth century, fif-, actually from the fifteenth century, after Columbus.

MC: Yes.

JS: After...

MC: After the *auto-da-fe* in Spain.

JS: After the Inquisition.

MC: Inquisition.

JS: Right, which were invited by the Ottoman Empire to come and establish a commerce. They were there. The Kabiljos and the Polyokans and the Cardozas, they were the intellectual elite. And they kept a wonderful Jewish life. And when I came to Skopje and I said to one of the natives, I said, "Aren't there any synagogues?" "Oh no," he said, "they were all made to, like, into stables." And actually the ones who sent the Jews away from those, even from those towns, were the Bulgarians. There's a lot of finger-pointing but, because the Bulgarians say, "We saved our Jews."

MC: Yes.

JS: They may have saved their Jews but they certainly went with a vengeance after the Macedonian Jews. It's, as I say, maybe because we didn't know what was awaiting us that, where we were oblivious to it, that we survived and we can look back and say, "That was a horror of horrors."

MC: Thank you. Is there anything else you would like to add before these tapes will be transcribed [tape off then on]?

JS: Yes, I do have hatred. But I don't have any bitterness. And I'm not objective. No way am I objective. I know what was happening. And like I met a lady in Prague. I went to the services at, on Jeruzalemska Ulica, which is the Street of Jerusalem. And the synagogue was the same type of synagogue where I come from, Ashkenazi with a balcony, no *mehitzah*, [partition between men's and women's sections] no curtain. But it's a balcony where I remember my mother, my aunt, me, my sister, my cousins, we all sat up there and looked down on our fathers and brothers and whoever had an-- and I was very touched because it was in a horrible condition, that synagogue, and, but the services were in a small chapel. There were about 12 men, and we were sitting, we were about six women. There were two Israeli women and my friend from Manhattan and myself. And then there was a lady who belonged there, who was in charge. And she said to me, "You know," she said in German-- she spoke English too but-- she said in German, "You look so familiar to me." And I said, "You look familiar to me, too. You look like my mother, and my aunt, and my cousins. We have the same face." [weeping] I don't really cry much. Just with that. That was just recent, and it came out. And it was wonderful to talk to her and to see how she survived. She was in Auschwitz and it's, listen, this is our history today. And like they say, you don't learn from history, you're bound to repeat it.

MC: Yes.

JS: You're bound to repeat it. And this friend from Manhattan, she wasn't so, she is not so Jewishly inclined and her parents died in their beds in Milano, and, you know, it's a different little attitude. I don't say that she is not sympathetic. I don't say that she does not feel, but she can never feel the way like somebody who has lost, of course, the immediate. She may have lost other people but the immediates she didn't. So she was a little bit, wherever we go, I have it right here, wherever we go, I go to services. And if she wants to go, fine. And if she doesn't want to go, that's okay. She can go someplace else. And she didn't feel like going to Terezin. I said, "Listen, I'm going to Terezin. If you want to come, you come. If you don't, you can do something else in Prague. It's a big city." Well she went along. And then I went to Lidice, which is also something to see and hear. They had a movie there at Lidice, in German. They had it also in English but when we came there was a lot of people. So, they couldn't, we would have had to wait a

while, at least half an hour to get the English version. So we all went in for the German version. And there was a big group of Germans, young people. Oh, they said, to their own guide, they said, "There is so many people." So she says, "Never mind," she said, "there will be seats for everybody. I want you to see that movie."

MC: Good.

JS: And they went, and I'll tell you, if that doesn't indict any, the Germans, nothing else will, because in their own words, in their own words, they bring it out, just like *Shoah*.

MC: Yeah.

JS: You don't have to make a, you don't have to write for them. They are going to hang themselves by their own petard, by their own words, by their own actions. And today too. And today too, absolutely.

MC: This is your aunt...

JS: That's, this is my aunt, her husband. They had two, a daughter and a son. And they lived in Cluj, which was Romanian for Kolozsvár, Hungarian, or Klausenburg for German. They had a man haberdashery, he had. They lived very well. But the antisemitism was constant. We never had that in Zagreb, that they would break the windows of the store, they would loot, never, and that you had to bribe for everything official, in bureaucracy you had to bribe. So, when the Romanians became fascists too, so they were always fascists, but I mean when they got imprimatur of Hitler, to be, you know, so, to-- Tiso was the Romanian butcher. And so my cousin, the son, who started in Prague, married a girl in, from Prague. They went to, back, in, they just like ran before the Germans from Prague. They got married in Prague. They ran before the Germans from Prague and went to Cluj, to that, to his parents. And they had an uncle here. I had an uncle here, too, but it didn't help me that much, who sent in an affidavit for the son and the daughter-in-law.

MC: To come.

JS: To come to Philadelphia. The, so, they left. They left from Genoa and it was, they came through Zagreb and we saw them on the railroad station, brought them food, because it was a long trip from Romania to Genoa. They were able to bring all their belongings, not furniture, but dishes and linens and things like that. And they came to Philadelphia. Now the mother and the father, the daughter and the son-in-law, and a little girl, were staying in Klausenburg. First in Cluj, first they took the son-in-law to a labor camp. And then they all were taken eventually and they went to Bergen-Belsen. But, he was, my uncle, he was a *B'nai Brith* man. And there was like an underground with that Hungarian Jew-- I think his name was Klauser or Kauser or something of that order, the name escapes me right now-- who bought them, bought them from Bergen-Belsen, bought them with trucks to the Germans and shipped them to Switzerland. He was later executed in Israel,

that man.³

MC: Yeah, who was he?

JS: Because there was a great resentment on the part of the people who had relatives, parents and children, in Bergen-Belsen, who were not rescued. And, so they were rescued, in total, the mother, father, daughter, son-in-law, granddaughter, and the two who came here prior to the war.

MC: And they were rescued.

JS: They were rescued in, they were all survived, let's put it this way, survived.

MC: Yes.

JS: Now they in turn have grandchildren here. I don't think those grandchildren know a thing about what went on.

MC: Oh, really?

JS: Because the grandfather did tell stories, but they were never around when those stories were told. They just got up and walked out. Or, even the son-in-law, it was just, when you say that people you didn't know, well, that you didn't know, it is not so odd, because after all you grow up in a family which did not have any connections to those survivors or people who perished. But a Jewish family, he gave his oral, I don't want to mention any names...

MC: That's all right.

JS: But he gave his oral, the father, gave his oral testimony here to Dr. Rosen.⁴ And it is here, in Oral History, that he gave that.

MC: Unclear.

JS: Right. They let him go.

MC: Thank you very much.

JS: You're welcome.

MC: You've been wonderful.

JS: It was my satisfaction, my pleasure.

MC: Well, it's a great contribution to the oral history program and I know they're going to be very pleased, because this is one part of the...

JS: Yeah.

MC: One area that is not so, there's not many survivors that talk about Yugoslavia and Italy.

JS: Unclear.

MC: So it's a valuable contribution.

JS: I just want, this is not on the record...

³³Rudolf (Rezsá) Kasztner, Hungarian-Jewish journalist and Labor Zionist activist, together with Joel Brand, negotiated with the SS to permit a select group of almost 1700 Jews to escape deportation to Auschwitz in exchange for trucks. This highly controversial rescue resulted in Kasztner's assassination in 1957 in Israel.

⁴Dr. Phillip Rosen, previous Director of Holocaust Awareness Museum in Philadelphia.

MC: Okay.

[Tape one, side two ended. Interview ended.]