

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

DIANE WEINSTOCK

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Bernice Zoslaw
Date: June 1978

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Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

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DW – Diane Weinstock¹ [interviewee]

BZ – Bernice Zoslaw [interviewer]

Date: June 1978

Tape one, side one:

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

DW: 1923. I'm 64 now.²

BZ: Please describe your childhood and family life.

DW: Well, up to the age of 16, exactly up to the age of 16, I had a happy life as a child and teenager. I had my education all mapped out for me by my parents. And of course the obedience course was so much different than it is nowadays, at the end of the 20th century in this country, especially. And where our children tend to take education for granted, we did not because very few were able to get higher education. And by that I mean high school education. The level was probably the same as our three, if not even four-year, four years of college, in Philadelphia.

BZ: Yes.

DW: Now I can even appreciate my education which I received then. That included piano lessons, private piano lessons, and that's where I always think about my piano teacher, who was not only my, she happened to be not Jewish. She was a friend of the family, even before she became my piano teacher. This was the person who about six to eight weeks after the occupation of Poland by the Germans, I would say Germans, as opposed to Nazis, because presumably not all Germans were Nazis. The *Wehrmacht*, which was the army, was supposedly not all Nazis. She joined a so-called *Volksdeutsche* group, as a, let's say, here we would say the ethnic, the German ethnic group.

BZ: Would you wait one second? I just [tape off then on].

DW: By doing this, their stakes were so much higher. They were able to receive better rations or no rations at all. Every, the world was open to them. Anyway, this woman came with a Gestapo man to confiscate my piano. This was very, that was really the very first disappointment, and that's why I so vividly remember it. As a 16-year-old. And, it was my prize possession. And I stopped playing and I never played since. Although I did have access to a very fine piano in Germany, but my heart was not in it. I have a piano for my son. He rarely plays. It's in the basement. It's a good one. And I, I never touch the keyboard. That's how she influenced me. Anyway, there was no help per se coming from the Gentile society. Even to what you would say, the sophisticated individuals, the sophisticated Jew, where the rapport would have been different than let's

¹nee Gottlieb. Our records indicate that Diana is an additional first name for this interviewee.

²This interview was conducted in 1978, though the release was signed in 1981. The discrepancy about her age is unclear to us. Her birth year has been corroborated by other documents.

say with the ghetto type of a Jew. Sometimes we don't identify with some people.

BZ: That's right.

DW: But in our case, this was a family friendship, very similar to the production of the Holocaust, the Dr. Weiss, remember...

BZ: Yes, yes.

DW: The family doctor Dr. Weiss with the dwarves?

BZ: Yes, yes.

DW: The baker?

BZ: Yes.

DW: That you might even compare with. So this was the first disappointment. And, and everyday living situation, even before the ghetto started. And it, the ghetto didn't start and we weren't chased into it for, oh, probably over a year.

BZ: What part of Poland were you in?

DW: Oh, Radom is...

BZ: Oh, Radom.

DW: The central part of Poland. It's about 100 kilometers from Warsaw, south of Warsaw. It's not a peripheral place. It's a city. It's very much functioning now. Of course, I never revisited it.

BZ: And was the ghetto formed right there?

DW: Right in the poorer section of the city. And we were all transferred, mildly put it. I had to give up all our possessions and our homes. We just took a fraction of what we had.

BZ: And before you were transferred, you, she came for your piano, almost immediately...

DW: Oh yes.

BZ: I suppose, as soon as the Germans came in.

DW: Right. Probably about six to eight weeks after the occupation forces came in. There was a score of other disappointments, but I think this would vividly portray the relationship between the Jewish population and the Gentile population of our city. Oh, I'm thinking.

BZ: How many children were in your family? What did your family consist of?

DW: Well, we're lucky to have, we were three, and we're lucky we survived, all of us.

BZ: Children, three.

DW: Yeah.

BZ: And your parents. Were there grandparents?

DW: Oh y-, I had a set of grandparents in Belgium who were exterminated. I had a grandmother in Radom with whom I was very closely associated. She was killed in a very, very well planned extermination action.

BZ: In the ghetto?

DW: In the ghetto, yes. She was 72. My father died in a concentration camp two months before the liberation. My mother survived the war, died afterwards, in a freak accident. And my brother, Nathan, went through, that's the one I'm expecting here today, went through several concentration camps, with my father and my uncle. He and my uncle survived and my father died there.

BZ: Did you have cousins? Did many of your cousins survive? Cousins and aunts and uncles and...

DW: A number, a good percentage of my mother's family survived in Belgium. They lived there.

BZ: Were they in hiding?

DW: Most of them were in hiding, yes. And their Gentile friends who helped them were much better friends than our friends, so-called friends in Poland.

BZ: The antisemitism was so deep-rooted in Poland.

DW: And that was, I have no doubt, the result of the deep Catholic faith that our neighbors had. The Jew, the Christ killer.

BZ: Yes.

DW: And now came the time to revenge.

BZ: And they would be able to feel very holy, very holy in doing so too, nothing, you know, their conscience was never...

DW: Never stirred up, no.

BZ: Never plagued, never stirred up

DW: No, not at all.

BZ: That's right, yeah.

DW: Till af-, actually after the war, when we came back to our hometown. That was our basis for our, we hoped to live there, to continue staying in, we hoped that members of our families, whether, of course, my father we hoped would come back, and the others, we-- there was a business left, which of course was functioning but it's not, we had no part in it because it was taken over by the Communist regime now in Poland. We hoped we would meet friends and relatives. And the Poles were in amazement greeting us. "You survived? How!?" They were dismayed to see us. And when we asked for anything left, some mementos or things that we actually left there, most of it was gone. But I will show you some. We had a neighbor friend who was a judge, very respectable, respected in our [unclear], elderly people. I will show you what they returned to us. It meant a lot to my mother.

BZ: Oh!

DW: And me of course.

BZ: Did your, you or your family belong to any Zionist organizations?

DW: Yes. I belonged to a youth Zionist organization. There, we learned about our history of Zion. We learned the Bible, and of course we socialized, as every teenager

would want to, in a very, very wholesome way. There were several very active ones, but very few, comparatively, very few people actually went to struggle, to...

BZ: To Palestine.

DW: To, before even Palestine, to prepare for it. Because that was such a waste land there. It was so neglected. And malaria was so prevalent if you know from, as a matter of fact, there was one boy in my class, Kirschenbaum, who went, I don't remember whether with a father or with a uncle, he probably didn't go by himself at the age of 14 or 15, and returned sick...

BZ: Oh, poor thing, yeah.

DW: Several months later. What impressed me you see how so many years later, almost 40, how one remembers. He met Paul Muni in Tel Aviv.

BZ: Is that so?

DW: Or wherever, in Palestine.

BZ: Is that right? Before the...

DW: ...yes.

BZ: ... is that so?

DW: And we knew Paul Muni's film, *The Good Earth*.

BZ: Oh.

DW: We saw it in Poland and we read the book, Pearl Buck's book...

BZ: Yes.

DW: As literature.

BZ: Oh my, this is interesting, yes.

DW: Compulsory literature.

BZ: Yes.

DW: See, that's how our level ranged at the time. We were very much aware, and when he came back, he was like a celebrity. We didn't feel sorry for him that he came back sick, but we were happy that he met Paul Muni there.

BZ: Yes. I guess the Arabs used to call the Jewish people that came to till the soil "the children of death," because so many died of malaria.

DW: Right.

BZ: That was their names for them...

DW: Right. Right.

BZ: [unclear] they came to die they'd go.

DW: Right. So where were we? How I, I lost the...

BZ: Did your parents belong to any...

DW: Yes, and my mother especially was very active in the what we call WIZO, WIZO, World International Zionist Organization. She was very active.

BZ: Was your family religious?

DW: Modern religious. You would call here Conservative.

BZ: What was the extent of your religious education, other than Zionism. I

mean, your Hebrew and so forth.

DW: Well, I, my, the school I attended was, high school that is, was a Hebrew high school, on a very high level. You might compare it here with Akiba Hebrew Academy, which my children, by the way, all three are graduated from. Yes, I did speak Hebrew, and besides this, the high school was not a religious high school, so I did have a tutor and I attended a Sunday all girls religious school, which was Beth Jacob. Well here it's co-ed, there was only girls school, a religious school. So, I did have, for a girl, and if you realize girls were not obliged to have as deep of a religious education as the boys were required to have, but my brothers did, of course the younger one's education was mostly in Israel, his religious education. He was seven when the war broke out. But Nathan received his very deeply. It is just, culture and education and...

BZ: So you were committed Jews.

DW: [unclear]. Very much.

BZ: You were very committed Jews.

DW: Very much so.

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

DW: Yes. Yes, and that I will give you a vivid example for. Up to fifth grade, I was in a State school, elementary State school. We were quite a few Jewish girls in the school, and in my class. Our music courses were-- of course everything was compulsory; there was one curriculum for all of Poland-- it happened to be on Saturday and Monday. Well, I was permitted by my parents to go to school on Saturday, on the Sabbath, but without books, and without a pencil. So I was just sitting and observing and listening to the, not lectures in fourth grade, fifth grade, right? But participating. One year, I think it was in fifth grade, Sabbath, Yom Kippur occurred on the Sabbath. So, of course, none of us came. And we couldn't prepare our assignment for Monday's class. In music, mind you. So, none of us came prepared. And we explained to the teacher why we were unprepared. Well that Mrs. Koshesheva gave us a piece of her mind. "You Jews ought to live in Palestine! Not here in Radom, Poland! Being here, you are to observe all our laws, and not your Jewish laws." Well, we were frantic, as young as we were. We all ran to my mother, not to the other mothers, but to my mother.

BZ: [chuckling]

DW: And my mother solicited help of two others, and the three women went to the principal of the school. And she reprimanded this teacher for being as antisemitic and rude to us. This was quite an experience, you can imagine. During the war, this woman, this Mrs. Koshesheva, met my mother in the street, and approached her, saying, "You know what I could do to you now."

BZ: Oh my God.

DW: My mother was not easily frightened. But this incident frightened her. I think that when she met her, without the arm band, or if my mother had the arm band, it was covered with a coat over it, and she was doing something that, shopping or visiting

somebody, I don't remember what she was doing at the time. But that could have been why she, you know, "You know what I could do to you now."

BZ: Mmm!

DW: Now this, this is one vivid example, I suppose, that we would like to put down. And there were many others. Many others.

BZ: So...

DW: The fact that our, in any parade, our school was always at the tail end of, of...

BZ: Oh, the Jewish school...

DW: The parade.

BZ: Was always at the tail end...

DW: The Jewish school.

BZ: Of the parade.

DW: Always. Of course the curriculum and the examinations were given always much harder, by the authorities from Krakow. And Krakow was the residence of the, you would call, the Education Ministry, or Minister of Education. That was, and we were...

BZ: The examinations were...

DW: Always were...

BZ: More difficult for whom? For the Jews.

DW: For the Jewish school.

BZ: For the, oh, they...

DW: For the Jewish...

BZ: They adm-, oh, I see. They administered...

DW: They administered.

BZ: The curriculum for the Jewish school.

DW: Yes, right.

BZ: What was expected from the Jewish school.

DW: Well, it was identical, really, to everybody. But the requirements...

BZ: The requirements were more stringent, yes.

DW: Were set much more stringent. But we lived up to them always.

BZ: Yes. Yes.

DW: Well, ours was double. Because it included the Hebrew.

BZ: So in the long run it served you well, but that wasn't the way it was intended.

DW: Oh it really did, yes.

BZ: Yes, it served, it served community. Did Nazi propaganda in Germany before World War II affect your standing with your neighbors? Did the, what was filtering in?

DW: What was filtering in and we really didn't realize that that's what's

happening. We thought it is just from within, not from without, or, from the outer world. Yes. As an example, all Jewish merchants had to display prominently their names, full names. There wasn't M. Weinstock was not enough. Let's see, it had to be Moses Weinstock. And of course no Gentile name was named Moses.

BZ: Yes.

DW: They did not use the Old Testament names like they are used here in this country. There are no Sarahs and no Rachels, no Rebeccas. Or, Abraham Lincoln was, I am sure the Poles considered him to be Jewish, because only, how can a Gentile have a name Abraham? Or Jacob, they, their names were strictly New Testament names. So, this was so very vivid. Then, by just labeling the stores, and...

BZ: It was an economic boycott, wasn't it?

DW: Economic, yes, definitely so. Then, the Gentiles were encouraged-- they didn't have to, but they were encouraged and they subscribed to it wholeheartedly-- to display signs that "This proprietorship is Gentile." So, people did not, and there were boycotts, the picketing, the, was picketing in front of Jewish stores, "Do not enter." And, sometimes there were riots with actually bodily harm done to some Gentiles who wanted to go into a Jewish store. It was, a matter of hotels, probably was not as prevalent as it would be in this country because most Jews in Poland were kosher, so they wouldn't eat just anywhere. And, let's see what...

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

DW: Unfortunately not. Well how does the saying go? "Hindsight is..."

BZ: Yeah.

DW: ...the 20-20 vision?" At least as far as I remember, no. And we discussed it with my youngest brother. Why not? There were. There were people who did. My father had a passport. He was ready to come to this country, here to the United States, to the World's Fair, in 1939. But there was already an upheaval, and he felt that he should be with his family. He should not risk. I wish that he were in the States. He would have been saved. But not per se, no. Palestine was a wasteland. And there were family responsibilities. There was a business to attend to. As a result, only one cousin, the one who raised my brother, left Warsaw by illegal *aliyah*, illegal emigration, and was on the waters of the Mediterranean for weeks and arrived there in Palestine the day the war broke out. His parents, his two sisters, and three brothers, perished. He survived.

BZ: He survived. How soon after the conquest of your community were Jews singled out for special treatment by the Germans?

DW: Immediately...

BZ: Immediately.

DW: ...upon the occupation. They were, the religious Jews, that looked religious, that is, wearing the black caftans, and the beard and the bearded, and skullcaps, were singled out for beating, for hard labor, torture actually. As soon as the first of the High Holidays, which usually come in September, and September 1, and, and about eight

days later our hometown was occupied, so, take it from there. Immediately. They were taken out of the houses of worship to clean outer houses, toilets, with their *tallisim*, their prayer shawls. And this was such a desecration. And the books were burned right away.

BZ: The holy books.

DW: The holy books and the scrolls.

BZ: [unclear] right away, right away.

DW: They right away made the Jews take them out. Old, sick people had to do it. And many, many of them died as a result of just this anguish.

BZ: Was there, that anyone knew of, a passive resistance among these very religious Jews? I know that they couldn't resist by force of arms. But, would you say that there was any sort of, that you know?

DW: Passive, you would only, let's say, they changed, to them it meant a lot to change their, the way they are, they were dressed. To put a light gray suit rather than their black caftans that they wore all their lives, it was a desecration. And, not shave, but cut their beards by themselves so it wouldn't be pulled out hair by hair.

BZ: Yes. Yes. Yes.

DW: And then they wore, men, sort of bandages around their heads to, just camouflage themselves.

BZ: Did they continue to pray? Although I suppose if they were caught they would be...

DW: They, not necessarily in unison. They prayed by themselves.

BZ: Mmm hmm.

DW: No, I don't think houses opened.

BZ: They didn't continue to meet together.

DW: No, not to meet even. No more. That's of course at the very onset. Life was extremely, extremely hard. And this forced labor, although just for a few hours a day, let's say, at the very beginning, was quite tough for many people. Well, young girls had to carry rocks or bricks. But still, as the later, later time proved, it was quite, this was nothing. But, at the beginning it was...

BZ: It was tranquil in comparison.

DW: Well, we always live by comparison. Everything is relative.

BZ: What was you, the reaction of the non-Jew to the sufferings of the Jews?

DW: They were quite indifferent.

BZ: They were quite indifferent.

DW: Quite indifferent.

BZ: No one ever expressed their horror or their sorrow?

DW: No, not that I know of. No. And if they did, they certainly did not mean it. They did not mean it. That I'm very much convinced of. If there were sporadic cases, at least in Poland, it was not at all vivid, not at all.

BZ: How long were you in the ghetto?

DW: Our ghetto was created in 194-, '41. And you know, it varies from city to city, even in Poland.

BZ: Yes, yes.

DW: Till '42, August of '42, the ghetto was decimated.

BZ: Maybe on the deportations?

DW: By deportations, yes. We had two ghettos in Radom. One was, it consists of, contained, I would say, 8,000 people and the other one 27,000 people. I lived in the larger one.

BZ: Were they segregated according to age in these two ghettos? Was the separation because of age?

DW: No, no.

BZ: No, no.

DW: No. It's where people obtained housing. That's where they, either they lived closer to the other one, which was on the other part of the city of town completely, or they, even if they wanted to be in the larger one and there was no place for them, they had to live in the smaller one.

BZ: Did you remain with your family in the ghetto? Were you all together?

DW: Yes. We were all together. My, we were very close with my father's brothers. They were in business together. But, unlucky, as it turned out to be, they lived in the smaller ghetto. They had much better living conditions there as long as they lived, but they, we were separated. And they were, we were meeting, illegally, or during our work hours where we obtained permission to work.

Tape one, side two:

DW: Where were we? [tape off then on] know, what I want you to know is, that we were planning all along our escape. What kind of an escape? We wouldn't have been able to live, let's say, in the woods like some people did, because we were city people.

BZ: Even the Gypsies couldn't survive in the forest.

DW: Right.

BZ: And they were used to them.

DW: What we were hoping to do is to pay our way with some peasants whom we dealt with. I shouldn't say "I", my, although I knew them too, because I worked in the factory and I did meet them. They were extremely affluent during the war. And we were manufacturing agricultural implements. So let's say when there was a large implement that the whole village shared before the war. During the war, with the rise of the price, the food prices and the black market, they were able to, every farmer was able to afford a, his own implement. So they were coming and shopping and bringing food. So we really had, personally we had no problem with food.

BZ: And your ghetto wasn't walled in.

DW: And the ghetto was not walled in.

BZ: No, no, yeah, okay.

DW: Our ghetto was not walled in.

BZ: So people could come and go.

DW: They, not exactly, because there were guards at every entrance. And they were human, one was better, one was worse. And of course we had, at first, we had our Jewish guard.

BZ: Yes.

DW: So, by feeding them, you fed yourself. And you brought in, if we were two of us out or three of us out of the ghetto we were able to bring in. Our ghetto was a much easier ghetto than the Warsaw or Lodz Ghetto, much easier. It lasted just about the same time as the Warsaw Ghetto. And the extermination was just as severe at the end, that is '4-, in 1942. But up to that time, we were fairly well-fed. So we, my father was preparing for some kind of arrangement that when the time comes that we women, mother and I, would be perhaps in the open society with falsified papers. And the men, well, our problem was the little boy, who was circumcised, and so vividly, playing with other children it would be disastrous. That's as a result of this, no Jewish boy of, between age of 5 or 12 survived any escape, any kind of escape.

BZ: You absolutely had to look Christian.

DW: Not only look Christian...

BZ: To, to...

DW: And not only act Christian.

BZ: I mean the Christians wouldn't even take them if they didn't look Christian.

DW: Absolutely.

BZ: Yes, right.

DW: But, adults, some adults were a, for a high fee, were hiding. They were in open, wide open fields, let's say they were hiding, graves sort of things prepared for them, and where the peasant was bringing-- the farmer, I should say-- was bringing food to them. Many of them when the time came just say goodbye and good luck. You know, go. And these people had no alternative but to run into a woods and either create you know joint partisan groups and that wasn't easy because of the AK³, the...

BZ: *Chomam*.

DW: *Chomam*, yes, who was uprooting and actually exterminating the Jews.

BZ: Helping out the enemy.

DW: Oh, yeah, very much so.

BZ: Helping out the German enemy.

DW: Very much so. But there was no active resistance like the one in Warsaw, because our extermination lasted only-- being a much smaller town, you know, 35,000 against half a million in the Warsaw Ghetto-- lasted only three days. The first time was one day and then two, two more days, and that was the end. Then we were pushed into a very, very small ghetto that consisted only of three narrow streets.

BZ: Your extermination, you mean, your deportations?

DW: Deportations, yes.

BZ: Yes.

DW: To extermination camps, that's what I mean.

BZ: Yes. Yes.

DW: That, that to make clear, yes. That was a so-called selection, to the right and to the left.

BZ: Were there actions in the ghetto too, though? Shootings? Beatings?

DW: Very, very many. Very many.

BZ: Very many.

DW: Very many. And what must be stressed is the responsibility, what do you call, by association. Guilt by association. Let's say if my brother would escape, there would be no saving for my mother or father, and probably the two of us.

BZ: They would kill the whole family.

DW: They would kill the whole family. Who knows, if, they even killed the whole building.

BZ: For one escape.

³Armia Krajowa - underground military organization in occupied Poland from fall 1939 to January 1945. Nazi-helpers under regional government.

DW: For one escape. Now, what decent human being would want to, unless you would know that in the long run we all would be sent to death. And where did he have the guarantee that he would survive as an escapee, knowing that he has so many adversaries? So many. The Polish neighbor? The schoolmate? The boy he sat on the same bench in school with? Right? The worker in the factory?

BZ: They would all point him out.

DW: They would all point him out, exactly. So, very few wanted to escape. Unless there were, there were probably some single people whose relatives or parents live in a different city, so perhaps there would be no repercussions there. But other than that, we were just, and hoping that a more conducive time will come. Not exactly liberation, but perhaps a, some, some way that we could change this. But there was no open resistance in Radom.

BZ: But going, going to see your cousins, it was your cou-, and your uncles...

DW: Right.

BZ: In the other ghetto, was a form of resistance.

DW: Yes.

BZ: Yes. Yes. So you did, you know...

DW: And smug-, and listening to the radio...

BZ: Listening to the radio, yes.

DW: That was called for death.

BZ: Yeah. Were schools conducted in your...

DW: No.

BZ: The ghetto?

DW: No schools at all. But of course we had our, we did not stop studying.

BZ: Oh, then, you did...

DW: None of us.

BZ: You did have underground schools.

DW: We had underground schools.

BZ: Which was a form of resistance.

DW: My brother Nathan was translating Robinson Crusoe into Hebrew with his professor.

BZ: And for that the penalty was death...

DW: Definitely.

BZ: Including the schools in the ghetto, yeah.

DW: Definitely.

BZ: Yeah. And yet all the children who...

DW: My English...

BZ: Went to school...

DW: Is from those days.

BZ: Is that so?

DW: Yeah.

BZ: And you see that but your...

DW: I never, I never...

BZ: English education.

DW: I never, because in high school, my foreign language was German, which came handy under the occupation. But my English started in, at the beginning of the war, and continued through the ghetto. As a matter of fact, when I was hiding in Warsaw, I took a book with me, an English book. And believe me, I never thought that I would, I'll end up a citizen of the United States of America. So that's, it all came very handy. Yes, we did study, all of us.

BZ: Your Jewish values, then, were kept intact.

DW: Very much so. Very much so.

BZ: The German barbarianism...

DW: Our, our...

BZ: Had no, really meant no...

DW: By no means...

BZ: With that, no death.

DW: Our *seder*⁴ had so much more meaning to us.

BZ: Your *seder*.

DW: And we could really identify with the slaves in Egypt.

BZ: Of course the penalty for that would have been death too.

DW: Right.

BZ: Yeah, for the *seder*. A Passover *seder* in the ghetto. Were you a member, or do you have firsthand knowledge of the resistance groups or the partisan groups or the groups...

DW: Only when I came to Warsaw and lived as a Pole. I knew that there is resistance in, in Warsaw.

BZ: Jewish resistance?

DW: No, because...

BZ: No.

DW: The Jewish ghetto was destroyed by the time I came to Warsaw. But it was told to me. Of course, you have to realize that communication was completely impaired. There was no mail. There was nothing available to go by, only by word of mouth. And these Poles whom we met and were in the resistance told us how ghetto was fighting and how they were, they heard the fighting, and the noises from there.

BZ: Did they regard the Jews as heroes in the Warsaw ghetto...

DW: Yes they did.

BZ: The Poles?

⁴Seder - on the first night of Passover, a family ritual at home.

DW: They definitely did. We did ask them. As a matter of fact, when we first, my mother and I first came to Warsaw, we stayed with customers of ours, who took us in at a very high fee. And when we felt that we could be on our own, and cut our expenses to minimum, they resented it, and they almost denounced us to the authorities. Almost. By almost I mean, they ma-, placed an anonymous phone call to our landlord, telling them, telling him that he has to do something about the two Jewish women who live in his apartment. And this man was nice enough to come up to us on a Sunday morning and say, "I don't want to frighten you ladies, but I received an anonymous call to this effect." And my mother was frantic. "Who dared to do such a thing? We're just ready to go to church now and you disturb us!" Or whoever, you know, "you upset me." "Well," he said, "I didn't mean to upset you. I just wanted to warn you." And he really meant it. He wouldn't do anything wrong, anything to destroy us. This man was a very fine...

BZ: This man was a decent Pole.

DW: Very fine person. Then a second phone call came about two weeks later, and he again came to tell us that this woman sounded, that, "I see you didn't do anything about having these women out of your apartment!" So he again came to tell us about it. And my mother asked him, "Now what would you want me to do? Do you really want me to move?" He said, "No. I don't want you to move. You just do accordingly." And we did not move, because it would have meant burning the bridges behind us. Things that we acquired at such high price, in every way high price, that is documents and being, then legalized because at first, after these papers were falsified, but then we registered ourselves in City Hall so we became true citizens of Warsaw. And it would have meant just burning the bridges. So we did not, we took a chance. And shortly thereafter, an uproar started. The Warsaw star-, we saw already movement of the defeated German armies coming through from Russia. And they were planning defense of Warsaw against bombing. So the atmosphere was such that it was not conducive to looking for Jews, or doing things. But this woman, this former friend of-- not-- former landlady who housed us at a very high fee, came over to us, knocked at the door, and, "I just want, I was in the neighborhood. I just want you to know that there are, getting, taking women off the streets to send to hard labor in Germany. So, you better stay home." That's when we knew that she was the one to call him. Oh, we were, we were positive at that...

BZ: Yes.

DW: That's when we came to this conclusion. There is no doubt in our mind that this anonymous phone call...

BZ: Yes.

DW: Was from this person. And this was just for the purely economic reasons...

BZ: Yes.

DW: We stopped paying her the high fee. I don't know where we would have gotten the money. We moved because we had to...

BZ: Yes.

DW: Help ourselves...

BZ: Conserve.

DW: Conserve what we had. And we couldn't expose ourselves to go to work. That would have been too dangerous.

BZ: That would have been too dangerous.

DW: Because then you deal with, and what capacity we could find work. Expose yourselves to the plain, ordinary person in the street and they, digging, because the atmosphere was such that everybody was very suspicious of the outsider. "You came from hundreds of miles from here, to live in Warsaw?" There must be something, you know. We were there as a, my mother was a, presumably a spinster who raised me. My father was a prisoner of war. And the reason why, and I had to call her "Mother" because I wouldn't be able to adjust any other way. The reason for it was that our papers were, unfortunately, falsified in such a way that my mother was made "Miss".

BZ: Oh.

DW: So, as a Miss, and having the same name, last name...

BZ: Yeah, you had to create a situation.

DW: We had to create.

BZ: Yes.

DW: So that's how it was.

BZ: Was there ever any doubt during the darkest days when you were in the ghetto and so forth that Germany would lose the war? Were you ever...

DW: This was the only hope.

BZ: The only hope.

DW: The only hope. And even I remember during the *seder* my father said, "I can just paint a picture. When we are sitting in a free world, over a glass of tea, and telling these experiences, and no one will believe us." But he did place himself in a free society. And he was painting it. So, I can just see this picture.

BZ: Was Israel a part of it too? Did many people dream of Israel at that point?

DW: Yes. Very much so. Very much so. We were aware of the fact that had there been an Israel, this wouldn't have happened. Yes. That's when my brother left for Palestine at the age of 10. We knew that he is, well, not until we heard from the group from Istanbul, Turkey, that we knew that they are free, and they are, they are free in a full sense of the word.

BZ: Well, when your, you and your mother left the ghetto, where was your brother at that time? Was he still in the ghetto?

DW: Yes. My brother and my father, and my uncle who lost his family by then--his wife and twin daughters-- were in the ghetto.

BZ: But Nathan...

DW: We were...

BZ: Was he in the ghetto too?

DW: Well, Nathan I'm talking about. Because...

BZ: Oh, the other brother wasn't...

DW: Eli left much earlier.

BZ: Much earlier, that much earlier, I see.

DW: Well, much earlier. Much earlier. You know, it's only a year, to be exact, a year difference.

BZ: So much had happened.

DW: Oh my goodness, it looked like 10 or a 100 at the time. That's why I say much earlier.

BZ: Yes.

DW: Eli left in October of '42. And...

BZ: Were you in the ghetto at that time?

DW: Yes.

BZ: Yes.

DW: Yes.

BZ: I see. Would you describe the way he was able to leave?

DW: This was a stroke of luck. Still in the large ghetto, in 1941, there was a registration. I have to go back to this registration.

BZ: Yes.

DW: There was a registration of people to go to Palestine, people who had relatives, very close relatives, it wasn't enough to have a cousin or a father-in-law, very close relatives in Palestine, to register to go to join them. Of course no one paid any attention to this. But this woman, who, whose husband went a few months before the outbreak of the war to visit her parents in Palestine. She was there, and she was left with three children in Poland. She was a close friend of the family, age-wise comparable. And the children were of very similar ages. She had a daughter my age, and two younger sons of my brother's age. And because she was there alone, my family helped her with certain things. Well, she survived the deportation with her two sons. But she was living in a work camp, in a labor camp, about...

BZ: Was her daughter with her there too?

DW: No, her daughter was in Warsaw.

BZ: Her daughter was in Warsaw.

DW: She was working there in the ghetto, and studying. She was not in touch with her, because communication was very much impaired. Of course, the call for the exchange, we didn't know exactly what it was, but it turned out to be an exchange for colonists, German colonists on British territories, which included Palestine, as a mandate, for...

BZ: German colonists for...

DW: British...

BZ: For Jewish?

DW: For Jews, right, came about in '42. And this was already after the deportation of Jews from the Radom ghetto. The list came to the Jewish police office. A list of 63. I might be mistaken, but as far as I remember it was 63. Again, there were no lists of survivors. There were no addresses. You lived wherever you found a hole to occupy, literally. And they were so busy with other things. If they found somebody they knew there is an Ashpis or Margulis, they contacted the people. If not, "Goodbye and good luck". Well my father luckily came into this office and saw the list. He saw the name of this Mrs. Grauer, with her three children. He told the policeman where the woman is at the moment to go and get her. Then they, they brought her to Radom, with one son. The younger one was deported, while she was at work.

BZ: Oh, they came and took the children.

DW: They came and took the children...

BZ: Yeah.

DW: Who were not working.

BZ: While she was away. How old was he, do you know?

DW: He was 12 while my brother was 10. Probably a skinny, scrawny child. Her older one was at work. That's why she was able to...

BZ: Yeah.

DW: Come to Radom with this son. At the designated time, two or so days later, probably no more than two days later, the policemen were told to bring this group to the SS Gestapo building. There were 14 people to go. And this marvelous person told us that she would like to take my brother. I didn't realize until I met her in Israel, she told me, "Do you know that I crossed off my son's existence, off the list, by taking...

BZ: Yes.

DW: ...your, your brother?" Yes, I do realize it now. Of course it was very much appreciated all along. We knew, although we had already falsified papers prepared for him, but we knew that he would not have survived, because he was so young and being in a, with a farmer's family and going to bathe in the...

BZ: Oh yes.

DW: River, or, or, a lake. At, he would not have survived as a circumcised youngster. And you could not have avoided it.

BZ: You couldn't avoid it.

DW: And that, I will bring out later to you, a very vivid example of [unclear].

BZ: How did Nathan survive?

DW: Well, Nathan was older, and he went through the whole rigmarole.

BZ: Oh, he went through...

DW: He went through...

BZ: The labor camp?

DW: He went through concentration camp.

BZ: He went through the concentration camps, I see. It's just fortunate. He was one of the fortunate ones.

DW: He was just fortunate.

BZ: Yes, he was in the camps with your uncle, wasn't he? And your father.

DW: My uncle and my father.

BZ: Yes, but your father perished there.

DW: Yes, well a-, when we left Radom, you asked me before, they were stay, they still stayed behind in the ghetto. But we were trying to pave their way to Warsaw. They had to be treated differently because they were men, obviously.

BZ: They had to be hidden.

DW: So, we did find them a place to hide. And they did come. They were smuggled out of the ghetto by a man who was paid handsomely. By the way, we didn't know that the man was a Jew. But he had a responsibility of hiding eight members of his family. He perished as a saint...

BZ: [unclear]

DW: To me, yes. To my estimation as a saint. He brought them to Warsaw, and that was a place, a hiding place, prepared for them. Unfortunately, they were blackmailed several times. And that was by Poles. A lot of money had to be spent on retrieving them. Life became very miserable, and an opportunity came up to ship them, smuggle them off to free Hungary at the time. Free? Hungary was not occupied. So on Christmas Eve, everybody's busy. Poles feasting. The Germans drinking. They went by train with this Michael, to-- he and four other people had this set up with a guy, the eight, toward Krakow. And from Krakow they were to be smuggled to Hungary. Being free men in Hungary they probably could have gone either to Palestine or to England. But, as bad luck wanted it, they were captured in Krakow, all seven of them, all eight of them. They were imprisoned in a very, oh what do you call it, for escapees, I can't, in Plaszow, near Krakow. Then luckily they were put to work, and they were shipped from camp to camp since then. This was Christmas of '43. When Michael, the smuggler, whom we thought, who we thought was not Jewish, was put in a dungeon too, he was beaten, actually beaten to death. He was beaten too, they wanted to get more names from him.

BZ: Of people who've gone...

DW: Of people in Warsaw who are still there.

BZ: The whole network and all...

DW: Of the network.

BZ: Yeah, yes.

DW: And he actually died there in torture. His wife was bringing, buying ammunition and delivering to some underground in Krakow. It could have been double agents who, by that time he was already gone. But she didn't know, and we didn't realize it. So that's why I considered him a saint. She did not survive I don't think, any, because they probably, perhaps she must have smuggled some, brought some ammunition and

that's when they cut her down too. And I don't think any of these eight people that he tried to save of his own family survived.

BZ: Yeah, cause he was the only lifeline that you had.

DW: The only lifeline.

BZ: The only one.

DW: Right.

BZ: Yeah, yeah, because he was able to pass as a Pole and so he was helping the Jews.

DW: Right. As a matter of fact, his nephew died of a bullet wound and, in a hiding place where I left about three minutes before. I was trying to transfer, I did luckily, two men. One was my husband, he became my husband.

BZ: Oh, is that right?

Tape two, side one:

BZ: Mrs. Weinstock, when you spoke of the Jew that posed as a Pole and helped you, would you say that it was relationships like that that kept the Jews alive, that did manage to stay alive?

DW: Yes, I would say for most part of it, yes. Of course everybody struggled in his own way to survive, everyone by different means. But, yes. I am sure when the young man planned to become a militia man in the ghetto, his primary interest was the well-being of his immediate family, his parents, his wife, his children. Unfortunately, in many cases it turned very sour, because in order to help his own family he had to turn against friends, neighbors, and perhaps distant family. But it's, in order to survive, people did many things that they wouldn't have done ordinary, for good and for bad. The page in the book of the survival of the militia man is not too favorable. Nevertheless, there are quite a few people, elderly people survived because of their sons helping them in a certain way. When they had to make a choice, let's say, there was a certain amount of people to be brought to the labor camp or extermination camp, or, obviously they would try to prevent their immediate family from going.

BZ: I'm listening...

DW: Luckily...

BZ: You mean Jewish policemen.

DW: Jewish policemen.

BZ: Yes.

DW: Luckily, we had none of such people in our family. And this is a [unclear], a [unclear] of...

BZ: Wicked men.

DW: King.

BZ: King.

DW: [unclear].

BZ: Was it a refusal on the part of members of your family to join the Jewish police or were they just not chosen?

DW: It was not a matter of choosing. It was a matter of volunteering.

BZ: Volunteering. And no one did.

DW: No one volunteered.

BZ: I see. And, what of Jews that helped the other Jews? What do you think caused them to help the other Jews? Do you think it was something in their background, in their teaching, or...

DW: Oh, definitely so, yes. Definitely. That age-old philosophy of charity, *tzedakah*, which not only speaks in terms of money but any, any help given, extended to the orphan, to the widow, dressing the bride. It's in the daily prayer of the Jew. So that's a, goes beyond words really, the...

BZ: There's much...

DW: Help that...

BZ: And as much as it could be lived, it was, it lived in the ghetto as well.

DW: Yes.

BZ: Yes.

DW: Yes.

BZ: And among Jews in hiding, as you were, Diane.

DW: Definitely. Yes. The only obstacle came from local population, Poles, that is. We just had to make sure that we had some decent, good neighbors, or former friends as I stated before, and gave vivid examples of it. And no, no what, no extra example comes to my mind at the moment and I don't want to repeat myself on the previous ones. [tape off then on] I do recall when my brother, the time when my brother was leaving. As a 10-year old youngster leaving his family and going with a friend off to a unknown place, which turned out to be Palestine of course, and survival, liberation and survival. My mother approached this Mrs. Grauer, offered her her diamond ring. Not in payment, but she told her that she realizes how tough her life will be now as a newcomer to a poor country, Palestine, where her husband remained only as a tourist. And who knows what kind of a living he is able to make there. And she was giving her this diamond ring to help her to feed my mother's son. But she refused it. She says, "Whatever I will eat, I assure you, your son will eat." And this to me was just a beautiful gesture. Of course, the ring my mother used later to feed herself and me, but the fact remains that this lady did not take anything. Then of course the fact that she mentioned to me later, that is only a few years ago, that she had hopes for her daughter's arrival from Warsaw, to freedom. It never happened, but as far as her son was concerned, here was a boy who replaced her son, and forever, till this day he is extremely grateful to her for it. He's 45 years old and considers her his second mother.

BZ: Did she remain in Palestine?

DW: Oh yes.

BZ: [unclear]. [pause; tape off then on]

DW: I don't think I aired it with you the, our experiences in Warsaw. We were living there, my mother and I. I did mention that before, as, since November of '43. And we lived pretty free. We were not allowed per se to know each other's addresses, or names. So we were just known by nicknames or first names. The reason for it was that-- "we" meaning Jews in hiding-- because in case, under pressure, under beating, we would not trust ourselves not to reveal our compatriots' identity. So I had meetings with a friend of mine-- who lives now in Paterson, New Jersey-- every Thursday, and if this particular Thursday I wouldn't be there or she couldn't come, it would be a date, a rendezvous for next Thursday. And this was just to help each other morally, and also physically. And that is it, yeah. She had some dollar bills, which had to be exchanged for *zlotys*. And I had a source for it. I would take it this Thursday and return it next Thursday in *zlotys*, of

course without any compensation to me, just as a favor, and vice versa. Once she came to me and told me that, or, didn't come to me, we had this meeting place in center city, that she heard of two sisters whom we knew from Radom are in a convent, not far from Warsaw. And one is very sick. Would I consider going with her to see these two girls? Of course I would. Without even the knowledge of my mother, we met again and took a train there. And we-- really was a great, great joy for the girls, very young girls, to see us.

BZ: Children?

DW: Children, actually, yes.

BZ: Children.

DW: For girls was now, again, was much younger to survive.

BZ: Yes.

DW: But I can, I can see this little girl, the ill one, how thrilled she was to see us. She didn't even know us from Radom because we were older. Just the fact that we were...

BZ: Jewish.

DW: Jewish, and from a place of her, her birth, we were, we really added some good measure of life to this youngster. I don't know whether both of them survived. I know that the older one did. Then, very unex--

BZ: She returned, excuse me, was she returned to her parents? The child that you visited?

DW: I don't think the parents survived.

BZ: The parents did not survive.

DW: I don't think they did.

BZ: Do you know what happened to her?

DW: No, as I say, I don't know what happened to the younger one.

BZ: Yes, that's what I mean.

DW: I know that the older one, which was by two, three years older, survived.

BZ: Do you know where she...

DW: I did not see...

BZ: ...is? What happened to her?

DW: ...her after the war, but I knew, as a matter of fact I heard that she was on a motorcycle with a young man who was killed, in an accident, in Germany. But she survived unscratched. So that's how much I heard about this particular youngster. But I didn't hear anything about the younger one. I don't think anything, she probably survived the illness and continues, I just don't...

BZ: Mmm hmm.

DW: I never met this girl.

BZ: Yeah.

DW: So it's, it's hard to tell. But these were times that were, it was very gratifying to meet some of these people that we knew before. I know a schoolmate of

mine who was extremely helpful, as a non-Jew in Warsaw. He was Jewish, but he pretended not to be.

BZ: Yeah.

DW: And he managed beautifully. He was helpful to his mother, his two sisters and brother-in-law. But unfortunately in the Polish uprising, he, his mother and brother-in-law, lost their lives. Not as Jews.

BZ: Yes, 'cause they were known as Poles.

DW: Yeah. Although there were cases, many Jews were killed right there by the Polish underground, only because they were Jews.

BZ: The [unclear] Army...

DW: That was...

BZ: The AK.

DW: Yes, the AK. Is that what you call it, Polmot?

BZ: The other was the People's Army. I think the Communist Army was the People's Army.

DW: I see. The AK, yes. So these two, and I'm in very, very close touch with these two sisters who survived right there. And as far as we are concerned, we did not leave Warsaw after the uprising was defeated by the Germans. The uprising, just for the record, started very unexpectedly to us, August 1, 1944. And that was due to the retreating German armies from the Russian front. And they were coming right through Warsaw. And we saw them in a horrible state. Which we just hoped that any minute we'll be liberated. Warsaw will be free from the German occupation. But that's when the underground, the AK mainly, attacked the German forces, the occupation forces, and the battle started. It ended in defeat, in October 2. And all Polish population had to be evacuated. So some were taken to concentration camps, probably the activists. Women were taken to labor camps. And the rest of the population just had to leave Warsaw. So I don't recall how, but just by mere blinking of the eye probably, we met some people, men and women, who for a variety of reasons did not want to leave Warsaw. And we all, we were eight of us, decided to build a bunker. This was done in a burnt house, burnt apartment house, with huge cellar. It was all concrete and brick and it was extremely hot, because it was after the fire. And all the ruins were just on top, were heaps and heaps of ruins. On top it was first floor, and the cellar was hardly accessible. And that's what, that's where we hid. We prepared water for one month. We prepared food, which we were just trying to find, nothing was purchased. It was just found in abandoned stores. I don't remember working only, personally, or my mother, but the men took care of it. And our duty was to cook for them and just maintain ourselves. Well, we had there with us a man who brought two women with him. Both were saving his life in a variety of ways. One young Gentile girl who lost her parents welcomed her, welcomed him into his, into her apartment. He became her lover. Another one, a Jewish woman, paid his way. And when he brought these two women, they started to argue right there. That is a interesting

part of life!

BZ: [chuckles]

DW: One man was a escapee from Treblinka extermination camp. His function in Treblinka was pulling teeth of the bodies. This was actually the first live person that we met who had, was able to give us these accounts. He was screaming at night. He was so, so badly affected by it. That was, and, and two other men. Yes, we were eight of us: four women, and four men. We were eating what we prepared, not using much water for washing ourselves. Rationing it. It was extremely hot, as I mentioned before. We found some broken, not broken bottles, but bottles, bent, like you see here sometime a Coca-Cola bottle stretched up or down or sideways? This was done as a natural process, only, due to the heat, extreme heat. We were normally sleeping during the night, eating, or living during the day. I had some wool. I was knitting there. I was knitting a sweater, I was sure it's pink, because I found the wool also in the basement, not in this basement, someplace else. It turned out it's gold. That's how dark...

BZ: How dark the basement was.

DW: They, in, and the stole that there, the color was the stole. I'll show you the stole. I have it as a souvenir. Then two men were sleeping on a s-, made landing, self-made landing-- rather than in the hot basement, which my mother and I endured-- were talking before they fell asleep. And all of a sudden they hear steps. And two men listened to their conversation. The men o-, the men only revealed themselves, their identity, when they heard that they deal with Jews. It turned out they were Jews. They came into our bunker, like lords, in comparison with us looking like beggars. It turned out these people, they were Jews, father and son. They were residents of Warsaw before, so they knew every stone there, where we were, around us. They educated us to the fact that we were in danger for a whole month while we were already a month there, because we should have reversed our procedures, slept during the day and lived at night, because the Germans were here, and cleaning forces, Poles, that were brought by these Germans. So we really lived as only luck would permit us. And they educated us to this. Then they saw what we eat, what we drink. They took our men at night to bring in water, to bring in food. And since our men were too weak, they carried sacks of sugar, dried beans, on their backs, to help us with. And that lasted till, so, all were in a little better frame of mind and physical sustenance, till January the 17, when one Polish woman, who was to convert later to Judaism, married this man. I think they live in Israel now, brought in the good news. "Get out of here! You are all free!" This was about noon, January 17. So this, this couple, these, this family, we are extremely grateful to, were there beautiful to help us. And about a week before the liberation, our men went for, again for water and food. And they found a ra-, a crystals for radio. So one of the men built. Then our bunker enlarged. We became 24 rather than 8, because another bunker was either uncovered by the, by the Germans. And they had to flee. So we took them in and, the place was huge, so we were able to enlarge our "quarters", in quotation marks. And one of our men, and the assortment was

so different again [chuckles]. Oh, people with such experiences. We had a lawyer from East Poland. When, everybody was just sharing their experiences. And a book could be written just on this bunker. And we had an engineer. And he found these crystals. And he says, "I'm going to devise a radio for you now." And my mother was the one who could listen to, well everybody actually understood German, but, they had the earphones. And my mother was the lucky one who heard about the great invasion, Russian invasion in this part of Poland. And, hurray, hurray, we'll be liberated! And we were liberated shortly thereafter. And, you know, when we stepped out into the January snow, stepped out of a hole, there were pictures taken, but, but I'm sure it was the Russian force. And we never saw them, and newsreel as well. And snow was yellow in our eyes. And I said, the sweater...

BZ: Your vision was actually changed.

DW: Right. And the sweater, as I mentioned to you-- pink, that was actually gold. And there was no place, no warm place in the whole of Warsaw, except across the Vistula River, which was close to Praga. So we housed our liberators, the Polish Red Army, the Russians, till we picked up enough strength to walk home, to Radom, hitchhiking, or walking.

BZ: Now how...

DW: That I mentioned before [unclear].

BZ: How did the man that was, that pulled these gold teeth out of these people, the dead bodies, now did he tell you how he managed to escape from Treblinka?

DW: Yes. He did. He was one of the, now what do you call it? On August the 2 of '43, they burned Treblinka.

BZ: Oh, Treblinka. They had an uprising there.

DW: An uprising in Treblinka.

BZ: Yes, yes.

DW: He thought while with us that he was the only one who remained alive, and he will be the one to tell the story. But as history has proven that there are a few survivors. And everyone has the same story to tell.

BZ: So he escaped during the uprising.

DW: He escaped.

BZ: Did anybody ever assist him to escape? Did he ever say? Any assistance?

DW: He was hiding in the woods, being summer. And then he led his way somehow to Warsaw, though he was not a native of Warsaw. But this seemed to be the best place to hide because it was so huge, in comparison with other place, cities, in Poland. And if, I assume that it's the same stories everybody else's. He, when he got to Warsaw for better or for worse, either he found someone who, I don't think he got any money out of there to be able to pay his way.

BZ: He somehow...

DW: Perhaps he walked. And that I don't know. I don't remember actually.

Because there were so many stories to be listened to. But I do remember his constant, constant crying. And, he didn't know whether to be happy that he survived or not. But he did feel this sense of duty. He's here to tell the story, and he started right with us. We were probably the first one he was able to, the first ones that he was able to relate.

BZ: You must have been incredulous.

DW: We were, because it so happened that our immediate family died in Treblinka. So we were able to see beyond the shadow of doubt that that's where it happened. This was quite a while later, of course, and to us it seems still so much later. This was, end of '44. And our family went to extermination August of '42. But hope against hope, we still thought...

BZ: Yes.

DW: Perhaps, perhaps...

BZ: Yes.

DW: Someone will survive. But no one did.

BZ: And...

DW: And very few came back. From this uprising, very few came back. And he was the one who gave us the date.

BZ: And about the children who were in the convent, were they encouraged to practice Catholicism do you know, in the convent?

DW: Yes. Yes. This was part of, this was-- and I doubt very much whether the nuns knew who they were.

BZ: Oh, you think the nuns thought that they, oh, I see.

DW: I don't think they knew.

BZ: They just assumed they were Christian children.

DW: Right. And it was easy to pass anywhere in Poland as orphans.

BZ: Yes. [unclear].

DW: Not that they were killed, but they were separated by the Russian border, and prisoners of war. So it was just very, very easy to say, "My," and especially for a girl, "My parents were killed in a bombing incident." Whether in Warsaw, Warsaw had quite a bit of bombs, right at the beginning of the war. Actually, Warsaw was keeping itself I think for 18 days. And every day was shelling and bombing. So that, that was no problem.

BZ: So as far as you knew then, convents were not helping the Jewish children...

DW: Not the Polish convents, no.

BZ: Not the Polish convents...

DW: No.

BZ: Were not helping...

DW: No.

BZ: Jewish children to remain alive.

DW: We do know some French did and perhaps some other ones. And then hopefully they gained these, these children to their religion, yes.

BZ: Yes.

DW: And I'm sure there are many that are still left there...

BZ: That's...

DW: As adults.

BZ: I just read *The Holocaust Kingdom*. Did you read that? And the child came out, it was antisemitic. He was living in a convent and was very antisemitic as well. They had quite a bit of dealing with them.

DW: Oh, you have a little paper that is published in Toronto, Canada, *The Voice of Radom*. Several years ago we read an appeal of a woman-- I don't recall how old, in the forties or less-- who appeals to her landspeople, if they know, if they could give her any leads to her parents. I don't know of anyone who could, because she remembers so little. She did not, or if she did put the names of her parents, they're probably not alive. And she was raised as a non-Jew, in Radom. And she married there and had children. And some how, through neighbors, she heard the rumors that remained rumors to her, that she was a Jewish child given away. I'll share an interesting story with you. And my, I think I did mention to you that my mother went to Germany to look for my...

BZ: Wait a sec. [tape off then on]

DW: My mother found my brother Nathan and my uncle Jacob in Germany. That's when she learned that my father was killed, died in the concentration camp. There, in Regensburg, the town in Germany where my family was, were two sisters, who were Jewish women, of course, who were working-

Tape two, side two:

DW: One of the two sis-, both sisters, had little girls. Barbara, the daughter of the older sister, was about seven years old, while the younger one's daughter was about four. The women felt that they have to help themselves by, from the ghetto of either Warsaw or Lodz-- I don't remember which one-- to send the children or give them away-- probably Warsaw-- give the children away, to Poles. But they didn't find any willing to help them. So was the little, that Barbara, Vasha, the older one, who begged her aunt to take her to any larger city, leave her in the street. This, her imagination worked that way. She's going to approach a wealthy looking woman and ask her to take care of her because she is lost and she is an orphan. So this desperate aunt did it that way. She took her to Radom, by train, left her on a holid-, during a June, was Corpus Christi, end of June, was in what year I don't remember. It could have been '43, and left her in the street of Radom. This is what she was telling my brother and my mother. Well my brothers, and she was ready to leave Germany, go to Poland, and search for these two girls. Well, this happened to the older one. The younger one, who was four years old, she left with some people in Warsaw. They accepted her. Well, she was ready to come, and my brother recommended that she comes and knocks at my door, and perhaps I can help her. She did come. The first thing to help her, I took her to the Jewish Committee, which was housed in a one-room apartment, and mainly for the purpose of uniting families. So we were all registered there. There were also cases of people coming, Poles, coming there, asking for help, financial help, for the children they were having. Well, of course, first thing we did, we looked for the name in this book: Barbara Koslosky. Believe it or not, the "K" page was torn out of the yellow pages, torn diagonally. But the secretary of the committee told us that there is a woman coming here for help with a Barbara Koslovky. Where does she live? They don't know, because the page is torn. She thinks that she is someplace around the ammunition factory. Well, that's quite a task for us. Nevertheless, we went on a search. We came to a poor, unpaved street, single little homes, with white picket fences. And after a rain, at a puddle, a few children were playing. And this woman spotted Barbara. And Barbara saw her and ran into the house. Well, what are we going to do now? Well, we knocked at the door. The story unfolded in a most incredible way. The woman had now two daughters, a girl older than Barbara and Barbara became her daughter. She was the pride and joy of the whole community because she was a brilliant girl. She was the pride and joy of the priest, and the school, while the older one was a dumbbell. After a few days, it took us a few sessions, a few times, because the woman would not relinquish the child. First of all, the child wouldn't even go to the mother-- the aunt. The woman confessed to us that she was childless, that the first child, the older girl...

BZ: Was not hers either.

DW: Was not hers. And how did Barbara get? That is the incredible story. Instead of, if you remember, approaching a good-looking, wealthy looking woman...

BZ: Yes.

DW: She just walked and walked for miles, till she reached this poor community, around the, a ammunition factory. She stopped at the picket fence and started to cry, telling this woman that she is lost, she had no parents. And this woman took her in, and became her mother. Isn't that a child's intuition? A sense of survival...

BZ: Yes.

DW: To reach a place where there was a childless couple?

BZ: Yes, it's amazing.

DW: And, obviously she was fighting for her. Her first argument was, "Where is the mother? You are the aunt who left her in the street." And of course, the woman didn't know that this is a ch-, Jewish child. Till we came she didn't know.

BZ: She didn't know.

DW: To make it easier for the aunt, I still pretended to be...

BZ: A Christian.

DW: Not Jewish. And if I am her friend, as a non-Jew...

BZ: She [unclear].

DW: Why can't you be the non-, the non-Jewish friend...

BZ: Yes, yes.

DW: Who returns the child after...

BZ: Yes.

DW: Befriending her, making her your own? With, I left Poland by the time this case was settled. And I'm sure there were many, many similar cases. The mother had to come from Germany, which was very difficult. The mother wasn't well. She could have been a, a mentally disturbed from all the trouble. While the aunt was much, the sister was much stronger. That's why she went on the search. Then while trying to arrange the return, and for the mother to come from Germany, after she got a little better, this woman went on a search to Warsaw. But Warsaw was devastated. It was destroyed. And there were no, no one to ask and no one to be able to approach for the child. But somehow, I don't know this story too well because I didn't participate in it as I did with Barbara, it ended well. They, both mothers got their two daughters back and they are in Israel.

BZ: Oh, they're in Israel.

DW: Yeah.

BZ: Had the child gone to a wealthy woman she would have never come to claim the money and could have never been traced.

DW: That's exactly...

BZ: Yes.

DW: The woman said, "What mistake I have made by going there to the

Jewish Committee.”

BZ: That’s a good ending.

DW: And that money for the support and the help must have come from the Joint Distribution Committee. I wasn’t aware of it at the time.

BZ: Yes.

DW: But I’m sure that’s where it was. After all, it was emergency money that was...

BZ: Yes.

DW: Absolutely needed.

BZ: Yes.

DW: That must have been it.

BZ: And they weren’t, I understand they didn’t want to give it to any, once they had Palestine, for the children, that they knew they could take these children to Palestine, the orphan children, they refused to pay any more money to the people that were housing them. Because they really weren’t their children. You know, I guess in the interim they were willing to pay for their keep. But once they...

DW: Well, this was, it didn’t mean, I’m sure the Jewish Committee was the one to judge who deserves, who doesn’t...

BZ: Yes.

DW: There were a few people, a committee of a few that, if a woman came and said that, “Oh no, she must have been aware because, otherwise she wouldn’t have come to the Jewish Committee at all.” I mentioned that she probably didn’t know until we came there. No, she must have known.

BZ: She knew that she was a...

DW: Because, it was [unclear] already. But, she did quite a beautiful job, but she did hope to have Barbara as her own daughter.

BZ: Yeah, understandable.

DW: Right.

BZ: But too many...

DW: But you see, this wouldn’t happen in a boy’s case.

BZ: No. They would have known right away...

DW: Only possible, right.

BZ: That they had a Jewish child.

DW: Right, yes. Only...

BZ: Yeah.

DW: In cases of girls this was possible. So this, this is, this was quite, just a accidentally I participated in such a search.

BZ: That’s really something. I know that many of the children were just not released from the convents and so forth. They were just never released.

DW: No, because there was no one to claim.

BZ: Yeah, but I, I understand even...
DW: That's a...
BZ: Sometimes when they came to claim them...
DW: When they were...
BZ: You know there was...
DW: Well it was also up to the child...
BZ: They were...
DW: They were...
BZ: Yes.
DW: Indoctrinated...
BZ: Right.
DW: In such a way that they just wouldn't leave.
BZ: Yes. That's right.
DW: Yes, it was, she came, the mother and her sister came to Regensburg where we lived, with Barbara, and she's, was sent to a Hebrew school right away. And learned to play the piano. I think she's a piano teacher in Israel. And...
BZ: And she adjusted?
DW: Oh yeah.
BZ: She adjusted very well.
DW: She adjusted beautifully.
BZ: From the two religions, you know...
DW: Right, yes.
BZ: She was [unclear]. And the four-year-old was kept by a Christian family?
DW: Yes.
BZ: Yes.
DW: Yes.
BZ: And...
DW: But the mother recovered her as well.
BZ: Without any...
DW: I just...
BZ: Without any problems?
DW: There were some searching problems. She had to find, this I'm just not aware of.
BZ: You don't know what, the details...
DW: How the details went, no. I do know that it ended, the search ended happily for both mothers.
BZ: You don't know any children that arrived here in America that were orphans, do you? Came as foster children from the Displaced Persons' Camps and so forth?
DW: Not as a child. I know a man who is about my age-- he was not a child

any more-- who befriended an American officer in Germany. That's after the liberation of course. He worked for American, for the American occupation forces. And this young American was so taken by this young survivor that he made his parents adopt him, right here in Philadelphia.

BZ: Was he a Jewish officer?

DW: He was a Jewish officer, and he happened to have lost a brother in the war, and this youngster reminded him of his brother. And his parents adopted him. He was the first one to arrive in Philadelphia before any refugees came to the shores. Just by, probably by a few months. And it was a big splash in the Philadelphia press, and through- out the country I understand. I was shown some clippings, because we came about a year-and-a-half later. And incidentally, I learned about this happening in the apartment house where I lived when we first came to Philadelphia. It turned out that he is, was my brother's best friend.

BZ: Oh my!

DW: By the time I was to contact him, he was out of Philadelphia, and in St. Louis studying. He is now a, an ordained Rabbi and the director of the Hillel Foundation at Harvard University. We communicate once in five years only. But he, as I say, he was adopted, and he is still under the name of his adoptive parents, which I, it's very strange to me, because he happened to be of a very, very beautiful and prominent family, in every way, scholastically and socially, financially as well. And he was the only son in the family and the only survivor. So not to carry on...

BZ: Yes.

DW: It's very strange to me, but as I say, I never saw him, so I can't speak for...

BZ: Was he in the camps, this boy?

DW: Yes, he was.

BZ: He was in the camps.

DW: He was a survivor of the camps, yes. I really don't know, and I know that the parents could have helped him to come a few months earlier to the States, which in the long run didn't amount to much. Financially they were able to help him, but he refused their help. This I heard from his brother.

BZ: He did everything on his own.

DW: He did everything on his own. He was well-educated in, Hebraically, before. So this was a, the easiest field for him. And it's quite a position for, quite a...

BZ: That is quite...

DW: Responsibility.

BZ: Yes.

DW: And on the phone he told me [someone: "Good morning."] Good morning. [tape off then on] Where were we?

BZ: Let me play it back.

DW: [tape off then on] I'm wondering if there is any other question you would have for me. [tape off then on] We reached a stage, I think in our report on the preparation for the Polish uprising, but I would like to tell you about a situation that occurred to, as a, where two men were involved. They were living across the Vistula River in Warsaw. This was the part of the city that was liberated by Russians, right after the Polish uprising of the main part of Warsaw.

BZ: Excuse me, the uprising was so that the Russians wouldn't have claim to the land.

DW: Right, right. Now the Polish underground...

BZ: Yes.

DW: Would have had the claim and established their own government, non-Red, of course, not Communist. These two men lived with a family, paid them handsomely. When the Russian pre-invasion took place-- there was bombing, quite severe bombing, and the local population had to go to the shelters-- these two Jews were not permitted to go to the shelter, because they would be recognized and then there would be repercussions on the landlord. And there wouldn't be repercussions any more by the authorities. It would be by the local, you know, their neighbors. "You bad people. You black sheep. You housed Jews. You are being paid by them." So they would not permit them to go to the shelters. Simultaneously, as it happened, their money ran out. So, these people wouldn't house them anymore. They had two excuses: "You can't go to the shelter, you cannot be killed here, because people would know that we housed Jews, and of course, without money, there is no bread. So you must leave." Well, where will they go without money? My mother decided to take them into our apartment. We put some bedding in our empty room and gave them shelter there. Well, our money ran out as well. So my mother borrowed 500 *zlotys* from a cousin of ours and bought some food for it. And that lasted just up to the time of the uprising, where there was no more question. Money couldn't buy anything, and you got what you were handed by either the militia or whatever you found on the way. Especially, our house was bombed, so we had to leave it anyway and travel from one house that wasn't bombed to the next one. Within, what was it, two months, exactly two months, we traveled through probably four houses. And there weren't, after our own, there must have been just basements, until October 2 we hid in this, in a bunker that I described before. But this was significant, how we, money couldn't buy anything anyhow. We Jews were able to help other Jews. Now, to tell you about this family that lent us the money for, to buy our last legitimate food. My mother was raised in Lodz with a cousin who was of a prominent family. They owned a very large hotel. This woman fell in love with a Pole, that is, a Christian. They were both non-believers. And they were married in a civil ceremony, which was extremely unusual for Poland. There was only one place, and that was Krakow City Hall, that was able to issue such a marriage license. They lived in Warsaw. They had one daughter. They lived very happily. And he was very much involved in helping Jews in the ghetto. For two years he

was coming and going under what pretext, I don't remember. But he was arrested, and imprisoned. While we lived in Warsaw, my mother wanted to find this woman, because she was, used to be very friendly with her, her young days. And it didn't take really too much effort for us to find her through the registration books in City Hall. It was a great joyous reunion between my mother and her. And of course we met her daughter, and we befriended each other very, very much, to this extent that I called her "Aunt" and I was not a child any more. The man was released from-- when we met her-- he was still in prison, and she had absolutely no contact with him. Well, when he was released, of course, we became great friends. And still while he was in prison, there was a scare that she might be arrested. She had to run to hide some place. Ironically enough, she went to us, and we housed her for a week. Of course, it was quite obvious that she was a full Jew. But, somehow she had enough friends, and she lived quite openly, while he was in prison, then when he came back he was, it was a quite a happy twosome. Although, their daughter became a Christian, willingly.

BZ: During the war?

DW: During the war, yes. They did not object to her taking the religion of her choice. And there was a psychosis at the time that no Jew will survive. So, she became a devout Catholic.

BZ: How...

DW: We did meet after the war, but then we did lose contact. So I should someday sit down and try to trace them in Warsaw, but I did not do it yet. With my daily living and occurrences right here, I just didn't. But if I ever go, I'll look them up. Or perhaps through correspondence I could do it. It was great, great...

BZ: Do you have any desire to?

DW: I have a desire to meet them. My desire to see Poland is just coming and going. There is a bit of nostalgia coming over us, and then it just, poof, vanishes.

BZ: When reality hits.

DW: When, that's it. When reality hits. We were ready to go right, we were talking about it in '73, and then the Yom Kippur War came. Well, how in the world can one go to such a country, with so many enemies still there? It's just impossible. So I don't think we'll ever. I really don't know what else I could tell. [tape off then on] Well, I did mention some time ago that we were, we lived in Radom, our hometown. We hoped to start our lives again right there. When we were chased by the home army...

BZ: Yes.

DW: We left for Germany, where my brother and my uncle stayed after their liberation. So, we led a fairly carefree days for close to two years there, in Bavaria, living as Jews, separated from the Germans, helping each other in whatever way possible. It was a school created, we did mostly voluntary work. I worked in the UNRRA as a interpreter, German-Polish-English. I worked with a doctor from New Zealand, a doctor and a nurse. And it was not only for the Jewish community. It was for the entire DP,

Displaced Persons' Camp, and people living in town, freely. Of course, I objected to my working with the Ukrainians and Poles because I realized who these people were. These were not Displaced Persons. These were escapees from their own homeland, from their people, for they would have been punished had they stayed, punished by their own people.

BZ: Yes, for collaborating.

DW: Collaborating with the Nazis. So I left this work shortly before, I did study a bit at the University, but not long enough to count for anything. We registered for a trip to, for emigration to the States. My uncle contacted, my uncle incidentally was a president of the Jewish community which counted about 2,000 people in Regensburg, Bavaria. My husband worked as the secretary-general for the district Jewish community that encompasses the small towns around Regensburg, with the residents in Regensburg. We wanted to emigrate, either to Palestine or to the States. Actually, Palestine would be preferable, but the borders were closed and before the exis-, the creation of State of Israel, of course, there was only by small allowance by the British authorities. That's how my mother got her certificate. [tape off then on] My uncle wrote to a cousin to Philadelphia. He remembered their address, because they used to correspond. The whole family corresponded with these cousins in, from the United States. And he described to him who survived the war. In answer to this letter came certificates of emigration to this country. So, eventually, my husband and I and my uncle took advantage of those. My mother did not, since you know, my brother Nathan, remained in Germany for a while, and then after my mother's death he went to Israel. It was still Palestine before the liberation, before the creation of the State of Israel.

BZ: Did he fight in the War of Independence?

DW: He did, yes. There was very small air force, per se, but that's what he was with, the air force. And he wanted to continue his studies that he started in Munich. And he didn't want to go back to Germany. If he went back, he would choose this country in Europe, and that was Austria. And he continued his studies in Vienna, but we established ourselves right here in Philadelphia, and that's where we remained. And they were quite helpful, our family, that is. They found a job for my husband. My son was born nine weeks after we arrived here, so I could not get into the labor market. Now we're middle-aged people, with three children and one daughter-in-law.

BZ: Oh.

DW: And hoping for more.

BZ: That's lovely. Did you find Americans accepting?

DW: Yes, I did. What was probably helpful to me was a knowledge of English.

Tape three, side one:

BZ: What are your religious attitudes now? Well, you're quite religious, I would say. You haven't lost...

DW: No, I have not lost my faith. I sustained it all the time. I feel it's very important to maintain it through good times and bad times, more important of course through bad times. But it's not an issue that you can turn on and off. So it has to remain with, of course, in all your family. In my case, I feel that I fulfill my father's wishes, at least to my estimation, and it makes me happy.

BZ: To go back a bit, were you in a Displaced Persons' Camp? You were in...

DW: I was in the area and I was considered a Displaced Person in Germany. But we did not live in a camp per se.

BZ: You did not live in a camp.

DW: No.

BZ: You had an apartment, I suppose.

DW: We had an apartment that was confiscated from Nazis. That was the setup in Regensburg. Evidently that's how it was designed by local authorities. That was their way of rehabilitation.

BZ: Upon arrival in United States, were you aided by anyone, any agencies, to establish your life here?

DW: We arrived in New York rather than in Philadelphia, and for a week we stayed with my husband's family. And we were visiting the center where most DPs were arriving, new immigrants. But, the next week we came to Philadelphia and we were living with our family, my family that is, and they aided us in whatever way possible. Helped us renting the apartment. Of course, we were very independent, didn't want any financial help, not even for the obstetrician who delivered my son nine weeks after my arrival. He gave me a discount, from \$200 to \$150 which we paid off within two years. That's how we felt.

BZ: Commendable.

DW: We led a pretty active and normal life after arriving in the city.

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

DW: Definitely. On daily basis.

BZ: On a daily basis.

DW: Yes. By comparison with every other issue. Of course not everyone is able to do it. I'm speaking as a survivor, and an experienced person, of course. But I think that I, I do it in my own way. Whatever issue comes up, I can compare, and air it, either with my children, or neighbors. Sometimes I'm afraid that I burden people too much with it. But I don't think it's really too much. But, that's why I say on a daily basis. But not everyone is able, as I mentioned before, to do that. So at least it should be taught

in schools.

BZ: Yes, it really should be taught in school.

DW: On all levels.

BZ: All levels?

DW: All levels.

BZ: At what age do you think they should start to teach it?

DW: As part of social studies, perhaps already in grade four.

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

DW: What they feel, they are different, if not more sensitive, they are different. They have no grandparents.

BZ: And they're aware of...

DW: And they are aware.

BZ: Of, of that void.

DW: They were much more aware of it at a much younger age. It did affect them. I'm sure it affected in some way every child. It's, quite a bit has been written about it and studied, all kinds of psychological studies conducted on this issue. Some might want to work harder themselves. Some are perhaps set back psychologically, or perhaps is it only an excuse, but, and...

BZ: Yes.

DW: It's possible they would have been that way anyway.

BZ: Yes.

DW: That's because, "My parents are different than your parents. I have to be different." I think in my children's case, at least if it were, language-wise they are different. [chuckling] Leo's very sensitive to his English. It has to be perfect. His Hebrew is perfect, better than the average Israeli. Whenever we have a visitor, an Israeli visitor, he has to be extremely careful with his Hebrew because there is someone who knows better, and that's Leo. The others perhaps less, because they were born later, and our life was a little more normal. But I can speak for myself, that's how I feel. My niece came home crying at the age of perhaps eight or nine, when her friends in school told her, "Well your parents were in prison." Well she was very indignant. "How come I don't know anything about it?!" And, "What kind of prison were you in? What crime did you commit?" Well, that's when they had to start telling her what "crime" they committed. And I'm sure every household had some experience.

BZ: When you say the Holocaust should be taught, and you feel it should be taught to everyone, because there are lessons in it for all humanity...

DW: Absolutely.

BZ: Yes, do you think your children have learned the lessons of the Holocaust?

DW: I think so. I think that they will be constantly on the guard. They would

recognize danger. And they would take, make, make an issue out of it. I know that my daughter has Gentile friends. She makes them aware of what her parents went through, and perhaps not very personally but she makes sure that they know about the Holocaust. She, well, she invited a girlfriend to a *seder* once. We conduct our *seder* mainly in English. And we do draw a comparison between, or analogy between the Exodus and slavery in Egypt and our own contemporary enslavement. We always mention the Warsaw Ghetto uprising during our *seder*. Obviously, we have it, at least twice a year that we talk about it in unison. So, right now she is in Europe and she visited Dachau, she took a group with her. And I think they're mostly Gentiles.

BZ: Did she tell you of their reaction?

DW: No. But she said, "At least," in her letter she states, "At least I came in as a free person and I am leaving as a free person."

BZ: Yes. [pause; tape off then on]

DW: ...not stop. I don't remember whether we put on record the fact that while in Warsaw, living as free people, so-called "free" people, my mother and I were observing Yom Kippur, twice. The first time, twice meaning twice the same year. The first time, we thought it was Yom Kippur. The second time was when we heard through someone that this might be the date of Yom Kippur. It was a day of fast, and a day of prayer for us.

BZ: You never gave up hope?

DW: I never gave up hope. [tape off then on]

BZ: Yeah, it's still on.

DW: I met a man by the name of Isaac Akerman in Regensburg. He became a great friend of my father's in last concentration camp. And that was the one where my father died. The man told me that my father, in his sad moments, was telling him that his daughter has a very fine boy, but he is not steeped in the Jewish learning. And that meant so much to him then.

BZ: When.

DW: [weeping; tape off.]