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Interview Transcript Title Page

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Interviewee Surname:	Pohlmann
Forename:	Lili
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	29 March 1930
Interviewee POB:	Lwow, Poland

Date of Interview:	23 November 2016; 7 December 2016
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Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
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REFUGEE VOICES

Interview No. RV195

NAME: Lili Pohlmann

DATE: 23rd November 2016

LOCATION: London

INTERVIEWER: Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

[Part One]

[0:00:00]

Today is the 23rd of November 2016. We are conducting an interview with Mrs. Lili Pohlmann and my name is Bea Lewkowicz and we are in London.

Can you please tell me your name?

My present name now?

Yeah.

Lili Pohlmann. P O H L M A N N

And your name at birth?

Stern. S T E R N

And when were you born?

When? 29th of March 1930.

And where were you born?

In Lwow - L W O W - in those days. Now it's Lviv.

Yeah. Thank you very much Mrs. Pohlmann… Can- for agreeing…

You can call me 'Lili'.

Lili. So, thank you, Lili, for agreeing to be interviewed for the AJR Refugee Voices Project.

My pleasure.

Can you tell me a little bit please about your family background?

Well, you can ask me what you want to know. I mean I can tell you - what? - about my mother, my father. We lived in Krakow before the war. It was a very, very happy family. I had a little brother who was four and a half years or so, younger than myself. Living very happily in Krakow until the outbreak of war.

Can you tell me a little bit about the grandparents…? What they…?

[0:01:36]

My grandparents were in Lwow. And… we went, my mother- myself first and then my mother and the two of us, [the] children, every Passover to Lwow to her parents. Because they were her parents. We went for Passover to Lwow to my grandparents, which was lovely. My mother was the only one in the family- she was the only child. My [grand]parents had eight children. Eight babies. And she was the first born. And she was the only one to stay alive. They all died within one month. Must have been blue babies, we don't know. I don't know what it was, but nobody knew in those days.

The grand- your grandparents?

My grandparents. So, my mother was the only one, the only one surviving. And the first born and the only one surviving. And she was a very delicate child and- and in life also right to look at her, it was a very delicate-looking person. And yet she was the one to survive and nobody knows why the others died. So… she was, you know, they, they…they were, you know, she was the apple of their eye, obviously. They were actually very orthodox. My mother was not. My mother was an ardent Zionist - when she was growing up, that is. And…But she never wanted to upset her parents, so they didn't know about that at all. And she belonged to Zionist *Hashomer Hatzair* and organisations and so forth, unbeknown to her parents, not to upset them. And we lived in Krakow, as I said. So, for Passover we used to go to my grandparents which was lovely. It was an adventure for children of course going by train, and- you know. And there, there was a large family. Because my mother's family, cousins and so on, there were many of them. And they all had children, so that was quite something for me and for her. And in Krakow, I didn't have any family as such. We were the family unit.

[0:03:58]

And what were the names of the grandparents in Lwow?

Hinda and Abba Brück.

And had they been there for a long time?

Yeah, yeah. Oh, yes. They were in Lwow. That's where I was born, in my grandmother's bed. [laughs]

So, did you…

To that extent I mean, my mother wanted her mother to hold her hand. It wasn't in those days that husbands were present at birth, you know, but… But… I was in my grandmother's bed.

So, she went back to Lwow to give birth…

Yes. To give birth, and stayed for, I believe, ten days or two weeks, something like that - and brought me back.

And what was your father's background? Where was he…?

My father… well, you know, I don't know very much because I lost him so early. I mean, we didn't ask questions in those days. Who asks- what child asks questions? So… But- he was also a Zionist. He was leading a group at…at *Hashomer Hatzair* outside of Lwow in another town. In a small town. And preparing them to go to Palestine. They were going to go to build… the land! And that's where he met my mother. They met like that. And… then he did some harm to his knee. I'm not sure if he fractured, but it was ligament. It was something that for the rest of his life, there were moments when that knee was not right. And he had to walk with a stick for quite a while. And he decided this is not- he's not the right person to go and build. And so consequently they didn't go, unfortunately. Unfortunately, that's why they stayed behind.

Did they want to…?

[0:03:58]

Otherwise they would have gone to Palestine at the time. Yes.

So, it was like a Hakhshara camp?

It was *Hakshara*, yes. And he was leading this *Hakhshara*. I have some photographs here. He was that group of boys.

And where…

And it was very unfortunate. It is in a place which is very difficult for you to probably pronounce…

Go on…

So, it's Ustrzyki Dolne [Poland]. Very difficult. And to write it, even… But anyway, my mother was there because my mother was a…was a teacher doing a course of designing. Dress designing et cetera at the age of eighteen, nineteen. She was very, very young, but she was very talented. Very talented. And the, the art school from Lwow sent her out to teach. And her so-to-speak 'pupils' or ladies were far older than she was. She was teaching them dress design, dress making and so forth. And that's when they met- with my father.

In that place?

In that- in that place. In the organisation, because she belonged, and he belonged. So…In *Hashomer Hatzair*.

So, she'd finished school? She'd finished?

[0:07:07]

I only know she was there, until- until that they got engaged, they got married and so on. They went away. They went to Krakow. And then he was banking and so on. Not- he was not a banker; he was a bank manager. But he started working banks and so- he actually had a- he... patented a special …oh, what's the word? What would that be? A…a kind of … chartered accountancy. Yes? And a special way - a patent. He patented a…some kind of a system.

A method?

A method. A system. And it is- there is a patent until today in Poland under the name of 'Star'. Yeah, he was very good at that. And… Actually, he was good at many things. He was very talented too. And… And so, he became a bank manager. Later.

And why did they move to Krakow?

That's where they sent him. They sent him first to a small place called Bochnia, and from Bochnia to Krakow.

The bank?

The bank, yeah.

So, he started working for the bank?

Yes. And I- I was brought up in Krakow from the age of – I don't know - six months, or so.

So what are your first memories of Krakow?

[0:08:38]

They're very, very, very, very going truly - you won't believe it, but I think I must have been a year old I remember some things. I mean fragments – fragments of things. I remember from before when we were in Bochnia, lying in a pram and looking at the tree and the tree was in the garden. I, I can see that now. But... you know, but that was so, so young, that I, I, I just don't know myself how I can remember. But there are fragments. Just little fragments. And I remember everything from Krakow. Ev- every iota. I loved the city. I loved the city. I mean, in those days one didn't think, "one loves the city." You lived there and, and you had fun, and you know, as a child. I went to a Hebrew kindergarten because my parents were constantly thinking that - "the knee will improve, and he can go!" But it didn't. It was a standing thing even on a photograph here which you will see later. You'll see him… normally walking but he always had a stick on his hand, just in case. Just in case- And he was a sportsman. He was a great sportsman. Football, this, that. He was a judge- football, what is it? Judging the football players at… Maccabi…I think or whatever it was. No maybe it wasn't Maccabi -whatever it was called. I think Maccabi in Krakow. I'm not sure. And you know he was a sportsman. And nonetheless – skier, everything. But you never knew with the knee.

And where did you live in Krakow?

Where?

Where?

[0:10:20]

What, you want me to tell you the name of the street?

Yes.

The name of the street was Pijarska. That was… at first. And then it was Karmelicka. They were right in the centre of town in the old city of – so-called the old city. I don't know if you know Krakow, but…

Yeah…

Right in the, in the centre.

And can you…

At Planty.

At the Planty?

At the Planty. At Pijarska and the at Karmelicka. Corner Bartorego it was a - a very well-known house under the sign of of a... What is it? Anyway. It's very well known in Krakow this house because there was a- there are only two houses of its kind in Krakow, build by an architect which are very, very unique in their- in their aspect and so on. So that was the house.

In which way was it different?

Because it was a brick, a red brick. All red brick. …It's- until today it's a very special house.

It's there?

Yeah. Not only there, but very, very special. Everybody knows it. Krakowians if you tell them, you know, they will know.

And you had a flat?

On- yes, on the whole first floor. …Yes.

Can you describe a little bit for us the… the images or those fragments you have in mind when you think of Krakow?

[0:11:56]

I have so many fragments… So many, I mean… I, I loved to play in Planty. I had friends there. I- my father was my greatest friend. He used to take me places with him, everywhere. Wherever he went, he used to take me along. And we- I loved that. It was great fun. Great fun…I used to go. And the music was in coffee houses. And… Beautiful music. Operettas and so forth. And I- that's, well for me, I lived like in an operetta because my parents sang it all in German. And you know… And I remember when my parents were going out and I remember… one of- one of the memories which is so vivid is that, you know, everybody had a - a housekeeper or a maid or so on. And ours was… …with us for obviously quite a few years. And when I was about five, six years of age, at Christmas …she had a secret with me - from my parents, you know. She would take me out before midnight, for midnight mass. And that was quite something. That was quite wonderful. And my parents didn't know it. They were asleep and we would run and she would dress me very, very, you know - it was cold. It was not like here. It was really very, very cold. And… [laughs] And she put I remember like my father used to put newspapers into my shoes to- into my boots so that I don't freeze out there. And we would walk the main street, you know, and… Florians Street you know, into the church - main church – that was the cathedral in the square. And everybody was walking. The snow was fresh, and new and beautiful, beautiful, it was… I can hear the snow in my ears, you know. And holding… candles and so on and so on. It was quite wonderful, I mean, quite wonderful. And that was such an incredible thing. And my father's cousin, who was a singer, was a soloist in the main …choir in the church choir. He was a soloist. He sang at the mass. And she said- she was always saying, "Don't say anything! Don't… because I will…" And it was wonderful, it really was. But there are such many fragments of, of…of, of my life

in Krakow. Many funny things that happened. Very funny things. And I never used to like to go - we had a- a nanny. And my little brother was very much like my mother and I was very much like my father. So he- he was a very… disciplined boy. When you told him to sit, he sat. When you told him to do this, he did. He was, you know, like that. And he was always spick and span and always… And I was very opposite, unfortunately. So when we went to a garden or to somewhere - the park which was the Planty, of course, in Krakow… she lost me. I mean I never held on to the pram, but I did my own thing. So, very often she would have to go home without me. So my poor mother was distressed. But- but these are- these were the sort of things. I liked to listen to the music when it was played in the- in the coffee houses. All I wanted was to be inside and I couldn't, because I was small, nobody would let me in. You know, that sort of thing.

What music? You mentioned operetta…

[0:16:11]

Yeah, well that was…

What did they listen to?

Well, they were operettas. Viennese operettas, you know. And that's what was being played all the time. That was the music and plus - plus of course the Polish tangos and this and that. But as such, it was Viennese music, mostly.

And what languages did your parents speak?

In Polish.

Polish…

Oh, yes. But – but. They both spoke Hebrew very fluently. And they both corresponded, as young people, before they were married, in Hebrew. My father wrote poetry to her in Hebrew. Yeah. Yes, and that's why they sent me to a kindergarten, to a Hebrew kindergarten.

So that, I mean we spoke Polish and Hebrew. But we learnt Hebrew songs. I even today, remember the songs from the kindergarten.

Really?

Hebrew – Hebrew.

Go on…

No, no - I won't sing them. [laughs] But I remember. I can sing it for you, but not on this. And… they were, you know - it was lovely. Absolutely lovely. But the thing is I was always the youngest everywhere and so I had a problem. Because who wanted to play with such a youngster, you know. [laughs] I wanted to play with the boys 'cause they were more interesting than playing with dolls. And, and they… Who wanted? And so, you know. But it was- it was lovely. I loved Krakow. I loved being there.

And what sort of friends did you have? From the Kindergarten and what…?

Yes. From the kindergarten. Some of my parents' – children… friends.

And you said you remember going back to Lwow for Pesach, for Passover.

Yeah.

What can you remember? What…?

[0:18:07]

Everything! I remember everything! You don't want to go into all the details; it will take you forever! No, because I remember everything. I remember the journey. The journey one looked forward: Oh, my God, going by train! You know, and then- and then in Przemysl- In the main- it was always a fast train. It stopped I think on two stops or three - I don't know. And one of the main ones is, is Przemysl. So my mother and my father had some family there. So they all came out, waited for the train. Not like here today, you know. Waited…

with food - with food! And this one brought some broth and this one brought eggs and this one brought sandwiches “so that the child shouldn’t starve, heaven help us!” you know. It was great fun! And- and we looked forward to it. And we saw these people about half an hour the train stopped, or so. I don’t know - maybe longer. And so they brought all the food and we…[laughing] were stuck with it. And it… And it was very lovely.

And how long did it take from Krakow to Lwow?

I can’t tell you exactly, but I think about four hours, something like this. Four to five hours. It was a fast train. I- I wouldn't know exactly. But I know that Przemysl was always- we were all waiting to see that because we only saw- And on the way back. Everybody came. I don’t know, ten people. I don’t know- practically the whole family came up [laughing] to see you.

And you said that your grandparents were more religious than your mother?

[0:19:45]

My mother- they were- they were very religious. They were orthodox.

Yes. How…?

My grandfather spent his days praying in the, in the, in the synagogue. And on Friday he came home and, and there was a queue of people waiting for to be offered this, that and food…

Tzedakah.

Yes, *Tzedakah*.

And what- did you go to synagogue at all in Krakow? And what did your parents…?

No… No, I did not. And my father was really non-believer, an agnostic if you like, I mean, he didn’t… And my mother had candles every Friday for her parents, you know. And my grandmother sent every week a challah which she made and some bits and pieces, some cakes

and this and that. She baked, and that came by post every week, to have it on Friday. So that was it. My mother did some praying and… my father was the opposite. But they were the most loving of couples you ever saw.

He was Zionist…

Yeah… he was completely non- he was secular. Totally secular. [doorbell rings]

[sound break]

Sorry about that…

[0:21:05]

Yeah- so we were talking about your parents - your father, that he was secular.

Yeah. That's how it was at home. But it didn't prevent them from being the most loving of couples. Yeah. And he was a wonderful father… marvellous. Wonderful. Yeah.

And what were the- did you have some non-Jewish friends? What was the relationship with you?

I don't think- I don't know. I never thought about it. I mean, I never thought whether Jewish, non-Jewish. In the kindergarten I knew, I mean we were at a Hebrew- and we were Jewish, and that's about all I knew. But… But as such, I don't know! I had - just, we were very young so that sort of friendship, you know. We saw each other on the Planty, we played and that's it. But when I went to school - my father had me at school at the age of six, which was very difficult. [half-laughs] He had great difficulties to get me into a school and he considered that…that I knew how to read a little, write a little, that one and one it two, you know. And so I should not be at home; I should be at school. So he fought for it. And he got- and not only a school, at the best school. At the top school. And they had the most disciplinarian and, at the top, educational and so on. To get me in there, and on top of that, it was a very Catholic school. It was all against him and religion and everything. But- it was the top school in - in Krakow. Girls' school. Girls' school. Girls only.

What was it called?

As I said on the thing, Saint- Number One, School Number One, Saint Scholastika. And… that stands until today, but no longer what it was. No longer what it was. It was a very, very highly disciplinarian school. I mean, we had to have a specific uniform and… and not only. And, and our slippers had to be lined with felt so that we were not heard… walking. And we had to, you know, the floors were parquet floors. So when we walked, we…we cleaned the floor at the same time. And… and we were not… We were to be seen but not heard. And, you know, that sort of school.

And how did you manage there?

[0:23:45]

But I was… I was very happy. I was very proud to be in that school. Very proud. I mean, when I wore my - my beret with the emblem, I was very proud to be in that school but… as such… you know, they had a priest come for religious lessons so I had to go out of class, of course, which was, which was quite obvious to me that I had to. I was sent to the corridor for the period of his duration. And- and that was that. But I had a very unpleasant experience. The only anti-Semitic experience I had was at that school. And… And I didn't understand what it is about. Because to me it was- I didn't understand it - what they wanted of me. And it was very unpleasant. And I was hit by this teacher. And she hit me so that blood started pouring from my nose and everything, and eyes were swollen. It was very bad, cause she hit me, and I went onto the wall and must have done … you know. And when they got me home, of course it was awful. And my father came and- and he wanted to know absolutely every detail. And he said, "You are telling me the truth? Remember you must tell me the truth what exactly happened. What did you do? What did you not do…" et cetera, et cetera. And I told him, you know, "I have no idea why- what happened there. Why did they- I didn't do anything. I did not do anything wrong." And so he took that… case… high up to the education- ministry of education, et cetera, et cetera. And I had to stand in front of a commission or some kind of jury, or whatever, and… and tell them what I had to say. What happened exactly. And the teacher had to apologise to me - in front of the class. And that I remember very distinctly because it was- it was quite an event. It was quite something.

And which year was that?

1938. It was really a very unpleasant experience. But that was the one and only of its kind that I had… in a way… to do with anti-Semitism, put it this way. I did not have- my father had some problems with changing jobs, et cetera, with banks. Because being Jewish it was not- he was, no matter what qualifications: "Jewish? No, finished." So he had problems. But they were overcome also, but there were some problems. And I remember sort of… my mother being very unhappy about it and so on.

But how did your parents identify? Did they feel Polish, or…? I mean you said they were Zionists so how did they…?

[0:27:11]

Well, yeah, you know, I imagine - yes. But, but at the same time my father, who was very adamant that I should speak very perfect Polish. As a child he had me on his knee and he was- you know he was teaching me, you know, the pronunciation of the letter 'R' and so on, that I should speak it very, very properly and very well. Which…which stayed with me, you know. And I write. And I never made mistakes at school. And that particular teacher, afterwards, liked me very much because I- my Polish was very, very good. Very good. In the sense of a child of that age you know, can do. But whatever I did was good from point of view…

Of the teacher…

Yes, that of the teacher. And my father taught me also those sayings, you know, to pronounce them. You know, Polish is not easy: Cz, cz, cz, cz – all that. And you have to say it very quickly and so on. So I learned that as a very, very young child. And that was good. I liked that. And so we liked the literature. We had Polish books at home and literature and so on. Which… I do until today. Yeah. I like that very much. My language. It's my language. No matter what, that is my language. And that is the music that I like. You know… It's all there. Can't take that away.

So how many years did you have in that school?

Two. …The third year was finished. It was the war.

So what happened… and how did things change for you?

My father put us on the 31st of August 1931- '39. Put us on a train. That was my mother, the two children. And when I say 'put us on a train' it wasn't like we would go into a train, sit down - no. The train was overflowing… with people hanging outside and so on- on the roof. Anywhere. He had to put my little brother through the window. It was so full. It was the last train from Krakow to Lwow. But… the war was in the air, you know. Nobody talked about anything else. Just the war, the war, the war, the war. We had to break up our holiday and everything because "the war is imminent". "The war". That's what I remember – "the war". But. Nobody expected it to be that close. That close. So people were going away. We were- as we were standing. Nothing. No suitcase. Nothing. Because my father said, "Right," - he stayed behind – "I shall send everything. I shall send everything tomorrow, day after, everything, so that you get all the things and I'm coming over in a few days' time." In a few days' time. By the time he got home… the papers, call-up papers were waiting for him, which we didn't know. He got home like now, the postman… and presented him with the papers. And he was called up to the military. And the war was at night of the following- the same night from the 31st to the- to the 1st. And we arrived in Lwow. It was- took about ten hours. At least ten hours. The train stopped in every village, everywhere, people, more people. They're hanging on, one was holding on to another. It was unbelievable, the sight. And usually my grandfather always would wait for us at the… station and take us home and so on. But there was no way of getting at - to the station because the military, the, the soldiers, were lying down on the platform, one next to another, almost like sardines you know -sleeping. So when we arrived… we didn't know how to get out, even off the train. There was no way of manoeuvring yourself over these soldiers. At five o'clock in the morning or thereabouts, the Germans bombed the city. And they bombed the station – these soldiers; it was horrible. So that stuck in my mind very much. Cause that's what I saw them then. They bombed it very early in the morning. And they bombed the station. They bombed the station.

But when you arrived…

[0:32:26]

We arrived at about ten in the evening. And got out. I don't know, it was very difficult to get out of the train I remember because there was no way of, of getting out- of, of-

Of walking…

…of walking. They were lying there and sleeping, poor things. And so there it- there it was. And…

You went to your grandparents.

To my grandparents. And there was bombing. And there was this and… within a few days I mean not- not immediately but you know towards the end of the month, the Russian forces- Soviet forces… occupied because there was a pact. [inaudible – probably Molotov-Ribbentrop pact]. And so between the Germans and the- and the Soviet Russians. And they divided Poland. Part of it- the eastern part was Russian, the western part was Polish- was German, sorry. And we were under the Russian side. And there we were. And… toward the end of the month - no - it was the beginning of the next month, of October, suddenly my father appeared. We didn't know what happened to him. Of course we didn't know where, now what- we were cut off. We were cut off. He had nothing to wear. We had nothing there, because we came as we were. My mother had a handbag and that's it. And the food that they brought from [inaudible].… that was all. And so you know suddenly this man appears… looking like a wild, wild creature with a beard. Long black beard. And… And, and eyes… we didn't know who it was. We didn't- we couldn't recognise- we didn't know who it was. Barefoot. When they disbanded the army and so on, he walked from where he was fighting. Walked to Lwow… and had to shed the uniform and so on.

[sound break]

…Lwow… and your grandparents- and your father arriving.

[0:34:55]

Yeah. Well, he was in a very bad state, very bad shape. It wasn't the same man we knew… who was sporty and good-looking and all that sort of thing – Oh, my God. Terrible. And not only that but he – like now – when the soldiers come back with the trauma. It was traumatic, absolutely. At night he was shouting, screaming in his dreams and in his sleep… and it really was very, very bad. And then his nerves worsened, and he developed sciatic nerve from it and so on. And he couldn't walk. He couldn't- he was almost paralysed, out of sheer nerves – nervous condition. And so he had to be in hospital- hospitalised. And they were- how were the treating these things then? That's amazing. I don't know about the medication, but- but they were treating the actual pain he had, and so on, with bags of hot sand. With hot sand. Imagine that. And of course don't forget it's the war. So there are no possibilities, no amenities, no anything. Hospital is full of soldiers. Dreadful. Pretty dreadful. And then when he got a bit better, he had to work, of course. Everybody had to work. It wasn't just, it wasn't just you know, sitting there. He had to work. And he could not say what he was by, by- by profession because that was not on either. Because the Russians did not like what they called 'the bourgeois', you know, these people…

Capitalists.

Capitalists, and so on. Not that we were capitalists, but, in their eyes, that's what it was! So, as I told you before, he couldn't do anything. He was very, very talented. So he said, "I am a cabinetmaker." "Oh, that's very good, so... well, we need cabinet makers." So he got a job as a cabinetmaker in some institution. A Russian institution. And as such, he worked. And that was fine, and they rather liked him, because they liked what he did. He was very good at whatever he did. He had very good hands. And, and so they- they appreciated him. And… more and more people- more and more men… were on their own there because they also like he, in the Army and things. And they went slowly, slowly to Lwow. Lwow was the sort of capital of the emigrés. Of those refugees, not emigrés, refugees.

Yeah.

[0:38:00]

They were all refugees. And they all came to Lwow. And quite a few of them were friends from before the war. From Krakow and so on. And we had- we couldn't stay with my

grandparents because by that time we were four. Additionally, they didn't have such a large apartment. So we had to- so they found, or they were, they were… I don't know, some kind of a flat, an apartment, in the centre of town and so on. That's where we lived. So these people started coming to us, because we were a family. They were just on their own. And on one such occasion… they came, they were very elated, elated, "It's a wonderful thing, we can go back! We can go back to the families…". The families stayed behind on the other side. They were with the Germans. And they corresponded. And- it didn't seem too bad. They were still in their flats. They were still there; it wasn't too bad. It was 1940. Not too bad. And they… were allowed to go back. "And how…" my father said, "What do you mean, you're allowed to go back? What do you mean? How?" "Well, there are…you know, posters all over town – all over town - that you can register. Anybody who came from the other side can register if they want to go back to their families. We – you know – we allow them to go." My father said, "Don't do that. Don't register." "What do you mean 'don't register'? We want to go back! We want to go back! They're all there, and they're doing quite well." And so on. "Don't register." He said, "It's a trick." Now, he fought in the war which was the Polish Bolshevik war in 1918, 1920. And he had… an absolute hatred for the Russians. For some reason or another, I don't know why, he did not trust [inaudible]. And he said, "Don't go. This is a trick. Don't register." They all registered. My father did not. And one nice night, the following morning, they were all gone. They were not there. All sent out - to Russia. They were all taken. All those people who registered to go back. We were the ones to stay behind because my father didn't register.

So they were sent further in… to Siberia…?

[0:34:55]

They were further in - to Siberia! To Siberia! To Kazakhstan, to Siberia. They were all taken away. Finished. Not to mention that when they first came some of the intelligentsia was all… shot. The doctors, the professors, all of them. Jewish and Polish. And Polish. They were all taken out and shot. With their families… But that was the sort of thing. Now…

But you stayed…

And we stayed. And the officers where my father worked for whom they- this organisation, this institution, this Russian institution… he said, "I'm going to give you a lorry. You take your family and anything you can take into a suitcase and go - go into Russia." My father said, "No thank you." He said, "I'm going to send a lorry for you. Don't stay behind. You don't want to stay when the Germans come. You don't want to be here." And he said, "I'm not going to Russia." And he didn't! Unfortunately. Unfortunately. And I don't know what it was that he had such a terribly deep-seated antagonism- something. Antagonistic something. Maybe something happened to him during that war. Maybe he saw things. I don't know. And I wish we would have been taken, all of us. Who knows? Because, those people who were taken away – even families, some families - they were writing letters from Russia to send them food, to send them parcels, to send them something to wear. And, my- my mother was doing all of that and they were sending parcels- and these people all survived! No matter how hard they worked, no matter what, what food they didn't have- they somehow survived. All right. Many did not. But on the whole, they survived. And we- that's how it was. And then the Germans came in and then you know what happened. Then you know what happened. And there you are. And everybody thought, "Ah! the Germans! Such a cultured nation." I mean, "What can be… we work. Sure, we work. Until the war is finished. The war will finish very soon." "The war will finish with the Poles?" "Ah! The Poles? The war will finish in a week." You know.

But as a child, what did you- as a child what did you actually do when you were in Lwow? In that period?

I went to school!

[0:43:47]

You did go to school?

Oh, yes, the Russians- yes, the Russians let us… school. I went to school. I was very happy. I had… nice friends at school. I didn't have far to walk to school; it was very close. I went to the conservatoire and to, to music. And I loved singing, so they were- in a choir. And they wanted me as a soloist even to go to, to Kiev. They were sending us to Kiev to… the whole choir. And we didn't manage, because the war broke out. The Russians and Germans. But

otherwise I would have been in Kiev and stuck there. With the other children- with the others... young people. That's what I did. That was perfectly fine.

So for you, under the Russians…

Under the Russians, it was- I mean, look, my father could not work. He couldn't be who he was.

Yes.

But he worked. He hated them. He hated the Russians. But they were very kind to him. They always put some chocolates or something, or… for the children, you know, and so on. Nothing terrible happened to us…

Yeah.

… personally, but it happened to other people, very badly.

Yes. So did you parents feel almost, not safe, but they thought they can stay…?

[0:45:12]

Well it was- we were the way we were. Hoping the war will finish. That's all. You know… We were refugees. We, we were not- we lived in very primitive …The, the flat that they had- the apartment - so-called 'apartment' - I mean... it was a room and a, a tiny kitchenette. And all the amenities were outside. The water was outside and, and everything else was outside. You know. We were refugees.

And you left everything behind in Krakow...

Everything was left behind in Krakow. We never saw it again. Never saw any of it. Empty walls. That's…That's how it was. We were not the only ones. But. Ninety percent of those people who were like we were, refugees, particularly the men on their own, and if there was a family, they were taken away cause they registered to go back. Because the Germans, I don't

know, in their- in their perfidious way… kept those people over there, on a certain level, there were no excesses, as such.

The Russians, you mean?

[0:46:27]

No, the Germans. The German- on the other side of the river, OK?

Right.

So people who stayed behind were still living in their own flats. And then, even if they were taken to the- there were no such excesses.

At that point…

They could work… The doctors worked, et cetera. So they said "It's perfectly fine to go back. Why should we stay here? Be on our own?" And that's the trick that they played on them, the Russians. Took them all away. But… we stayed behind and that was …that was a disaster, unfortunately. Not to have been for- not to- I mean, one thought the Germans were you know: "Such a cult- cultured nation. You know. What can be…?" "So we'll work. So we have to work or so, until the war finishes." Nobody in their wildest, wildest dreams, imaginations and… …

Yeah…

…could conceive that much of what happened.

Yeah…

So…

So even if it was expected that the Germans would come in and occupy…

"Yeah, yeah. All right, so OK, what can we do?" But the moment they came from this- to- immediately they were shooting and killing and, and we had the Ukrainians and we had the Estonians and we had the Latvians and the Lithuanians all in Lwow - to kill us. So it started immediately. Immediately.

What was the date please?

When they, they came in? Well, the war broke out on the 22nd of June 1941. And they came in on the 27th I think it was something like…

And where were you?

In Lwow! Where!
And what did you see on that day?

[0:48:25]

Nothing. We saw the soldiers coming in, marching. First – first of all there was a- cycl- a motorcyclist, you know, these things on motorcycles. First of all the city was no man's land… for about two days or so. Not here, not there. Empty city. And then they started coming and so and then they were marching through. That's what I saw. And that was the beginning of the whole disaster. Except, one could not have …ever in a million years imagined to what extent.

Yeah.

Nobody could have written it. There isn't such a script-writer. There isn't such a- nobody could… know.

So then you stopped going to school? What happened?

Well of course there was no school!

Everything just… yeah…

No school, no school. Certainly no school. No. Certainly not for Jews. We were immediately- the Jews were instantly. By that time they didn't have to, you know, by that time it was - it was on the other side - it was on this side. They, they didn't have to bother, you know, to, to- to pretend that all is well. They started the extermination right away. Right away. Shooting people in the streets, taking them away. Torturing- imprisons for reasons- all sorts.

And what happened to your family? What happened to your parents and your grandparents?

[0:50:08]

My grandparents were still there and then my mother… we were, we were, we were… Again, my father had to work. And again, he took ill. The same thing, again. And it was very, very difficult. So… but one had to work. Without it: "out, immediately". And… so he had to get better in order to be able to work as a carpenter again. Again, the same thing. And he worked as such. And again the same thing happened, that the people for whom he worked- he worked for *Sonderdienst* [special service]. And the officers would come, stand and look at his- at him working. And now and again they said, "You are not a carpenter. You're not a carpent- you're not a cabinetmaker." He said, "Well, I am. That's my- that's what I do!" "No." "Why do you say I'm not? I- I am." He said, "Because you're too good at it. You're not a normal ordinary carpenter." And so they appreciated his work very much. And again, one of the officers would put some chocolate into the pocket for the children. There some human bit of something- humanity in there. And… and there it was. He was working. And then one Friday- of course in the meantime all the… all the excesses. All the selections… horrendous. On two occasions they took all of us away. Four of us. My mother was always a very logical person and very calm… and thinking and logical. Logical. And she would say… to me, "You take- take the boy, and run." And I would say, "No, I'm not going [inaudible]. I'm not going. And I'm not leaving here when you are here. I'm not going." And so she started persuading and she said… "You have to do that. You've got to run and save yourselves, because when you do, then you can save us from outside. And if you don't, then we shall all perish here. You must run. You must run." And… so I did! And how we managed to get out, I don't know! Because, you know, there they were and this one to this side. That one to this side. Hundreds of people and I managed to escape with the boy. I don't know how. I don't know how. And true enough, I immediately started going here and there to people who I knew, who

can perhaps help- something- to get them out. And they did! On two occasions. They managed to get them out.

So what was it, the deportations?

[0:53:43]

Deportations!

From the deportations? Were you on a list?

For camps- for deportations, for killing…There was no list!

Or registration?

They would just come - they knew. They had, yes, they knew… [inaudible] They came, they took, the people were finished. And somehow or other we managed that. But in August of 1942 my father was working as I say for *Sonderdienst*. He had a paper and that was- he was covered, working for them. And then there was a rumour that they were going to take women away. Women. And children. Who would take children away? Children? What nonsense is that now? But the rumour spread and spread and so my father said to my mother that she and I must go to hiding, into hiding. And he would stay with the boy because he's covered by work. By his paper. And he can take the boy to work with him. And my mother of course, "No, we're not going." But then eventually, he persuaded that really it does look like this may be indeed women now and so "you must go." So we found- my mother had some friends who had a shop in the next block- in the next house. And they were Jewish. They were some millionaires. And they were going to hide themselves in the shop. Imagine, those hiding places. Unbelievable when you think of it today, but... And so she asked could she stay there with me. Oh, no, no, no, no. "No child, No child." She said, "Look, I promise you this: She will not – I promise you this- she will not say anything. She will be quiet. Please take both of us I cannot leave her behind. I can't." So eventually they said yes. So there we went. And they drew the… the shutters, and that was a hiding place. And there we were, and they had an arrangement with my father, my mother and he, that every time he finishes work… at six o'clock he will on the other side of the street be passing by that house with the- with the boy.

So she can see them, that they're all right. That's how it was. Every day she would be at the keyhole and… they would pass by. But on one day they didn't. So there she was waiting. Nothing happened. And then… like sent from I don't know. Like… purposely sent. Two women come and stand in front of the shutters. And one says to the other, "From my house- from our house, they took - two." "Oh really? Who did they take?" "You know, they took that Mr. Stern with this lovely boy of his." And we were standing and hearing it. And the other woman said, "Who did you say? Who did you say they took?" Cause she couldn't believe it. They were two care- caretakers. One was from this house where we were and the other one was from the house where we lived. So she repeated. So, the women who- whose shop it was, one of the women fainted. The other one screamed out. And we, my mother and I… we were like…like. I, I can't tell you… pillars of- pillars of salt. Like… Not a tear. Not a word, nothing. We were just… stones. And there it was. My mother said, "I have to go out and look for them." And they said, "No, we can't let you out because you can't, you can't." She said, "All right. I'll wait till it's dark." It was August, it took some time. "I'll wait, but when it's dark, I'll go." And she did. And she went to that officer, that German officer… where my father worked. And she told him. And he got into such a fury, he said, "What? With my papers? With my papers? How did they dare to take them?"

[0:59:08]

She said, "Yeah, they took apparently, the Gestapo came." What happened was, we had a Ukrainian policeman who was our caretaker. When the Soviets- when the Russians were there, he was a Ukrainian militiaman for the- for them. When the Germans came, he was a Ukrainian policeman for them. And he rather fancied my father's watch - always. He came in and said, "I like this watch- I love this watch of yours." And on a number of occasions my mother would say, "Give him that watch. Give it to him." And he said, "No. Why would I give him that watch? Why? It's a present from you." That was the present for my father's birthday in 1939. I remember that, because it was a very special watch. It was a black- not like- today it's a normal thing. But then it had a black face and it lit up at night. It was a Tissot, it was a Swiss wa- very unusual watch. And he liked that watch. And he wouldn't give it to him. Then he would come and say, "You know your radio is so good. It plays…" My father played- made- did something and the radio had a green thing. And it played very well. "Oh, this radio is- I like this radio." Will I give him that? No. So he brought the Gestapo and when my mother next saw him… he wore my father's watch, and the radio was playing

loudly in his… thing. And she had the courage to even go in there, you know, to ask what happened. To ask what happened, can you believe it? And he was standing, dressed in my father's shirt, and my father's trousers with his back to the door and was dark haired. My mother thought it was my father, from afar, standing with the watch, every- everything. Top to bottom. And that's how they- that's how… their lives went. And he, this German officer was going with her all over looking for them. As if the earth opened. Nowhere to be found. They were nowhere to be found! So, until today, we tried through the Red Cross. We tried through everyone. We don't know whether… they were taken to Belzec [Poland] because that particular selection, everybody - Belzec. So the trains were going all the time to Belz... Whether they were taken to Belzec… or whether they were shot somewhere- either way. Apparently, apparently… people said, neighbours said that the Gestapo who was standing on the courtyard there, wanted to take the boy away. Wanted the boy to, to, to run, to go. But he didn't want to leave my father. He didn't want to. So he stayed with him. He was six years of age.

And till to day you have no- no records, nothing?

[1:02:37]

No 100% records. Ninety-nine percent that they went to Belzec. Ninety-nine, because that's where they were transporting. But… they didn't find them anywhere. They were going, he was going- took my mother into the car and was going with her. Didn't find them anywhere. We don't know what happened. It's just one of those… absolute enigma.

And did you try after the war to find them?

Of course!

You did everything, yeah…

Yes, absolutely! That's what I'm saying. Everything! Through the Red Cross, through this… Asking people… No. …Not a sign, not a- not a- nothing.

So your mother went out of hiding. You stayed in the- in the hiding place or…what happened?

No. Both of us went out into the ghetto. Because by that time, my grandparents were in the ghetto. So this- the flat was stamped. We couldn't get into it anymore. They put a stamp on it and so on... And we went into the ghetto. That's when we went to the ghetto. And stayed in the ghetto with my grandparents. …Three families, almost - in two rooms. I needn't tell you what that was like. And there we were. My mother was working.

[sound break]

My mother was working of course because it was compulsory. She worked for a German civilian institution. Nothing to do with the Army, nothing to do with anything. It was a civilian instit... It was like civil servants, they were. And they were requisitioning apartments and flats for the German… district of the town. Particularly for the SS and Police district, they were requisitioning and…and, you know… putting their people into those - obviously Jewish - flats. And that's who she worked for. That institution. It was called *Wohnungsamt* [housing department]. And I was with my grandparents and she was going out with a group every morning and coming back with that group back into the ghetto.

Yeah. Forced labour.

[1:05:24]

Forced labour. Absolutely.

Yeah.

Slave labour. And… and I was with my grandparents. And… you know, there was nothing to eat. There was nothing. There were also horrendous things happening in the ghetto. One was a witness to all sorts of horrors. And you know… My grandmother managed to scrounge somewhere, I don't know, some…some frozen potatoes or something to make something out of it. She, she- she was an artist what she did out of god-knows-what, so that we had something that was palatable in any way, to eat. And…And that's how it was until the 18th of

November 1942. On the 18th of November- no, I start a few days before. My mother was coming back every day from work, with the group. But she came one- one evening and she said, "You know," to my grandmother, she said, "These people- there are these three sisters and they are begging me and begging me and begging me to make something for them. They said only I - nobody else can do that for them. And I keep telling them that it is very, very dangerous. I must not stay in town and it's dangerous for them and for me. But, 'no, no. Nothing. Nobody will know. It's just one evening, one night and that's all you need.' So I promised them, all right, I will stay, say day after tomorrow something- or tomorrow. Or tomorrow. And my mother said- or my grandmother said, "Oh, such a pity, such a pity because I just managed to get something which I wanted to make, because you like it, to eat. And I managed to get it and if you're not here tomorrow then- then it will go. It won't last. Such a great pity. Can't you go another day? So she said, "All right." She never wanted to upset her parents, never, you know. So she said, "All, right, I'll tell them. I'll go the day after tomorrow." That was done. So the day after tomorrow was the 18th of November, and she said, "All right, that's when I'm staying so don't worry if I'm not coming back. I am staying for the night and I'll come back the following day." OK.

[1:08:13]

But towards the evening… some- gossip, some rumours started spreading in the ghetto. And more and more so. And everybody coming in, distraught and so on. And so, "What happened?" That they're going to be closing up all the entrances and exits from the ghetto. And only those who work for the Army and those who work for the …high industry- for war industry, only those can go in and out. Anybody else taken away into extermination camp. That is to say, to Belzec. That was the rumour. And it was going on more and strongly, more and more and more and seemed like… that is so. And here's my mother who is on the other side. And she's not working for either of those. …So of course my grandparents desperate and so on and so on. And that they're going to be looking, taking selection and so forth. So we're all going down to the cellar. We all- the whole house going into the cellar - hiding. As if they wouldn't know who is in the cellar. I mean, people had such… you know, we were really the innocents there. Totally. And they took and they took me and everybody down, floorboards, into the cellar. There was a- there was a ladder came down. There we were. It was November, it was cold. Freezing. I was in my pyjamas and just a little sweater like that and slippers. And I was thinking, "Right. I have to escape because I can't have my mother

come back. I've got to go and prevent her from going back. But. I cannot say anything to my grandparents, because they won't let me. So I'll have to wait until everybody is fast asleep… and I have to see- try to get myself up so nobody can hear me, see me, and try to escape from the ghetto."

[1:10:53]

Now. There wasn't such a simple thing as one thought. But I definitely decided that I would do that. And I waited and waited. My grandfather [inaudible] and so on, pretended I was sleeping. I don't know. But I wasn't, and- and everybody was asleep and snoring away. And I decided I'm getting out of this bunk there or whatever, and I'm going up the ladder. And it shouldn't squeak. It shouldn't wake anyone, you know. And put the floorboards up. It was really quite an enterprise. But I managed. I managed. I did it; got myself out, put the floorboards back. And was in an eerie, eerie, eerie place. Not a sound anywhere, dark, black, the moon - full. The snow, virgin. Must have been snowing till about an hour before or so. Lying quite high. A scene like *Alt Kitsch*. You paint a Kitsch; that was the scene. And eerie, not a sound. I start walking and you I remember what I'm wearing. I'm wearing my pyjama, a little cardigan and my slippers. And I'm walking in this snow and the snow is up to here. And we lived, like this is the flat, the, the house - opposite was an embankment. I had to go up. And there was the rail. And on the other side… was the other side of the ghetto. In other words, the Aryan side of the ghetto. So I would have to go up the embankment and get to the other side. And not to be seen and not to be heard. OK. So I do that. I manage. I get on to the, to the top. It's freezing of course but no matter. And as I was high up on the rail track, suddenly dogs begin to bark terribly. And shoots- shots all around me. All around me. And I fell down. And I'm lying down with my face and everything in the snow.

[1:13:27]

And I think, "Any moment they'll come and kill me now, because the shots didn't do anything to me. No. I wasn't wounded or anything. I just fell down. And after a little while the shots stopped, and the dogs stopped barking. And I'm lying there, and I don't know what to do. I don't want to go back, because I need to go and prevent my mother going- coming back to the ghetto. So, after a while, I detach myself- I'm beginning to get frozen into, into the ground- into the... Detach myself, started rolling down like a snowball because everything- all the snow was around... like a snowball and down to the other side. And

nobody, nobody was shooting, and the dogs weren't barking. And so I thought they probably think I'm dead. They left me there and I'm finished. And I walked. And I started walking. And that street is the longest street in - not just long, right? It is the longest street, it's miles long, in Lwow. The longest street in Lwow. And… what is worse, that it has no side-streets. In other words, once you are on that street, you can go this way or that way. There is no way of going sideways. Nowhere. Nowhere. You have to walk. I'm walking the street - walking, walking. And on both sides of the street were barracks, which before the war were not barracks. They were some - I don't know – schools or something, but now soldiers were there in some kind of barracks - on both sides of the street about half-way through. And I knew it. I knew that there were soldiers standing up on one side, there were soldiers standing up on the other. I had no escape. I either had to go back - that was it - or continue. And I continued. And I thought- "Whatever happens. If they shoot me, they shoot me. What can I do? What can I do?" I walked. And I come to a soldier standing guard. He doesn't see me. I walk past. The other one on the other side. Now I passed him. Now he's going to shoot me from the back. I was convinced that he is going- one or the other is going to shoot me from the back. But they didn't! Nothing! They didn't see me. Isn't that amazing?

Amazing…

I wrote about it. Because you see, the thing is that there are Schindlers of whom one writes. There are those of whom one writes. One knows they did a lot of wonderful, marvellous things for which they deserve everything. But these were people I can't even say, "Thank you for not shooting me." They're just sort of like unsung heroes to me.

You don't know who they were?

[1:16:34]

No idea. They were standing guard… on both sides, and they didn't do a thing. And there is a child, walking, must have been two o'clock in the morning, three o'clock. I don't know what time it was. Deep night. Walking obviously from the ghetto because there was nothing else there but - after I passed this embankment. So… you know- but they didn't do a thing! So I walked. And I walked and I walked until I came to the… end station for some trams. And put myself into a tram which was going not far from where my mother was, at the nearest

possible tram. And they were standing… empty, waiting for the morning. I put myself in a corner in the tram and there I was. And then - I don't know how long it took - first workmen started coming in. You know, the sort of Poles – non- Jews – started coming in to the tram. So… some looked at me-

[sound break incl. bit of conversation: '…by not killing me, you know?']

[1:17:54]

So where were we?

We were in…

I was walking. Yes. I'm in the tram. And I'm in the tram and these workmen are coming. All these workmen: one after another, after another, after another. Some looked this way, some don't, so I sit there in the corner and that's it and the tram gets completely full to the brim. And by this time, many people have seen me. And comes the conductor. The conductor who worked before and- and he sees me, and I say now what? I don't know… what they're going to do with me. I have no idea. …The tram started. Nobody did a thing. Nobody said a word to me. They all looked away. They didn't ask me, "Maybe you need something?" I needn't have been a Jewish child. Maybe I could have been a not Jewish child there. Who knows? Who knows what these people were thinking? I know one thing that… that nobody did anything to me. They didn't. Not the conductor. They looked away. They all looked away… And I got off the nearest possible place to where my mother was. And it was very early with curfew, until seven o'clock. And what could I do? I had to walk… and pray to God that some guardsman or someone doesn't see me there… until I get to my mother. I come to where she was, and the main door is still closed, because they didn't open it until seven o'clock. So I had to wait somewhere - God knows where, I forget now - until they opened, until the caretaker opened. And then I came up. And I ring the bell and they thought it was the Gestapo, because you know, bec- you know, who rings the bell at seven o'clock in the morning, you know? Well they were all frightened, thinking that they would put my mother somewhere away, God knows where. And they had three Italian officers, billeted there, in that beautiful apartment of theirs... These Italian officers were billeted there. And my mother said, "Listen, you can't have me, I mean you have these officers. How can I believe…?" And

they said, “Oh! Italians! You’ve no idea. They couldn’t care less. They sing, they sing- what soldiers? They’re not soldiers!” You know. “They come, they bring us food, they…” you know, so. These Italian soldiers - and the bell rings. They jump up. Everybody jumps up. Here stands a child. So you can imagine. [laughs] It really was- when I think of it, when I tell you this aloud because… it seems impossible you know, doesn’t it? It seems impossible. No, it’s unbelievable. People always: “Oh, you have to have a film.” Nobody would believe it. Nobody would believe it!

What did your mother say, when she saw you?

[1:21:03]

Well, you know, what she said- she stood there, and she couldn’t believe what she saw! And what I must have looked like, you know. Don’t forget what I was wearing. Don’t forget it was in the middle of Polish winter. I was frozen… you know. And nothing happened to me! No flu… no cold… no anything. Yes? My migraine headaches were gone. Amazing, isn’t it? Nothing happened! I wasn’t ill. I think they gave me things, they warmed me up. And now it was a question, what to do? Because we couldn’t go back to the ghetto. Where are we going to go? Now she wasn’t on her own, now we were two. And so, I came to protect her and prevent her from going back. And now she had me… to cope with. So, if you want to stop here? We may or we may continue. What would you like to do?

I think let’s stop here.

[1:22:10]

Yes, you escaped from the ghetto. You were with your mother.

Yeah.

What happened next?

Well my mother decided we have to go to work and she had to go to work. She had to take me with her. It wasn’t easy to just walk the streets. It wasn’t just going to work normally.

Because normally she would have had to come with a group – her group. But… she wasn't there, she was here, and she had me. And I was dressed accordingly; there was nothing else around. However, all right. We weren't too far from where she was working and then still we managed to get there. And now question is, she had to think what to do. And there was no- no way out, as such. No way out. It was- we had to either- we had to either go into the street… or going back to the ghetto. Go back to the ghetto: that was it. We would have [been] taken away and sent to Belzec. That's what they were going…

And- sorry to interrupt you. At that point, did you or the adults, did they know what that meant? Belzec? Did they know?

Of course we knew.

Everyone, at that point?

[1:23:35]

Yes. What Belzec meant, yes. It wasn't a concentration camp, it was an extermination camp. We knew. Belzec was Belzec- Treblinka, Belzec - that was it. Not that anybody came back to tell us… but… So, there was my mother sitting working. She was sewing, she was doing that. And at one point… a very tall young woman walks in and stands there. And I was sitting in the corner there somewhere. Must have looked like I don't know, a cat brings better things in possibly what I looked like. I don't know why. And she in German pointed and said, "What is that?" Not "Who", but "What is that?" At me. And my mother said, "This is my daughter." And she said, "What do you mean this is your daughter? You- you said you, you had a child and the child is dead." Like this. Normal. In German of course. Cause she was a German. My mother said, "Yes, my child… perished with my husband, but this is my other child. My daughter." "Oh, hm." And she went out. I don't know- after another while she came back. And just looked at me and my mother said, "You know, I shall need to have a fitting with you." She was working for her, mostly, because my mother as I said, my mother- what she did was very beautiful. She was an artist in her way - in her, in her profession. And… And what she did, everybody loved. The women loved it. Not only women, the husbands came to thank my mother also. And so she said, "All right." So my mother said, "All right. Let's go to another room and we'll have a fitting." And she went with her. And then my mother- just

imagine that now. The courage of a person, a Jewish person, slave labour. She says to her who said, "What is this?" She said to her, "Frau Wieth," - that was her name – "We are in a very desperate situation here. If I go back to the ghetto with this child, we should be taken away. Will you please take us for the duration of this selection, and I promise the moment it's over, we'll go back to the ghetto." And she just stood- she was very, very tall, she was about six foot. She was a most unusual… height for a woman. Unusual. And she said, "Oh, what are you saying to me? Do you realise what you are saying to me?... Don't utter another word. Do what you have to do- and finished." Like that. So that was it. My mother did the fitting. She went her way, my mother went her way. After about an hour she came back again. And she looked at me. Just looked at me. Didn't say anything. And my mother said, "Oh, I'm glad you are here because I really need another fitting. I must do another fitting." "Oh yes?" She was very glad at that. So they went to the room. And my mother said again, she said to her, "Look I know it's terrible what I'm asking you. I know what it means. You don't need to tell me. But I don't want this child to die. And if I go back on my own, doesn't matter. But I don't want this child to die." It went three times. On the third… time when she went with my mother for a fitting, she already knew why she is- she was going. And she said, "Right. …I should be leaving here at five o'clock. As you know. You and- what is this child's name?" "Lili." "Right. You and your Lili will walk behind me, some distance - some distance - and I shall be leaving with the deputy – with the deputy- deputy Mayor…" - because that's what it was, and she worked for him – "…and his secretary, Frau Wenninger and myself. Part of the way we shall part our ways. They go this way and I go this way. Then you will follow. You just follow me, at a distance." …And that's how it was. We had to hide… from everybody… so that everybody who- "Are you coming?" "Are you coming back?" – terrible thing. "Yes, yes, we are coming in a minute." And… we followed her. And by that time, it was dark… because it was November. It was quite dark, and we followed her, and we went. And where did we go? We went to the- not only the German district, but we went to the German SS and police district. That's where she lived. And… she entered the house. And we had to go after her and so we didn't know exactly which floor. And then she waited on the, the fourth floor. We had to walk nobody should see us. All these sort of things which you see in the cinema and you sit like this, because you think at any moment somebody will come out or go in or... She took us in. And she took us in. And we entered… a home. A… normal, normal apartment. Beautiful, warm. November, where we were in the ghetto shivering - warm, clean, light. Unbelievable. And there we were.

[1:30:31]

And there we were. I didn't understand or speak a word of German at the time. My mother did. Very- she was very fluent in German. And so there we were. And she started- she had to share her… rations. Because we had nothing to eat. She was going to work and come back at six o'clock or so in the evening. And we had to sit and not *move*… the whole day long. Not- no toilet, nothing. Sit there, because… this was the house which was completely requisitioned for high SS Gestapo. That's all. Plus… one family which was the- who was the head of the Ukrainian police. And he was immediately underneath us. Immediately. So we mustn't move because everybody knew that [sound interruption]

[1:31:34]

Now the poor woman didn't know what she was going to find when she gets back. Whether we are dead or alive and whether she is dead or alive. It was truly very terrible. And my mother told her, "Look. You have to- I know you have no means of communication. But you have to try and listen and see when this selection is over. Because as I told you, the moment it's over we shall go- we shall leave here." So she did and one day she comes and says, "Right. It looks like it's over." All right. "But…only- you have to have a…a patch. A patch of 'W' or 'R'." …which was *Wehrmacht*, which was military, or 'R' which was the wartime industry. Heavy industry - *Robotovye fasad*. If you don't have that, you- you can't go because this is it, you're not needed. *Schmerz* [pain] - so - finished. So my mother said, "Well, I haven't got… …I haven't got one. I haven't got that. What can I do? Can you try to get one for me?" Something like that. And she said, "Where am I going to get it? Where am I going to get it?" [inaudible] in German, where is she going to get it? So my mother said, "Well, I- I know you told me that you still have a Jewish doctor." She believed in Jewish doctors. "You have a Jewish doctor and you still go to him. Maybe you can ask him to provide you with one… and I shall try to pay you. I don't have this money here, but I will try to-to reimburse you." "Oh, how am I going to…?" "I don't know, but otherwise I can't…" So she goes to her doctor. The doctor when he hears that, thinks she is mad because, "What is she asking me?" So she tells him. "I have with me a- a Jewish lady with a- with her little girl. And they want to go back to ghetto, the ghetto. And she can't get in without it. Can you get me one? We pay for it…" - and so on. So he said, "All right, all right, I'll get you one." And he got one- got my mother an 'R'. When she came to collect it, he said to her, "Right, here it is. But let me

ask you. I have a niece who is eighteen years of age. If you would take her in, to hide her, I will pay you…" - and he man- made some you know, some suggestion of some enormous sum of money in these days, of course, in dollars. In dollars, plus food. She came home and she was in a state of nerves something awful. Terrible. Red in her face… Brings the thing, gives it to my mother. "This is terrible." My mother says, "What happened? Tell me what happened." Because she communicated and she liked my mother, you know, they talked and they talked in German, no problem. And she said, "How dare he? How dare he?" "What did he do? He provided you with this and did you pay him?" "Yes, I paid!" "So what did…?" So she tells her what he wanted. "How did he dare to suggest like this?" And my mother who was very logical as I told you and very calm always and so on, said, "Look, you tell her you have a Jewish lady, you have a little- her daughter, a child there. So he tried- maybe you will take his niece. Nothing terrible because he wants to save his niece. He has no children. …So it's not that terrible." "What do you mean it's not terrible? I have you here and Lili here. It's not for money. And he suggests money to me? How dare he do that?" So she said, "No. Because…" she said, "Look…" Afterward they discussed it and so on. So she- mother said, "Look, I mean, she would pay you. You would have to have food for her. You would have to somehow sustain yourself and her." "No, no, no, no, no. If the Gestapo would get me, then if I'm going to die, then I don't want to die for money. But I have you here, I don't mind but you…" Like this. From this thing: "What is that?", to this. And then she says the following. My mother says, "Right, in this case, thank you very much indeed. I'll refund you the whatever- however I can. And we shall go. Tomorrow when it's dark we leave here." So she said, "Frau Stern… you can stay here. Both of you." And my mother said, "No, no, no, I can't. I'm going to the ghetto. I have my parents. I don't know if they're dead or alive. I need to go and if they're alive I find them and look after them. I cannot thank you- thank you very much but we are going back." She said, "Listen, you are a grown-up person. You can do what you like. You can stay, but if you don't want to or if can't…you go. But I'm not going to give you Lili." …And I didn't speak German then. So my mother said, "What do you mean? How can you not…? What are you going to do with her here?" "I am not going to allow you to take Lili. She stays with me, and…" "But why…?" You see now this is the thing that nobody can translate that into English. But can you speak German?

Yes.

[1:38:04]

Right. So I will tell you that in German and if you can- possibly nobody could. Not even-

Go on…

Not even Killinger for, for, for *Die Welt* [German newspaper] could translate that.

OK. Let's hear it…

Here she said, " *Frau Stern, Sie sind eine erwachsene Person, tun Sie, was Sie wollen. Sie können da bleiben, Sie können bleiben, Sie können gehen. But/Aber die Lili, die gebe ich Ihnen nicht. Wieso geben Sie mir nicht die Lili, was tun Sie mit ihr? Die Lili, die ist mir viel zu schade für die Gestapo*." Now you try to translate it.

[Bea laughs]

Try! It's impossible. *Sie ist mir für die Gestapo viel zu schade.*

You are right.

I will not… You can't translate it…

No.

You can't! You can translate it into Polish and into some other language, but you can't translate the exact meaning of it. What she meant to say was that, "I don't want to let Lili to fall into the hands of the Gestapo, so I'm not going to give you Lili. But. She is- she is too precious for the Gestapo."

Yeah…

Would be possibly the nearest, the nearest thing.

Yes… yes.

"And so," she said, "I want you to know, that if you are going to die or something-" - she was very direct, like this - "If they catch you and you are going to die, don't worry about Lili. I shall adopt her." So my mother said, "Right. I leave you Lili. And I will go back. And I will be coming back, hopefully, every Saturday night evening and stay here over Sunday to do something for you, to be with Lili, to do something for you, whatever you need. And I'll go back on Sunday night, in the curfew." Through the entire town from there… to… there. Through the town, in the curfew to get back with some group coming back from work into the ghetto. That's how it was! And I stayed with her. And I didn't want to stay. Of course, I wanted to go with my mother. But again, my mother persuaded me in her way. And she said, "Look, You're the chance that we may survive this way. I, I need to go back, and all that, but…" and so-and -so. And I stayed. And I was very, very unhappy not only because… I didn't have my mother with me or anybody. Not only, but, but because I felt terribly guilty… being in these surroundings. Because I was in the warmth, in the clean, she shared her rations with me. I had what to eat. I could wash. I had warm water. I could bathe. I mean all these things that people forgot what it's like in that ghetto and so on. Where we lived, what was the horror of the… Here I was in such there sheer luxury. I felt very, very bad. And I told her, "I want to go back to the ghetto. I don't want to- I thank you, but I don't want…" I started speaking German because I had to. I had no- no one else. I had to talk when she came. By the time after, after a few weeks I was as fluent as she was. So we spoke German, so we were discussing. And… And I said, "I really absolutely need to go to the ghetto." When my mother was coming, poor thing, I was standing by the door waiting. Is she coming? Is she alive? Is she dead? I didn't know! The whole week long- what is happening to her. Did she manage to get back? Did she- was she caught on the way? I- I knew nothing. So it was really, you know, from one point of view it was marvellous, and the other point of view it was terrible.

[1:42:04]

So there I was and then she was afraid that I may run away. So she was locking the door. She was- I said, "Please don't lock the door. It's not a good thing. I feel bad when the door is locked. I promise you I will not run away." So she started looking in town… for somebody to take into hiding, to give me company… so I should not be alone. And she went to this doctor and the doctor said, "Yes, but…" She said, "No, no, no - that's not on. I'm not taking money. And that's absolutely not on. And I can't have that. No." So she went. She had still a Jewish

pharmacist. The pharmacy was- hm, I don't know], but the man was still the head of the pharmacy. And she went to him once… and twice. And he thought - everybody thought – either she is mad or it's some kind of a trick! Because who would imagine a German, such an ooh, you know in high boots and so on, coming in asking for some Jewish person to take into hiding? I mean, who would believe that? So… she went once, she went twice. And then eventually he said, "OK, ok, ok, all right. I have my wife here. She is under the floorboards. Can you take her? Do you want to take her?" She said, "Yes! Bring her up. Bring her up! I take her with me." So he brought her- he brought the wife up. And one day she comes and brings this nice lady with her. And says, "Here you are Lili! You won't be alone anymore. You don't need to be worried. You'll have a nice companion. You have a nice lady." And her name was Anna. "She will be here with you." So she had two of us. Within one week, not even, without asking or anything, the husband decided that this is a very good place. Such a wonderful place. So he was- he came. He came, was on the door. So there he was. So she had three. She said, "How- how come do you…?" He said, "Well, you know, my wife is here and so on. So I should pay." I said- I told him, "Don't say the word 'pay'. Don't say the word 'pay'. She doesn't like that." "Well then I have to leave." "Don't say anything. Don't." I tell them what to do, what not to do. You know… And she had three of us! And there we were the three of us and somehow or I don't know... At the end of May, they were burning the ghetto. May '43. And my mother was coming every Saturday evening. In the meantime, her father was taken out of a group and shot dead on the spot for no reason. Of course, it was like that.

In the ghetto?

[1:45:01]

In the ghetto. So there she was with her mother. So she could not stay because she had to look after that mother of hers. She wouldn't go. So she was coming on Saturday evenings. Staying the night. Through the Sunday, she was doing all sorts of things for her, which she loved, loved. And be with me. And on Sunday late evening, late evening she would leave and go back to the ghetto and for a whole week I didn't know whether she was alive. Right? Nothing. So, I sometimes- there was a balcony, and it was a covered balcony not an open one. It was, you know… So I was lying, and the balcony was covered, and there was that much of space… one could- lying down on the thing, I could see what was going on down

below. So I decided, while I was on my own still, that I was writing on pieces of paper and the groups were going to work to and fro. I threw this- this paper down and if anybody would get it. And somebody picked up once, twice. And I wrote on it, "Please will you please see that such and such person is alive? I just want to know. It's my mother." They didn't know where it came from. And I said, "If she's alive, when you're passing by, make a signal of some sort." I forget what it was. This way, that- I don't know. And did not make… That's how it was for a little while. I was throwing things and sometimes they did, sometimes they didn't, sometimes they got the things. Sometimes. But then we were three of us so by that time you know, my mother was coming. I was still doing that. And then when the ghetto was burning, and I saw- we saw that the sky was red. We didn't know why. It was sort of- it was end of May. Red scarlet sky. The ghetto was burning. So my grandmother- that's the worst part for, for me to tell you I think. My grandmother who was with her… they lived somewhere… I don't know because I didn't see the place, but it was somewhere on a third floor. And they were- they were in the flat together and my mother turned away, something - and she threw herself down. Committed suicide. A terrible thing. So my mother went down. She was still alive. She was still alive. My mother got an ambulance for her. I don't know how, because the ghetto was burning. With a doctor. And she asked the doctor to take her out of her misery. To take her out of her misery to… to make it easier for her. Imagine jumping from the third floor and living… And… and she took herself off to her room with the ambulance and my grandmother still said to her, "You go. You go. Go." And so when she was not alive anymore she went out of the ghetto, took her armband off and walked on a white day, through the town, to come… And she came up. It was totally- the time was completely- we didn't know who was at the door. And… and then we were four.

[1:48:57]

And she had four of us… until the end… of her stay in Lwow. But…There were all sorts of things in between which are difficult to get into, because it would take forever. But on one occasion she was- when I was on my own still with her. And when the Russian front was nearing sort of, nearing… Then the civil servants were being evacuated to Germany. And… she was informed that she might - might have to leave and so on. "What am I going to do with you?", she said, "What am I going to do with you?" I said, "Nothing! I will go to the ghetto. You don't do anything with me." "No, no, no, no, no. You can't go to the ghetto. No, no, no. I have to think. I have to think what to do then." She thought out something which

was amazing. She said, “I’m going to cut your hair.” I had such braids – you know. “I’m going to cut your hair, short. I’m going to buy a lederhosen outfit. And I’m going to take you with me as my son, to Germany.” “How are you going to do that?” I have the papers; I have the right papers. It transpired that somehow or other, she had a child at some- at some point of which we never talked, not then, not afterwards and not ever afterwards. Never. She must have been divorced. We don't know exactly. And she had the birth certificate of the boy. And she said, “I take you. You are my son.” But luckily we didn’t need to do that exactly. We were- she bought me all of this… but we managed somehow or other not necessarily we went, but it wasn’t all that terrible. Because she had to come back. And she was back, and I was still the only one with her at that time. And she was back because the fronts didn’t reach as far. They went back. The Russians went back so then the civil servants who came back.

Was she a civil servant?

[1:51:31]

Yes, she was a civil servant.

So what was her name please?

Frau Wieth.

Wieth?

Irmgard Wieth, yes.

How do you spell that?

W… W E I T H. And… You know there were all sorts of… very awkward situations and so forth. Anyway, there we were, four of us, to cut a longer story. And… we did what we- well we couldn't move, we couldn't do this, we were- we had to eat something. The man had some Ukrainian who was coming delivering food for money, and so on, which she didn’t know about because she would have killed him or us. Or I don’t know. It was simply not- you know, and when you think we were on the fourth floor. There was a lift. It was a new block

of flats just before the war. And there was a lift in it. Imagine that somebody- we- I couldn't go in that lift -don't know- because if somebody walked in, "Who are you?" It wasn't like now, you can go and you- nobody knows anybody; it doesn't matter. But in those days, "Who are you?" And this is a house full of these officers - high German officers - and their families. So they all knew each other. "Who are you?" So we couldn't use the lift. Started walking. Walking, somebody could have come out. There were two flats on each floor. To get up to the fourth floor. To get down… You know, when you say so, "Oh, we were on the fourth, he was delivering food." It was an - an incredible thing.

So what were you doing during the day, most of the…?

Nothing! Not moving! We couldn't move because…for the floor not to- we couldn't flush the water… we couldn't- we couldn't tap the water, nothing. So that downstairs- this was because, she was a one person - and at work.

So how did you keep yourself busy? Did you read?

Don't ask me!

Did you read, for example?

Yeah. I- when I was there on my own, that's how I taught myself to speak the language. Because I was sit- lying there on the couch and didn't know what to do with myself.

[Bell rings- sound break]

Yes, you were reading in German…

[1:53:51]

So I decided there was library… of books! They were German books. A lot of German books. And Polish books, alright. But the German books, I thought, "Let me look at the German books." They were all in Gothic. Gothic German. But alright! They were illustrated, they were this- so I took the books to look at them at the... And then I slowly, slowly pictures- the

picture of Napoleon. So I thought, "OK, that's Napoleon." I knew who he was more or less, so I'll have a look. Where- what does it say? 'Napoleon'. So I- I started learning that way and I taught myself, really, to read and to write this way. And after a while, it was easy for me. I read and wrote and I still remember some of the titles of the books that I read.

Go on, what did you read?

Herzelina, Reiter in Grand Armee [Herzelina, horsewoman in the Grand Armee]. For instance.

Say it again?

Herzelina, Reiter in der Grand Armee. I don't remember who wrote it, but that was the title of the book. And… you know, I- I, I lie, lay there, and I tried to figure out what is what, what is who and that's how I learnt!

OK. And when there were the four of you, what…?

The four of us - nothing. We just had to whisper. We forgot. Our voices went or something, probably. Mother's certainly went after a while. And after a while even I, that was a very dangerous thing, because I didn't speak, I whispered. So somebody asked me, "Why do you whisper?" So then it occurred to me that I shouldn't be whispering. Why am I whispering? I- I- you know. I said, "I don't know. I have a sore throat." I don't know what I said, but you know, you did things which automatically you shouldn't have done. And so that's how it was until she got home. When she got home we couldn't do very much either, but, at least she could walk up and down. So it was- we could go to the toilet. We could- you know. Not too much, but nobody would have… made anything. Maybe she had somebody with her. Nobody would have thought anything of it. When she's not there, it could have been suspicious. Very suspicious. Even inadvertently, somebody might have thought, "Who is- who is there? She's at work." It's a secret? You know.

But you were not in hiding. You were in the flat.

In the flat?

Yes, you didn't have to…

All of us,

Yes, but you didn't…

…in the flat.

… you were not in a cupboard or anything.

[1:56:21]

I was in a cupboard at some points- some- sometimes, yes. I was in a cupboard. And, and… We were in a cupboard, at a later stage. We were. But as such, to begin with, no. It wasn't necessary. But…While- you see now the thing is… which we did not know… That flat was requisitioned for- not for her… but for a very high Gestapo SS officer. And she was his girlfriend at the time. And so he brought her into the flat. There she was with him. And at one point, he was sent away. He was sent away to Westerbork, concentration camp, where he became the commandant. He was the commandant of that camp. But we- we knew nothing about it and neither did she. Neither did she. No. He was sent away. And she stayed in the flat! And she brought us in without thinking. You know. And not telling us. What we knew was, there was a photo, two photographs standing in a… in a sort of… folder. One was with him…in his great uniform. The black one, with the cap, with the *Totenkopf* [skull]– with the complete thing. And the other one, the other photo was without the hat. Without the cap. Just the uniform, with all the stars and everything on it. And he was like a, like a… like a god. He was so handsome. Big, tall, blond - beautiful man to look at, I would say like Trump. This sort of [sound of gesture – his presence] … Every time I see Trump I think of him. Cause you put it- this thing on this one and- you know. And that was standing there all the time. I never asked and nobody asked who it is, but there he was. She left it like that and that's where it was. When I was going down shopping, I had to, for all of us. Particularly for my mother. The other man was bringing but then he stopped bringing. Well, somebody had to feed us. So I was a German child. I spoke German like she did very fluently then. And my mother did a dirndl for me. And… I looked like a German child despite the fact that I was dark. But it

didn't matter. She was also dark. It didn't matter. I was never afraid of any Germans. Never, never, never. I was afraid of all the local population, but not of the Germans. And I would go down and shop. And this was the German district, so all the shops were for Germans. '*Nur für Deutsche*': 'Only for Germans'. I would go and shop. But, who shopped? Hardly the ladies themselves, they had maids. They had all the, you know, labour and such labour and the labour, and they shopped for them. So I was… very uncomfortable among those people because there they were the Ukrainian maids and the Polish maids – not a single German – shopping for, for their *Herrschaften* [masters]. Yes? And here am I. So I never, never went to a queue. I went straight to the- straight, like with a chutzpah terrible. But I could not… could not endanger myself standing there in case somebody would point, or somebody would know me or somebody would think they know, you know. So I went straight shopping. And… I had no documents, no papers, nothing.

[2:00:46]

But. I decided what I will take with me would be his photograph, that photograph. And I put the money… under the photograph. And I went straight in and I wanted this, this, this and this very quickly. And if they weren't doing me very good, I said, "You've got- I'm in a hurry. I'm in a hurry. You've got to do…" in German, of course. And they immediately dropped everything else. And then I would hear some comments, "Look at her. Look at her. [inaudible] She's a German, you think she's a Jew?" Such comments. In this came, at that moment I would take this out, open up the photograph, take out the money very slowly and they could see… what I have here. That was my document. That was my document. And the fact that I haven't got it here is the one thing I regret. The one thing I regret. But I couldn't take it. It was… his. I think he took it away afterwards. But… And that's how I shopped. And… I managed. Until one or two occasions. On one occasion, I was standing, and I was- there were three people in front of me and they were talking German. So it wasn't too bad. I mean, some of the Germans… They didn't bother me. And that's why I stood in the line behind them. And I was nearly there. And suddenly, somebody grabs me from the back, says, "Oh, my god it's Seppi's daughter! Seppi's daughter!" And I know, without looking, that it's somebody who knew him. Who - knew - him. I didn't look back. I did not- I was standing, frozen. I was absolutely frozen. And he says, without even looking, holding me like that, you know, and I, "My God," he said, "well, where are you? Where are you? Where is your father? Where are you? What are you doing here?" To me. Without even looking at me, from the

back. So, I said, “Well, he’s not here.” And I looked. “He’s not here. You know he’s on the front.” “Oh, my goodness. He’s on the front. And so what are you doing- where is your mummy? What are you doing here?” I said, “Look, here she is not well, very ill” – not very – “she’s ill, and I have to shop. And I have to run home very quickly. Cause I- I need to be there.” “Wonderful! Listen – listen!...” And in the meantime… the, the ladies - and it’s my turn. I said, “Look, I’ll shop. I’ll wait.” “Wait for me. Don’t move. Wait for me- I want to see your mother!” So I said, “Right I will wait for you outside while you shop. I will wait for you.” And I went outside, and he was shopping. I started running, I tell you… I ran and ran. I didn’t know where I was running. I was running like mad. And, and nobody stopped me, and nobody was seeing. And I had a little bit of something in my hand. Not much. And I ran and then I was somewhere among- in the green. And I put myself in a bush and I waited. Because it was still daylight. And- and I needed to go back, and I couldn’t. I was afraid to move.

And who was he?

[2:04:25]

I have no idea who he was. I have no idea. I never saw him before – and after. Never. He must have been a friend of, of- of him. Of, of the man in the thing. You know, he must have- Because he saw me and he, you know, I opened the thing and, and started taking out the money to pay. I was nearly there… and he must have seen it. And he said, “My God!’ you know, “It’s Seppi!” You know, must have been his friend. And then he…

Seppi was the name of…

That was this chap, yes.

What was his name please?

I’ll tell you the name later.

OK.

And, he- he obviously knew him. But he also knew at - which I didn't know at all - that he was married. That he had children. He, because he said to me, "Oh, my! I remember you. So little!" You know. So he must have had a little girl. Maybe more, I have no idea. And I said, "Oh, that's nice." And- "I want to see your mother. I want to see your mother. This is so nice." You know, talking to me like that. And I had no idea who the man was. He was in civilian clothes. In civilian, that's… And I took it that this is what he saw. Was terrible. That was one occasion. Another occasion was… when I was shopping in the same shop, it must have been before. I was in the same shop and… and a lady with two children behind me. And I shopped and I- no, I was standing and again, there were only two. The Germans didn't shop on their own. As I said, they had their maids. They had… And she started talking to me which was all right. I talked to her. And she says to these children, "Look at this what a lovely, lovely girl. You see? She is shopping. Her mummy is not very well. So she is here to shop for her mummy and for herself. What a good girl." Like this - normal. Normal thing. Fine. "What is your name?" And my name was always Lili. Lili was all right. OK. Lili. "My name is Lili." "Oh, Lili. Now then, this is…" I don't remember their name, so I don't know. Fine. So here it's my turn and she says, "Wait, wait for me, I want to talk to you, and my children-" And the children started talking to me. I couldn't very well move. She finished shopping and said, "Come with me, come with us. We live just around the corner. Have a tea with the children." And I said, "Well my mother will be worried, and I have to go." "No, it won't be long. Just have a tea and then you can go." So I say, "OK." I come. Beautiful villa… and a garden. Lovely garden and it was summer. And she said, "Sit down. Make you some tea…" Or tea – not tea - or juice. Something. And yes I'm there with the children with the two boys and a girl I think it was. A man walks in… in his black uniform… And this is the head of the Gestapo. Katzmann [Fritz, The Katzmann Report 1943 summarising Operation Reinhard in Galicia]. I knew him from afar. That face- he was the- he was, you know I mean, you're…when you mention the name the blood curdled. He was the head of the Gestapo for the region. And that happened- it so happened it was his wife and his children. How did I know? I didn't know. Very nice lady - nice children. He walks in, the children running, "Papi! Papi! Papi! Papi!" Picks up and kisses them and Papi said… And then he looks. Oh, that's a nice little girl. Who is she- who is the girl?" "Oh, mummy was shopping…" and they tell the story. "The Mummy shopping… the girl shopping…" "Oh, very nice." And he comes up. Sits down… and says, "What's your name?" So I give him my name, "Lili." "Lili? Oh, very nice. Come, sit - sit." On one knee… the other child on the other knee. And he says, "Very nice… Your mummy is…? Oh, I'm so sorry -so sorry."

Normal, normal human being. And she comes, "Oh!" you know, "This little girl was shopping so I brought her home to have some…" whatever – tea, or whatever it is – "with the children, you know? And it's the most amazing thing." And I said, "Yes, and thank you very much, it's very kind, but I really must go because my mother will be very worried; she didn't expect me not to come back. I'll come again, if I can come again." "Oh, please, please come again… nice girl." And she tells him, "Such a nice girl. She was shopping. Look at this. Would you do that for your…?" My- something, you know, a normal thing. And I went. He kissed the girls. He kissed the children. I don't know if he kissed me, but I was thinking all the time, "My God almighty, if he knew he's going to shoot me. If he knows he's going to shoot me on the spot!" You know. And I left. And I thought, "I'm not going down again evermore. I'm never going down." But I have to because of shop- you know, food. And again, there was this man. It wasn't immediate. It happened later. Unbelievable… Unbelievable. And I really didn't want to go down anymore but what could we do? We had to, you know.

Yeah…

[2:09:57]

On one occasion she comes home, terribly upset. Terribly upset, nervous. Sits down, can't relax- and she liked my mother very much. Very much. She respected my mother, greatly, because my mother was a…was a very, very intelligent person. But not only that, she was always calm, and she was logical. And when she spoke, she listened to her, you know. And they… [aside: Are you uncomfortable?] And so my mother said, "What's the matter? What happened? What happened?" And she says, "You know, terrible, terrible thing, terrible thing." "What is it?" "I was coming back- I was coming and the- the wife of the caretaker came out crying terribly and so on, so I asked her, sit down, what happened? Sit down on the stairs. So we sat down. What happened, why are you crying? So she says, Well, you know, the Gestapo came and took my husband… away. Took my husband away. And I said well What do you mean? Why did they take? What- what did he do?" "No, he didn't do anything. He- they came, and they looked for a Jewish girl who came into the, they said they came into this house. So they looked around and they knew that she's got to be here. But we never knew about a Jewish girl here. We don't know about the girl. We didn't have anybody. So they took him and they're torturing him at the- in a prison somewhere. And I saw him and

he's tortured and so he doesn't know anything about the Jewish girl!" And so on. You can imagine. Now. They were the only… non-Germans. They were… Po-Polish. I think they were Poles. So the Gestapo came in the middle of the night. And of course they didn't go to any of the high officers there – nobody. Nobody. They went only to them. And somebody must have seen me who knew me from before. Or recognised me, because not by sight like this, but who recognised me …and pointed. Went to the Gestapo and announced that "This girl…" This girl, maybe even by name. Maybe even by name. I don't know. Went into this house. So the Gestapo came in the middle of the night and took that man and tortured him. Terrible thing. Couldn't do a thing about it. So she comes up "Oh," in such- in such nerves. What does one do? What does one do? Terrible. Innocent man. Innocent man. [huge sigh] Oh God. And things like that that happened. There are all sorts. Now. Now is the- now is the, the, the… Now is the culminating point of it all. I mean…

[2:13:13]

While he was away, she met or encount- she was not a person who needed company. She was very health-minded… in those days. Not like today, but- and she had to have every single day, a head of garlic. Not just- a whole head of garlic and some parsley to try to take away the… which I had to chop up every morning for her. She had it before she went to the office. Consequently, she was not very popular. Because, you know, the stench was- I can't smell garlic today, I mean, it's… But to her it was more important than any company in the world. This is what she said, "I don't need any doctors. I don't need any dentist. This is the best thing there is for health." I mean in those days it was amazing! And when you think of it today. And so every morning I chopped up this garlic. And the people with whom she worked were not very- very happy to be around her. And she was very, very happy not to be around her- them. Because, as such, she was not actually a civil servant. This is what she had to do but she hated the office. Hated to sit in the office. She wanted to come back. She was very tired always. She- she was- got tired from this work, which she hated and so on. Lie down and listen to the BBC World Service. She listened in German, in French and in English because she was tri-lingual. Very intelligent woman, she was. And she wanted to know what was going on in the world. The propaganda thing didn't mean much to her. And so she was very delighted that she didn't meet anybody. She was happy like this. But, somewhere – wherever, I don't know where - she met some German officer, Wehrmacht officer. He was a major. And they became friendly and he started coming. And he was a gentleman - a gentleman. Truly he was one of those who- very well mannered, very well brought up, very

well behaved and he was a pharmacist by profession - but a major in the Wehrmacht. So. When she brought him, he didn't disturb us really. Because we were in the kitchen quietly, the door was shut. He never, ever… it wasn't a day when, when one went- a guest went into the kitchen to help. You know. He wasn't one of those. So he stayed, in the room, wherever, you know. And she- this lady prepared all the things, and she would take the food in, and everything... And he would stay the night and go home the following morning, very early home, I mean. Wherever he was… [phone rings]

[sound break]

[2:16:39]

Yes…

So he was coming, and he was going. And she was taking the food and it was all calm, quiet, nice. Very, very civilised in a man- in a way. So that's it! So he did not - he never bothered us. We knew when, when she was- when he was coming. We were in the kitchen quietly. And we slept on the floor in the kitchen. He never went that far, never, never. Even if he needed to go to the bathroom, he never touched on the kitchen. Never. We knew. But one fine day, he came and he said to her, "Look my dear…it is either…" - not maybe in so many words like I put it, but the gist of it is – "It is either the garlic, or me." So she said, "Well, I'm sorry, you know." So he said, "Look, think about it. Think about it. When I come in..."- he used to come on Wednesdays – "when I come next Wednesday, tell me." He was a very elegant and very fine gentleman. OK. So she told us, "Oh, he's…garlic…" Well, you have to- you have to decide. He didn't bother us at all. It's all right.

Were you not scared at night time when he was there?

[2:18:07]

No we were not scared because he was the kind of person- you know, he wouldn't go anywhere else, but. They were eating, and then he would go to the bedroom, go maybe- maybe to the bathroom at night, but he never touched the kitchen. And we could always lock the kitchen. And if it's locked he wouldn't have thought anything. It didn't matter. He was not

dangerous to us - from that point of view. So came the next Wednesday, and he came, and he said, “Well, very nice.” And all that. “Have you thought about it?” She said, “Yes, I have.” “So?” “I’m sorry, but it’s the garlic.” So it was Hello and Goodbye. [laughs] Hello and Goodbye! So Bye-bye, Cheerio and that’s it! Off he went. And we never saw him or heard of him again. Good. But. One fine day… we slept on the floor - kitchen floor. And the kitchen floor was, was, was here, and this was a small corridor and immediately to the left was the entrance, the entrance to the flat. And you know our sleep was… such that we heard, was saw whatever was... And particularly I, I- I heard everything what was going on. I mean… Suddenly I heard it was somebody by the door, by the door outside. And… somebody feeling in the door. Sh-shh- shsh. Somebody by the door. And indeed we hear it’s somebody by the door. So quickly, quickly we put everything away, and into the scullery. Because it was… The scullery was the size of that and the depth of that. That was there, for four of us. We ran into the scullery and locked it. And suddenly we hear screaming, shouting, the, the key in the door. “Can’t get in. Can’t get in.” Because it was on a latch, on a chain, on the chain, not on a latch, on the chain. Couldn’t get in. So they started screaming and shouting - in German of course, yeah? “Open up or I’ll shoot. Open up or I’ll…!” …Terrible. The obscenities - horrible. And she, poor woman, what could she do? She opens the door. She obviously knew who it is. She opened the door for him. He starts running all over the place and shooting, shooting everywhere, into the – wherever. Underneath…Into the walls, into the wardrobes, into the bed. Underneath the bed, shooting. She went on the balcony and she said to- to us afterwards, “If I hear four shots from the kitchen, I’m going to throw myself down. I’m not going to fall into his hands.” And there it was the owner of this… who had the keys. And it was his apartment, and he just came back without- without announcing. He was the opposite to the other one. The opposite, absolutely, in every way. And shooting, that’s all we hear. And screaming, shouting such obscenities: “Where is that bastard of yours? Where is that bastard? I’ll kill him, I’ll kill him.” What transpired, that apparently one of her colleagues who was also his friend while he was in Lwow, in, in Lemberg, was in correspondence with him and among other things wrote to him that, “Oh, you know, while you are away she is having a good time. She’s got somebody else. He comes every week on Wednesdays to her.” You know, and she must have told her, you know. “While you are away this is what happens.” So he decided he won’t be away, he’ll come and shoot him. Why not? He’s a Gestapo; he can shoot anybody. So there he comes. And he comes running into the kitchen. We are in the scullery. And he comes to the scullery… And the key is inside. We never took that key out in that, in that moment of, of, of panic and so we locked it and never took the key

out. You should have heard the heartbeats. He must have been deaf. He must have gone deaf not to hear the four heartbeats which were from here to that door. You wouldn't know. And then he goes, and the door is locked. The door is locked but the key is inside! Inside. And he doesn't shoot. That's the only door he does not shoot into. And he wasn't surprised that it's locked. And- and didn't look… He must have been blind. He must have been deaf. He must- I don't know. This is one of those miracles when they talk about miracles. This is, you know, a total… There wasn't such a place where he would not shoot. Any receptacle. Or anything underneath or anything on top. Shot everywhere. And then he comes out, "Why are you on the balcony?" To her. "Well you are shooting all over the place. I don't want to- I don't want you to shoot me! Why are you shooting? What's the matter with you?" So he tells her why he's there. She said, "But there's nobody here!" Because about two weeks before- it was the garlic that saved our life! Right…

[2:24:38]

Yes.

Right, so she said, "Well, I- I didn't want you to shoot me, so I'm on the balcony. If you want to shoot me, OK, but why? Why? But why?" So he told her why. "Where is he?" She said, "I don't know what you're talking about. I have no idea. Did you find anybody?" "No!" "So what do you want?" "OK. So in this case I'm staying here. I have furlough for two weeks so I'm staying." And he did. And he stayed for two weeks in that apartment with us… unbeknown. And he was, to that extent, a horror… a terror, that he was too, too cruel for the concentration camp at Westerbork. He was so cruel, that they sent him to the eastern front. That's how cruel he was. Afterwards. Afterwards, when he went back. Can you imagine? He was a henchman.

And what was his name?

I'll tell you in a minute.

Ah- OK.

I don't want to say it like this. You know… I have proof, because I have it in writing that he was, and that he was there, and he was the commandant and all that sort of thing.

Yeah.

But there he was, and he was staying for two weeks. He said, "Oh, in this case I'm staying for two weeks."

How did you manage?

[2:26:22]

Don't ask. I don't know. I don't know. I cannot tell you. I don't know what miracle that was! Four of us! Now… when he went out, so that was- must- I don't know, in the morning she had to go to work. We were in the- so he said to her, "Look, Look, I have my luggage somewhere." He left the luggage somewhere. "I'm going to bring my luggage and- for two weeks." So while he went out, she came to the kitchen. She told us, "He's staying. What are we going to do?" She said, "No, you can't go into the street. No, no, no, no. We have to think of something quickly, quickly. He'll be coming back." So we think of something. What do we think of? The man and I… The man and I… will be in the scullery. So we put a chair in there for him and I'll be on his lap. And the two of them, my mother and the other lady, will be in the open…two Ukrainians. One is a- a cook and a sort of housekeeper and cook. And the other one is a dressmaker. She is entitled to have a dressmaker and she likes to. So my mother- they put the table against the door of the scullery. My mother had no sewing machine or anything like that. She did everything in hand, in her hands, everything. And you will be sitting here, she will be sitting here and sewing, the other one. And you don't speak any German. You don't understand. You don't speak German. You can't or you don't. Sometimes, you stay and you sleep here in the thing, not to come and go. Because it is too late. She will make dinner. She will make… And that's how it was for two weeks. Two weeks. And what happened? He was coming into the kitchen all the time while she was away cause he was bored. Bored stiff! She was working! So he was- she was coming into the- he was coming into the kitchen and was telling them how they're winning the war. And they didn't He was sitting down telling them how they're winning the war. And they didn't answer a word because- "Nicht speaking Deutsch"… "Nix sprechen Deutsch" and so on. Never

mind. That did not dissuade him. He was coming, sitting down, telling them how they're winning the war. My mother was sewing, and she was cooking, and cleaning. And then- and in the evening, she said, "They asked me if they can stay and sleep so that they can make breakfast for you in the morning… So that they…". She had to entertain him all night long. So that he…He was a house-body. He was totally different to the other one. He liked to go, he liked to cook. How are you doing this, how are you doing that? Standing upon her. …And we were only frightened that he might want a glass of water at night or something. She had everything prepared for him.

[2:29:48]

She, one of the ladies, while either my mother would bring everything into the room that the water is there, and the sugar is there and this in case he wanted that. So that the only thing that he doesn't come into the kitchen. They will be sleeping in the kitchen. So that they don't need to, you know, bother to go and come and- while you are here, so that they can do things and help and so on. And at one point my mother said to her, when she would come into the kitchen, he was out or something, my mother said, "Listen, get some nice material, nice cotton, nice something from somewhere, and I will make a pyjama for him. I will do something for him here. Make." So she brought and my mother did the pyjama. She measured him [inaudible]… And he sat here, and he admired, he said, "Don't you need a machine? Why can't you do…?" "Ah, it doesn't matter; I like to do things by hand." She likes to do things by hand. She likes to do it like that. Doesn't matter about the machine, for her. She does it like this. Can you imagine that? Two weeks. We had that for two weeks. And if anybody asks me like you do, "How was it possible?" I don't know. I don't know!

For you, because you were in that cupboard.

[2:31:10]

Sure! With him! Sitting. We- we couldn't go to the loo- I don't know! And my mother worried all the time that I, you know while he's talking all this rubbish, that I shouldn't laugh out or something, that I shouldn't cough- that, you know all these things which are not – sneeze – anything. He would come because he was so bored. He hardly ever went out. He just sat there and talked to them and they didn't answer. Just talking! Telling them how- how

they're winning on all the fronts. It was unbelievable. And then in that night we had to sleep on the floor… in the kitchen, four of us. And pray to God that… And she looked after him like never- he never had it so good in his life. Everything was given to him. Everything, plus…. plus. Can you imagine? …That was something unbelievable.

And at that point was he still in Westerbork or was he already…?

Yes, he was in Westerbork. He had a furlough. He took two weeks. He had a furlough; he came! And then when she wrote him a letter he decided and he "Oh…"

So it was a holiday?

And he went on holiday! Yes! On holiday!

Official leave?

Official leave, yes.

Yeah – yeah.

Official leave. And he came on holiday and he went back. But they didn't keep him for too long because of his cruelty, to the inmates. Such cruelty that they sent him to the eastern front. And we don't know what happened to him. Whether he survived or not. I tried to, you know, find out after the war, you know. Nobody knew. Nobody. They said, "No, we don't know." He had a family, obviously, but where he came from really… I don't know, because we never, ever talked to her about him. Never. Never. Because it must have been some terrible embarrassment to her with whom she was, because it wasn't she. It was purely, purely a matter of… you know, it was- it was a bad thing, that's all. Because she was very, very tall. Very good looking. I'll show you the photo. Very good-looking lady. She looked like Katherine Hepburn, if you remember that actress. Exactly that! Later on, later on and later on she lived in New York. People stopped her in the street, you know. She was just like her. But. And he was like a god! Tall, gorgeous, blond. You know. Gorgeous-looking man! So that's what it was. Nothing else, so she didn't know what he was doing. He obviously never told her, because why would he? And so it- how long it lasted I don't know, whether it

was a question of months, maybe or, or weeks. I don't even know. I know he brought her there and left her in the flat. That's it.

So those two weeks- when were they? When was it?

[2:34:17]

When? It was in the summer some time.

Summer of…?

It was in the summer. I don't remember the month. I don't know, but it was in the summer.

Of '43?

Of '43, yes. Absolutely, yes. '43. Yes. '43. In the summer of '43.

[Sound break]

Yeah…we just have to…

[Sound break.]

Yes. So we are still in the flat.

We are in the flat, when he goes away. Yes?

Yeah.

What happened after he left? Nothing. We stayed. It was… as it was before, normal - so to speak. And then… again a situation that again they - she thinks she might be taken to Germany. She might have to leave. Because by that time, the front was really nearing, nearing and so. She thinks she might be able to leave. So, this is an important thing I tell you. You see, I can talk about her… but other one is a different matter. She calls all of us and she

tells us such a thing. “What are you going to do?” She says. “If I leave, what are you going to do?” So he and his wife, he says, “Oh, don’t worry. We have where to go. We have everything arranged in case. Not to worry.” “Oh, good - yeah.” “What about you Frau Stern and Lili?” My mother said, “I’m sorry, we have nowhere to go but not to worry. If you have to leave, you have to leave. What happens, what happens? I don’t know. We haven’t got anything anywhere.” “Oh. She says, OK.” “Well, and if anything happens what if you- they catch you or something. What would you do?” “Oh you, not to worry, we have cyanide. You know, pills. I have a pill for myself and my wife.” “Oh,” she says. “Show me what it looks like. Show me.” So he goes and brings a little box and shows it. She takes it. “And you, Frau Stern, have you got that too?” My mother said, “No… [ironic laugh] we don’t have anything like that.” She said, “Fine. In this case you… are going to divide it into four.” “Oh,” he said, “I can’t do that.” “You can’t do it? Then you don’t get this back. Either four of you will have it, or nobody will have it. …So what is it to be? Go and fetch a knife and divide it here, in four.” Which he did. And so we had it. In the meantime, the front went back a little, so she didn’t have to leave. OK. And so it went on and off... But… towards November again, November of ’43, it was Stalingrad and it was all that. And so, by that time it really was that she has to go. All the civilian personnel. The civilian personnel was being sent back to Germany… and evacuated. And she comes and says, “This is it, now. What are you going to do? Where are you going to go?” So he said, “Not to worry. We have- where to go.” “You Frau Stern, where are you going? You have nowhere to go.” “No, but, you know, you have to leave…”

[Sound break]

Yes…

Where were we? What did I say now?

[2:38:33]

She- they evacuate the civilian…

They were going to evacuate. So again, the same story, Where are you going to go? No worry… So she says, “Right. …Either everybody goes where you are, or nobody goes.”

"Well, what can we do? We don't have a…" "That is the condition. Either you arrange- you-don't forget why you are here," she said - to them. "Don't forget. Look at this girl…You are here thanks to this child. You want her to die now? Where is your conscience? Either you arrange that she, they go where you go, or nobody will go." And so he had to do it! He arranged. And we all went to the Greek Catholic church. He was as I said, a pharmacist from before the war- way before the war. And he worked- was the manager of the very well-known, maybe the best-known pharmacy in Lwow. And being what they were, they delivered all the medication to the Greek Catholic church - among others. To the Greek Catholic church. To the Archbishop Metropolitan – Sheptytsky. I don't know if you ever heard that name, but… And Metropolitan Sheptytsky, because of that, told him at some point, "If you're ever in great- dire straits, great difficulties - come and I will help. I will take you in, you and your family." They had a son; they had a boy about my age. The boy was already in a monastery somewhere… by this Metropolitan who put him up. And so they had where to go. So they arranged- he arranged that he took us also- my mother and me. They went first… and we were supposed to follow. And again, in November… such a- such a month. What date is it today? Not- not yet. Yeah. It's gone, yeah. Around- toward the end of November '43 we went to the Greek Catholic church, which was an enormous magnificent sanctuary in Lwow. And to the palace. It was called the- the Metropolitan's Palace which was his residence. And… she - Frau Wieth - brought my mother and myself there when there- went there with me, she said, "When I see you on the other side of the gate, that's when I go back." And that's how it was. She came with us. When they opened the gate - we had to ring the bell, all these sorts of three times, two times, you know, that sort of thing and… when they opened the gate and somebody came up, out to get us in - that's when she said goodbye, and was standing on the other side of the gate until we were inside the residence. And that was the last that we thought we see her. We said goodbye. We said, "Thank you", what can you say, "Thank you"? You know [laughing at irony] … I mean… How can you say, "Thank you?" But… and then, there we were. They took us in to a library. A magnificent building, magnificent library…everything. And asked us to sit and wait. And after a while they wheeled in, on a wheelchair, a man who looked like some kind of a saint who came out from heaven. He was huge to begin with. Huge man. The whole family are very, very huge people. Very huge - family. Familiar trait- family trait. And a white, enormous white, like a leonine you know, huge and a white beard. And they wheeled him in on this invalid chair. And there we were and didn't know what to do. And that was Ukrainian. We didn't speak Ukrainian. My mother, not a word. I, Russian, but not Ukrainian. And… he looked. He beckoned me to come. And I

came but I was frightened. I was really frightened because he looked so… enormously imposing. And he was such a huge man, and this look of his. And he took me in like that and stroked my hair and he said, in Ukrainian, he said, "Do not be afraid my child. No harm will come to you here." And you know, he said that, and I- I stopped being afraid. Instantly. Instantly, like something- like somebody would pour balsam over you or something. It was- just- just that sort of thing. I wasn't afraid anymore at all.

[2:44:48]

And he said, "Look… you'll stay the night here, but you understand that it's very dangerous for you to be here because I have visits from these gentlemen very often. At least three times a week they can come in unexpectedly. I cannot keep you here, but I am not going to separate you two. I will send you both to the same convent. Except that this convent has an orphanage attached to it. So you will be in that orphanage. And your mother will be with the mother superior who has her own slight small residence, just also attached, but not within the convent… It's like a little oasis. And that's how we should do that." What were we to say? "Thank you"? "Wonderful", or…? So we stayed the night, and the following… evening, I think, it was evening, that he sent us with somebody. And that was at the - what shall I say, the - district of the town, which was quite far out of the town, of the main- where there were no, there were no sidewalks, there were nothing. Only terrible, terrible… you know, you, how you- it was awful. It was like you know, Polish, not countryside, but it was like villages which were in mud and so we were walking in mud. And so that's how it was over there. But the convent was there. And we went to that convent. And as he said, the mother superior took us in. Very lovely. And she said to my mother, "You will stay with me." She spoke- spoke Polish to her. My mother could not learn one word of Ukrainian. She spoke German, she spoke English- some, she spoke some French. Ukrainian she could not: impossible. She couldn't learn it. It was like a psychological- you know. "And you Lili, you'll be Lydia, Litka…" and so on. "You will stay…" and there was the orphanage just with the- attached to it. And that's how it was. And we stayed there until the Russians came again in 1944. And we felt, I mean, I felt quite safe there. There was no- no way of- you know, no way that I would feel otherwise. It was very safe. We had food to eat. We were dressed the way we were, but somehow. We- my mother was with the mother superior and she had to be deaf and dumb, which was a very difficult part for her to play. Very difficult, because- because automatically you react to something, somebody walks in, says something and you… And you're not

supposed to hear. So it's very, very difficult to play that part. And she had to do it until the end. Because she couldn't learn any Ukrainian. And I… didn't speak Ukrainian, as such. I spoke some Russian, but they explained, the sisters- the nurses – the nurses- I mean the, the sisters, explained to the other children who were Ukrainian orphans… that I'm half-Polish. The father was Polish, so we spoke, they spoke Polish to me at home, so that is why I don't speak such Ukrainian. But I speak a little but not very much. Because they were: "Why…?" – you know.

[2:48:50]

And how far from Lwow was it?

No- it was outside. It was like a…like a district just outside of the, you know, what shall I say? Like you have out- outer London here, OK? You… the same thing over there.

Yeah…
But it still was Lwow. It was Lwow.

But you said it was the Greek Catholic church?

Oh, Greek Catholic, yes. Uniate church. Greek Catholic Uniate church. And… and they were very, very good to us. I mean, I don't know who knew, who didn't exactly. But some sisters did know. And the mother superior of course did know. And one or two sisters definitely I know, who knew. The others I don't know if they knew or not. The children certainly did not know. But, there were quite- there were about three or four other Jewish girls there.

With you?

With me.

And did you know that there were Jewish girls…?

I knew one of them- one of them. And she knew me. And when I came, she got very scared. Terribly scared. And… you know we were standing…they were saying prayers. And I gave

myself away. That's why they had to say that I'm half-Polish because when they were praying and crossing themselves, I crossed myself in the- in the Catholic way. In the Polish Catholic- in the Catholic- in the Christian way. And they crossed themselves three times, right to left. And the Catholic is once, left to right. So I gave myself away. They were looking…. And so the sister immediately- one of the sisters said, "Well, Litka is, you know, she's half-Polish. She was brought up in a Polish- but her father, her mother died so she's here with us." So that was it. But, the girl who stood opposite me, praying, was the one who was with me at school during the Russian occupation. And… well, she saw me, and I saw her- we were strangely enough, scared. That we should not… give away that we know each other from before.

Yeah. And what happened to your- the couple you were in hiding with?

Oh, they- they were also in a, a convent. He was in, in a, in a monastery. And she was in a convent.

Not in the same? Not where you were?

Not where we were, no. Not where we were. Somewhere else.

And they survived?

[2:51:15]

Yes! They survived, the son survived- listen, that Metropolitan Archbishop saved 150 lives. Mostly – ninety-nine percent children. He saved one rabbi and his family. The wife, daughter. That was a rabbi. He saved rabbis' children who perished. The rabbis who perished- the children. The boys in monasteries, very difficult. Very difficult. But Yad Vashem does not award him a Righteous. And this is my fight against them. Because I think it's very- not very- it's totally unfair.

What's his name? What was his name?

Sheptytsky,

Sheptytsky

Count Sheptytsky. And… the Mother superior at our testimony got it, his brother got it, but he- nothing.

Aha.

Since years and years and years we are fighting, for him to be acknowledged. He saved 150 lives! How many worlds is that? 150 worlds. And if he had saved one world? Where is it?... Where is it?... Not political. You are a political organisation, then you can do what you like. But don't call yourself a humanitarian organisation. And take off "Whoever saves one life…" Take it off. This is not on. But… But you purport to be what you are…

Yeah…

…Where is it?

What have they said? Why don't they…?

It's political! …Political. Political - OK. But this is not a political organisation, to my knowledge, is it?

No.

No.

So how long did you stay in the monastery? From…

Until- until the Soviets came again. Which was in- in July '44.

So for almost a year…

So it was almost- no, it was over half a year.

Half a year.

Over half a year. No, seven months. About seven months. They came in in July 1944. And they were very good to us. I mean, I- wonderful. And the mother superior. And afterwards- after going… years later, I mean we tried to find out what happened to the sisters and so on. They were taken to Russia, they were- you know, the convent and everything were…completely because they didn't- the Russians didn't- you know. So they didn't- so they took them to, to Russia and so on. Kept them as, as civilian… And when we managed to discover where they were, we were sending parcels from here. And parcels. You have to buy specific things. There were special shops where you could buy to send to the Ukraine at the time. And so for one pair of tights, the sisters could live for two weeks. All the sisters. For one pair of tights. And when we sent a sweater, or when we sent some material. Whatever was allowed. You couldn't send used clothes. It had to be… They lived off it afterwards. And Mother Superior corresponded with us, with my mother, with me. I still have a letter somewhere written in Polish and so on. When we found them. And she was imprisoned and all that sort of thing. Terrible things. Terrible things. But they were wonderful. They saved our lives! 150 lives! There are some Nobel Prize-winners out of that. There was the foreign- the, the, the foreign secretary, Polish foreign secretary, who was a boy taken at the age of three years when he lost his parents was taken in and saved. He became Polish foreign secretary and so on. So… you know, I mean- yes, different people, different lives and so on. Doctors and professors. And boys! To, to, to have kept boys.

Yeah…

And he had the visits of Gestapo twice, three times a week in his- in his residence.

Yeah- yeah…

Looking for Jews. And Yad Vashem says he is politically- no. No.

But for you personally, it was- it felt, it was a much safer place…

[2:56:10]

It was safer…

…than where you were hiding?

…than, than- than for the boys. Of course. Much safer. For men- much safer.

Sure, but also for you, from where- the hiding place you- from the flat?

Of course it was safer! I felt very safe among- I didn't want to leave the convent. No! I would have- if my mother hadn't taken me out - by force, perhaps… almost - I would have stayed. I would then be a nun probably, yes. Because the nuns, it was very- one felt protected, safe. We had food. I always felt guilty, that's why, because we had food. I could eat, I mean, not that I was very hungry. But I, I didn't have to be hungry, to eat. You know? It… was quite different.

So did your mother take you away? Or did your mother decide to leave once the Russians came?

Yes. After the Russians came, she took me out.

Where did she want to go?

Nowhere. We could then go and, and she could work, and we could have a room somewhere and a false name. We couldn't have our names. We had to be non-Jews, because it was still very- Oh, it was very dangerous! Oh, yes!

So you still kept your…

Yes. And my mother, yes, we were called something- something quite different. And you know…

What was the name?

…not my name. My- I was Lydia Ostrowska. That was my name. But I couldn't keep that. I was her daughter. And my mother just changed one letter in the name. And you know, we didn't have a name- our own names. We could not be Jewish. We could not be Jewish. So, if they had known we were Jewish, I don't know. It was very dangerous still. Many people perished and died. I mean immediately somebody- immediately, the Russians came, somebody shot a man- a professor who, who- came out of hide- of the hiding.

So you kept your non-Jewish…?

[2:58:10]

So don't forget the- there were Ukrainians. And we know what they were, but, we were saved by Ukrainians also. By the Ukrainian church. And until today, I'm in touch with them. With the church…when they write to me. I just wrote a whole thing about the mother superior because they're writing a book about her. And they've written to me, can I write things so that they can put it into the book. You know. And I- when I was in Lwow I- I sent some money for them. You know, it's a…

Yes. And what- repeat again please the name of the mother superior?

Iosefa…

Iosefa?

Mn-hnn.

Surname?

No.

No.

That was her name. Mother Superior- Mother or, Sister Iosefa [Olena Viter, Abbess Jozefa]. And she also got the highest award from the President. Not only from Yad Vashem, but from

the President of Poland. I- I wrote to him and I told him that these people did so and so, and even though they were Ukrainians… And he awarded them, very, very high medals. One of the highest of Polish medals.

So by the time you then moved away from the monastery, did you- did your mother know what had happened to your father and your…?

Of course we knew. We knew even before we knew he was- he was gone, I mean... Whatever happened. We didn't know whether he was killed here or somewhere else, and my little brother. My mother, until the end of her life which was, she was nearly ninety-five, never stopped talking about 'my little boy'. When she saw a little boy, blond, green-eyed she came up and looked at him and I would say, "Mimi, Please…" You know… "Oh, looks just like him."

Your brother?

Yeah.

She never overcame…?

Never. Never overcame that. Never. Never overcame that. No. …Six years of age. And a very brilliant child he was, too. Very brilliant child. Not like I. He was brilliant. He should have stayed alive, really, because he would have done something for this world. You know. He was like that. He was like that.

So did your mother want to go back to Krakow or what did- what was…?

[3:00:40]

We didn't want anything. [half-laughs]

Yes.

But we were- there was an amnesty - next year. And everyone who came from- the refugees… were allowed to go back to the- to the west. Go back to their homes and so on, because they had too many refugees in that town. And they needed the town for their own, because they brought their own there, you know, and so on. So… we were allowed to go back, and so back we went. But not that we wanted to…to be in Krakow when we had nobody. We were- everybody was- everybody, my grandmother, the whole family went. The whole family. Only my mother and I stayed behind. That's all. The whole family and her… family. You know, the cousins and the children, you know, the whole- everybody perished. …I- I think close to 300 people all around. Not just from Lwow but in Sambor in Przemysl – in all these places. In Swarzow…

The only two survived- you were the only two?

We were the only two. …Amazingly enough. Yes.

So when did you come back to Krakow?

In 1945. In the summer of 1945. …Yeah. We travelled in one of these trains which took seven days… to get there. And it was so packed to capacity. It was a heatwave, such a terrible heatwave and it was so hot in the train, that I and the young people, the children - young ones were on the roof. We went on the roof and travelled on the roof, because it was unbearably hot in these…no windows or any- terrible.

And what was it like to come back to Krakow for you?

It was pretty terrible. We couldn't walk through the streets where we lived, or... It was awful, to begin with. And then there was a committee, a Jewish Committee which formed. They formed a committee and so we were all coming and putting out- it was full of little…little notes, looking for people - looking for this one, looking for that one. So we kept pretty close but, you know, they didn't want us either, in Krakow. And there was… one sort of… episode, similar to Kielce - you know what that was? That was in '46, but… very similar in Krakow, similar in Zakopane that they were... But…And, and again, we could not be under our… our assumed names. Always under an assumed name. And we- we lived in a room, rented from a

family, Polish family. And if they had known we were Jewish, my god, with the conversations that we heard. The anti-Semitic, horrible conversations.

What did you hear?

[3:03:54]

No, I don't know now what. But they were talking about 'the Jews', 'the bloody Jews'. You know, all these sort of things. I don't know what exactly, but it was all very anti-Semitic. We- we really had to pretend- and my mother was saying, "Remember, remember, don't ever, you know, that you- say…that you are going to the Jewish Committee. That you are going there." And I went- they had a sort of- I won't say a school, but they- we had lessons. There were no books. There was nothing. I still have here, God knows where, everything that the teacher was saying, I was writing. Because I could write very quickly. And I was writing. So this was the book; everybody was borrowing what I was writing. So, we had nothing.

So there was a school…post war?

No there was this, this kind of- the Committee- at the Committee they decided that the children should be learning something. And… it wasn't really a school. But they did, and we had literary evenings on Shabbat- Oneg Shabbat sort of things. But it was literary evening and so… on- on Saturday evenings. And the marvellous men who became… gurus - literary gurus - afterwards in Israel- all over the place- and they took me under their wings. And taught me to recite, and taught me to love music, and took me to concerts and took me- marvellous. One of them was a Lewkowicz – exactly, Lolek Lefkowicz. He was one of those …who came and proposed to my mother. That when my- when I should be eighteen years of age, would she allow him to ask for my hand in- not actually marry, but to be engaged. To engage- he was twenty-six…you know…[laughing] Ludicrous, really. And my mother said, "Look… [laughing] You are- you should get married to somebody who is suitable in your age. You're going to wait for eight years or something? More?" Yeah…

But the- were there many children your age? Because I would assume…

Many. What is many? I mean, you know there was- there were quite a few. There were quite a few but not many. Mostly…either younger, but mostly… considerably older. They were those who came out of the camps.

Exactly. Because…

Mostly.

…your age was a difficult…

It was a very difficult age.

… age to survive.

[3:06:20]

Yeah, absolutely – yes. So they were mostly older. So consequently, I- I was always with older, older people. With these young men. I mean there was Natan Gross you might have heard of. He was a- a literary giant in Israel after and a filmmaker and so on. I mean, Lolek Lefkowicz and Sachs, they were twenty-six, twenty-seven years of age.

They were the young survivors.

I never had any interest in anybody around my age. There was no interest there. But they… you know, had- had me with them and taught me all sorts of wonderful things. And they came out of camps.

Yeah…

They came out. They were very- a number of them were the 'Schindler Jews', so to speak, the ones whom Schindler saved.

Yeah.

A number of them. Because Krakow – Plaszow, the camp there. And- and then he had them in Brünnlitz [Brněnec, present day Poland]. But they were older.

Yes, so for example, people from your class…

From my class…

The nursery…

There were- there were, you know, there were about ten of us I suppose. They were all ages. We were not in a class because of the age- you know. We were just to, to, to learn something. Not to, to walk around doing nothing you know…

But I meant from your pre-war nursery. From your kindergarten…

[3:07:44]

Oh, no, no, no. There was nobody. There was one boy in my nursery, I can tell you that, because that weighed upon me very heavily for years and years and years…'till not so long ago. In that nursery where I was, I mean in, I was… very- I was the youngest. I was three years of age. And my father thought I shouldn't be at home; I should be among children. So they got me to this nursery. And the others were a year older usually, and so. And there was one boy there who was like… well, like a mafioso almost. Hands in his pockets, and- you know. And he was the leader of all the things. And he was about five years old. And he was my, you know, everything. All I wanted is to be in his group. Because it was interesting, you know, even then it was interesting. And he looked down at me as such a…nothing, nothing. And he was the grandson- he was impossible. He was…Nobody could cope with him. He was really an impossible boy. This is before the war I'm talking now. His behaviour was… incredible. Very, very, very...uhh. No one- nobody could cope. Nobody could…could put him down and talk to him. He- was impossible. But he was the grandson of …the head of… of the Temple in- in Krakow. You've been to the Temple- you must have seen that. He was Doctor Ozjasz Thon. That was… a Senator in the Polish government. He was great orator. A wonderful Liberale rabbi. But his Friday evenings were- people came whether they believed it- believe me, when the Poles, they came to listen to him because he was a great orator. And

an incredible man and, and, and religious leader. And this boy was his grandson. Nobody ever called him by his name Rost, Gabryzow, because his mother was a doctor. But this grandfather and so- so they could not- normally they would have expelled him. They couldn't cope with him. But being who he was…. So all right, so, on one occasion he talked to me and he said, "Right, if you go home and if you say such a horrible thing during the- at lunch. And you come and you know, if you are lying, I will know. Out. But if you say it, maybe you can come to our group. So, you know…" I won't go into the details. I came, I did, I- a horrible thing. My father said, "What did you say?" I had to repeat it twice. What did I say? Awful. And he took me into his group. And I was in seventh heaven. And I came home, and I was climbing trees and my knees were all in blood and so on, but I was happy. OK. Until the war and so on. Many, many years later- I came to Krakow after fifty? years of absence or more and so on. And I started asking, "Whatever happened to this one? Whatever…" "If you know, what happened?" Nobody knew; nobody knew anything. And then one day about- I don't know, five years, six years ago, maybe seven now, I don't know. I always came with, with Peter, with my husband to Krakow and so on.

[3:11:436]

And we were coming to the cemetery and I put a thing for my family. And we were walking through and walking through the graves looking. And suddenly from afar I saw a very large, large black… I don't know what would you call it? - not a monument but just a, just a - slab. And I-…. "Oh, I wonder what it is. Let's have a look." So we went. It wasn't a stone; it was just a slab. Very large, like the size of a -very, very large. And I come around Doctor Ozjasz Thon…. about this man "Rabbi Doctor Ozjasz Thon, Senator of Polish…" all of this about him and... He died before the war - a natural death. All about him. And on the bottom it says, "And his beloved grandson, Gabriel Rost, [that was my- who was tortured at Montelupich…" which was a… terrible prison. Tortured. A boy of twelve was tortured. "And then sent to Auschwitz where he perished." Now. That's the first time and that is only very recent, that I learnt what happened to him. Because I always thought he must have survived. He must have survived because- tough. He was so tough. And he was rough. He wasn't [inaudible???], he was, you know, nobody could say anything. And he was the one, and amazingly so. And this is how this boy perished. And when I saw that I… can't imagine. But, it occurred to me that because of the way he was, he probably wasn't going to go easily. He probably was, you know, making… He was - what is the word? - I mean… withstanding all of that and not only.

Probably you know he was maybe hitting them or something. He- he was like that. And because of that they tortured him. Because who tortures a child of twelve? They killed them, but to torture them- it is a different… "tortured" – it says so. It was awful to see that. Awful. And so you know… It was a terrible thing. I, I, I- I just couldn't imagine that that boy perished. I could not believe that. And in Auschwitz. They must have taken him on his own because the mother survived, father survived. They sent him away with- I learned later, quite per chance, quite per chance, from somebody I never would have imagined that, that- you know. That- that he was- they wanted to save the child, and there was not a nanny, but a friend of his nanny who was from the country, from the Polish villages somewhere. And she said, "All right. I'll take him. I'll take him." And he didn't want to go. He didn't want to go. "No, I'm… standing…" He didn't want to go. And then they- they somehow managed and she took him. And they were on the train and he was being obstreperous. Terribly obstreperous. And then the control came… I don't know, some… some… probably SS men, to control- you know, papers and all that. And he said- he stood up and said, "I'm a Jew. I want to go back to Krakow." Apparently. And they took the boy away. And this is how he landed in there and the parents survived. Terrible.

Lili I think we should break here and then continue from here next time. Is that good?

[3:15:53]
[End of Interview - Part One]

[Part Two]

[0:00:00]

Today is the 7th of December 2016 and we are doing Part Two of the interview with Lili Pohlmann.

Lili if I may, last time we- we ended up in Krakow, in post-war Krakow and you were telling us the story about when you found out that the little boy from the nursery was killed. Do you remember? That's what you were telling us. Because I asked you whether your friend had survived. Who had survived- and what the atmosphere was like.

Can we stop please?

Sorry-

Yes. So that's where we were.

Yeah- yeah, about Gabrich.

So maybe tell us what was the atmosphere like in post-war in Krakow? What do you remember?

It was a very sad atmosphere of course. I mean I was there in 1945. That was- the war was actually still on. …No, it had just finished. I mean, we arrived in… in July '45. War- war finished in May. So, the atmosphere was according- people were still coming back from camps, those who survived, those who hardly survived. Coming back from wherever. Wherever they were from: Russia, from- it was an atmosphere of perpetual- mobile. People were coming, constantly going, coming. It was… rather sad, because they were looking; constantly looking for survivors. For their families. For the- and so a committee - Jewish Committee was established and- in the middle, right in the centre of town. And this is where most of us always met. It wasn't- it wasn't- it was a meeting place without actually having pre- without having made arrangements to meet, if you know what I mean. Everybody was coming there just in case they meet somebody who- just in case there is somebody who survived. They were putting up little… notes: "Looking for so and so." "Looking for so and so." A whole wall full of these cards and so on. Occasionally there were very moving scenes, because somebody would come across his sister, or her sister, or the cousin, or someone. It was… like a melting pot. Like a melting pot. And- on the one hand. On the other hand, it was nice because we had somewhere to go, to meet. It was very difficult to be a Jewish person at that time in Krakow. I mean we were under false name, my mother and I. They would not have had us, I'm sure. I mean, we- we rented a room from a family.

Where?

In Krakow.

Where?

Where? Which street you want?

Yeah.

Sienkiewicza, Sienkiewicza14, which is in the centre of town. I mean it's the, the- the good part of town, put it this way.

Yeah?

And… they would not have had us had they known we were Jewish. So my mother altered the name and there we were.

So, you kept your name-you- the- the false name?

[0:03:38]

Not the same. Not the same.

No, you changed it.

My mother changed the- our- our name, into another. By one letter she changed it, and that was fine. Otherwise, they would not have- my mother was - like yourself - she was blond and green eyes. She had nothing Jewish outwardly, and she spoke beautiful Polish. So you know, nobody suspected her of being- I was dark, but it didn't matter, because, you know, I was her daughter and she- was fine. And of course, I was also- my Polish was such that it didn't- didn't instil any- any- nobody- nobody would have thought anything other than unless they wanted to find something there.

Yeah. And you said they changed a letter. What was the letter?

'A' she changed the letter from 'n' to 'a'. It made all the difference in the name- in the surname, our name. Our surname. And that made all the difference to- to particularly where

we lived. It wasn't perhaps so important anywhere else because you know, you didn't have to give your name all the time. But where we lived, we had to register and all that. You had to register. It wasn't like here. So, that was important. And, we used to go to that committee and meet there. And they established a small kind of school for those youngsters like myself; there weren't very many. But for whatever we were, we could go and had a teacher and so on. There were no books, as such. I still have at home somewhere- I was writing very- I could write very quickly. And so, whatever the teacher was you know, talking about and saying, then I, I would write. And then they borrowed- my friends borrowed this like a school book. Because, you know, there was something in it. Some substance. And also… we had, after a while, a wonderful man by the name of Natan Gross - you might have heard; you might not - decided that we should have some *Oneg* Shabbat sort of evenings. But they became literary evenings. And, poetry and, and music and, you know, singing and that sort of thing. And so he taught me how to recite. And how to- and put me up on a chair and I recited all sorts of poetry. They were beautiful evenings. Really wonderful. Always full to capacity. There were young people coming with a guitar playing. And you know, we had a very, very – very interesting and some- something to look forward to the whole week long, that on Shabbat we would go and we would have such an evening.

And who organised it?

Natan- Natan Gross.

And who organised those evenings?

That's him- he organised it.

[0:07:03]

But as a private person or was it…?

No, no, he was not- he came out from a camp like- you know, like so many others. And he and two friends they were like three- three close friends. And they were twenty-six years of age and they took me under their umbrella. And took me everywhere they went. To the theatre and to the…whatever. There was a little opera starting but it- nothing. But the theatre

was on. Cinema. Theatre. And taught me a lot of things; taught me the love of music, the love of poetry, the love of- you know, I had some in me from home, but they, you know, after the war. So, it was wonderful. And Natan Gross did wonderful things there. And then he became a film maker. And he was a film maker. He did that famous film after the war in Lodz. It was called "*Unzere Kinder*" [Yiddish spelling]. Famous film. That was he; he made that film and so on. And afterwards in Israel he was a, a well-known film maker and writer.

He emigrated to Israel?

He emigrated. They all emigrated to Israel, yes - these friends of mine. So that was Krakow after the war. It was very sad. My mother would- never want to go through the street where we lived. Neither would I in a way. It was very sad. If it hadn't been for the fact that we had that communal… place to go to and meet up with- with such life.

It was a safe place.

It wasn't very safe, no.

No, I mean the community. Friday nights.

No it wasn't very safe. No it was not safe; there was an attack in Krakow also. Not only in- and in Zakopane they were going to do things. Yes, after the war. And you know about Kielce?

Yes.

That was a little later, but in Krakow was a bit before.

What happened in Krakow?

I can't remember exactly; it was a horror. And they- nothing much happened, but they tried. And also in Zakopane in the children's home in Zakopane. There was an attempt to- but they pre-empted it.

A Jewish children's home?

The Jewish children. Before going to Palestine at the time still.

Yeah.

So it wasn't very- very easy. And that is why when the opportunity came for me to go to England, which was completely out of the blue. Completely out of the blue. And we never, never tried or anything like that; we never even knew about it. My mother insisted that I go. And I didn't want to go without her of course. I said, "No way will I go without you anywhere - nowhere." Not because I was afraid, but because I wasn't going to leave her behind.

[0:10:14]

What was she- did she work at that point?

Well, she had to. She, she worked here, I mean she was sewing, she was hemming. And as she was so very talented, as I told you, immediately people- one started telling another and then they come- came and then she could make a little bit of money.

So she had a little-

She was- yes?

Atelier, or?

She- yeah, well- in a room! In a room. It was no atelier- there was no atelier. But in the room and everybody- they didn't mind. Of course, you know, it was after the war. People were deprived. They didn't care whether you had an apartment or whether you had a niche. And so, you know.

So people came and she made-?

Yes. And they were all- they were over the moon because she- she did wonderful things. She was an artist in her- in her profession sort of thing. She was really very artistic.

So, she had no- there were no other relatives who survived?

No… Of ours?

Yes.

No. Nobody. No…

So she was by herself. You were by yourself?

No, we were by- just the two of us. And- and so, you know, when this thing came about that that I was put on the list to go to London… I mean this was amazing. And particularly because my father always used to tell me when I was a little girl, "Look, when you- when you study well, when you learn well at school and study nicely, and all that, then I will send you to England to London. I will send you to an English school." And I had no idea what he was talking about I'm sure. But that's what he was always telling me. "And I will send you to study at Oxford." I didn't know Oxford, you know. And so suddenly it comes that I'm going to London. It was like my father came and- and is sending me there. It was unbelievable. And… but I said, "No, no. I can't go. I won't go without you. Absolutely not." And it was only for children. Not- not for grownups. So my mother started to insist and then, and then she was very, very wise. She was a very, very wise lady. And she said to me, "Look, if you go, then you will bring me over and we can have a life. Of some sort. Here we can't; the way we live is not a life. But if you go, you can bring- but if you don't go, if you say 'No', then we have to stay and this is our life. So." And that persuaded me to go. Otherwise I wouldn't have gone. And true enough, within a year and two months my mother was in London. And otherwise we wouldn't have been. So that was… very important.

[0:13:32]

So this was a Kindertransport organised from Rabbi Schonfeld?

By Doctor Schonfeld.

So tell us a little bit about Doctor Schonfeld. When did you meet him?

I can tell you a lot about Doctor Schonfeld.

OK. Go on.

Not a little bit. He was marvellous. He was wonderful. He was glorious. He was all the things that you can put- all the wonderful adjectives to one man. That's all he was. Plus being incredibly clever and incredibly brave.

When did you meet him first?

That's where I met him. Where? In Warsaw.

Tell us –

But very briefly. That was very brief. Very brief. Actually in Gdynia before we were sailing. And of course he sailed with us. He sailed with us.

And tell us, what did he look like? I mean-

He was gorgeous.

What impression? What?

I should show you afterwards. I can give you his photo.

OK.

He was the most handsome man you can ever imagine to meet in your life. He really was. He had the…

Careful… careful…

[0:14:35]

Yes. Something happens?

[sound break]

Yes: Rabbi Schonfeld.

Are you editing that?

Not at the moment.

No, I mean not at the moment but afterwards?

[To cameraman:] *Are you running?*

Schonfeld, please. You were in the middle of telling us.

You want me to smile? Tell me Rabbi Schonfeld; then I smile. Yeah. He was marvellous. He was- to us, he was a god. A god came and took us out. And he really did. He did the most amazing things in order to get those children out. Because it was certainly not easy, to say the least. But apart from anything else- apart from where to get the money for it. Apart from arranging all the- all the things that go with it. All the bureaucracy that goes with it. But, he had to get the children out from convents. He had to get the children out from non-Jewish families who were… hiding them, protecting them. Looking after them. And very often these children became like their own family. When they came and they were very little, they almost forgot who they were.

Yes.

They had other names. They were- it was exceedingly difficult. Very often the families wouldn't give a child. They said, "No. No. We love this boy", or, "We love the girl." "We

love them. They're our children. This is our child. We're not giving…" So, he has to find the means… of getting out such a child. Incredibly difficult. Of course, money talked in many cases. But not in all the cases. I mean when it came to …to a convent for instance, it just wasn't. Bribery was not on. But they would say, "We have no Jewish children here", very often. So he had to find a means of establishing that they were. And do you know the means? Often he would come and look at the children. "No, we haven't got any Jewish children." He would know that this child, simply yes, and he... Either feeling, or whatever. Or maybe to look at, or... And he would start "Shema Israel…", he would say - aloud. And suddenly a child would react. He had these ideas which were amazing. Amazing. And so he got out three transports of children. Today they say- today they say. I don't know- numbers are never my forte, but- never have been. But I read it and heard it that there are out of those whom he took out before the war, to transport before and three transports after the war, 10,000 people around the world.

And not just-

Of generations.

[0:18:19]

Yes. And of the three transports, which one were you on?

First.

The first.

I was on the first transport. We were over 100 children. Hundred and- I haven't got an established- I want to say 106, 116. Over 100 – just over 100.

And where did you have to meet? Do you remember where-?

In Lithuania. In Lithuania.

So did your mother-?

And my mother came with me, yes. And, oh, I have some photographs just before embarking and so on in Gdynia. And… all these children were from ages like that to that. There was one pregnant lady in her ninth month. And we had to keep covering her up, so that she is a child. When we arrived here it wasn't easy, but we were – managed. Somehow managed. He managed everything. He managed absolutely everything that he undertook to do. He's- he was just like- really like something- a maverick! A maverick. You know when he came he invented this uniform for himself. Now, what an idea is that? That alone, you have to- I don't know a thing but I don't know, a year, and you wouldn't come up by an idea like this. But he did.

What was he wearing?

[0:19:56]

He invented a uniform that looked like an English officer. Looked like it. It wasn't, of course, but- why did he do that? Because he came to the conclusion- he thought, and thought, and thought about it and he decided that if he goes dressed in civilian clothes he is, well… as a rabbi… he may not survive to begin with. And if he does, nobody would even listen to him. But the Poles love a uniform. The Poles love the military, uniform…yeah. So, he decided he's going to have a uniform. And he invented this magnificent uniform. And his cap had Jewish insignias on it but nobody would look. Nobody knew. Nobody realised. And when he put that on, nobody would say, "No." Nobody could or did say, "No" when he entered. It was like he was- blond with a blond little beard. Not a big one. But the most magnificent blue eyes you ever saw, that when he looked at you, you thought the whole world is in you. Cause the way he looked at a person. And so, when he came, wherever he came, like Jesus Christ. And he managed to do all what he did! And he hired this Swedish boat, and he transported us on this boat and was going with us for seven days in March. It wasn't very nice. A lot of children they were very ill. The sea was not very- very calm. And he was marvellous. He was teaching these children to sing. Because he couldn't communicate- they couldn't communicate with him. I was doing interpreting for him, because I spoke German… and understood a little bit of English. Nothing to, to, to talk about or to converse in. And I- and he spoke some German and Yiddish and so I managed to translate, to interpret between the

children and him. So I was around him all the time practically. And was I happy to be around him all the time.

[0:22:50]

And how old were you at that point?

Twelve. Oh, no! What am I saying? Fifteen.

Yeah. So this was in which year?

1946. In March 1946 we were sailing. And he was doing everything to have the children's interest. I mean, you know, you had all sorts of children. You had children that were frightened. You had children who never wanted to speak. You had children- we had one boy who was a bandit. He was truly… dangerous. He had a knife, and if you touched him, you could instantly, cause he was in the woods… that's how he saved himself. And he was about ten years old, eleven. He was dangerous. Absolutely dangerous. That- that sort of assortment he had! So he decided that he's going to… to put a blackboard of some sort, right? And teach the children to sing. Now. What was he teaching us? Not religious songs. Not Hebrew songs. Not Yiddish songs, but English songs. Songs- I mean, for instance… *'Rule Britannia'*. He would teach us *Rule Britannia* and explain what it is- he would teach us '*Daisy, Daisy'* – the little songs like this. He would teach us a song about Abraham who had a thousand wives, he would say, oh, and sing it! He sang it! And that was the reason why he missed his early breakfast train. He kissed them all goodbye. Things like this he taught these children. You would never in a million years know this was a rabbi. And yet an ultra-Orthodox one. Because it was the means to the end. He was going to save the children no matter how and no matter what. He was eating with us. I won't say- maybe he didn't eat the meat, I don't know. But what did we have on a boat in early 1946, a tiny Swedish boat? They wouldn't have had kosher food, I can't imagine. So, he had to eat. And he was sitting with us, eating with us. Singing with us. Teaching us all sorts of wonderful things. And so for me Doctor Schonfeld: God.

And what was it like for you to leave Krakow? Do you remember? What…?

[0:25:46]

Yeah, of course it was very sad, because I was leaving my mother! And- and friends. And I had some friends there. Of course it was very, very sad for me to leave, but at the same time it was like an adventure. You know, I mean- and my father – as I remembered – my father was telling me, I mean saying to me when I was a little child before school even. And when I went to school the first time: "You better learn very well, you better study nice things. And when you do I will send you to England and I will send you to London. And when you finish school I send you to Oxford." Now, that didn't mean anything to me then, but I remembered it - and here I was going!

So you were excited?

Of all the places, I was going to London, like my father said.

And did you make friends on the boat? On the-

Yeah, of course.

Did you know any of the other children?

No, not before. Not before, but we are until today some friends, of course, yes. We- we know each other. I mean, you know, we are spread all around the world. But- but of course we knew each other. Yes.

So the boat sailed from Gdynia to…?

To Tilbury.

To Tilbury.

And you can imagine when the Tower of London opened. I mean the, the, the bridge, when it opened and we went under. And it opened for us. And that was an amazing sight. An amazing sight at any time and more for such children. You know, and he was telling us about the

bridge, what it does, beforehand. You know, he was just simply amazing. And he was the father to all these children. And then, he remembered every single child. And about every single child. Not just the few [mimics false behaviour] thinking who is… He knew the name instantly. If he saw, "Oh, hi, Lili. Hello! How are you?" You know, to every - to every one of us. And remembered the story, this child's story. All these children whom he brought over. He was quite extraordinary. And he was not very… very what shall I say, acknowledged by his own people here. Very sad. And I think that a person like this should be a Righteous Among the Nations. He deserves exactly the same as all the others, because what he did, he saved not one life...

Yeah.

He deserves- and Yad Vashem really ought to change their standard - I feel.

And what was the name of the boat? Do you remember?

SS Ragne.

Radne?

SS Ragne.

Ragne.

Yeah.

[0:28:50]

And the conditions were OK on the boat?

Well, I didn't mind. I don't know. It was OK. Well, some of the children of course were not- were very unhappy. It was very difficult- very difficult. But. And as I say, the journey was not the easiest because the sea at that time is, is pretty rough. So some of them were very ill and we had to do it all. The older children- the older ones were helping, you know.

And was Rabbi Schonfeld with other people who helped? Were there other…?

There was nobody. We were- he was on his own. He had a wonderful person here in the name of Ruth Lunzer - the Lunzer family, you know– Ruth Lunzer who was his right-hand here. And she did wonders for him from here and for us also when we came. She was very, very helpful in every way. Wonderful. But that's it. He had nobody! He was the father and the mother and, and the rabbi and everything,

And what were your first impressions of England?

I just loved! I loved England! Right away from the moment I- I loved it. Everything about it. My father was telling me about it when I was a small- not just that, I'll go, but I said, "What is it?" So, he was telling me what a lovely country, what- and this- so, I knew something about it. And-

[0:30:24]

So what did you see when you came? Where did you- where did you go?

Well, Doctor Schonfeld did this marvellous thing. Namely, to bring us over wasn't easy. I mean, you know, he- he had from the Home Office or whatever, Aliens Department- he had eventually, eventually it took a hell of a long time for him to, to, to, to do these- to, to, to bring this over. But eventually he got only a permission for a certain amount. I don't know exactly. I won't mention figures because I'm not very good at it.

That's fine.

But for a certain amount, six hundred or something, all in all, on a communal visa. In the meantime, he brought far more. Far more. He didn't care. He got this for that transport, he got so many for that transport. I don't remember; I don't know how many. I can't tell you. It's all in the annals there. And he brought twice as many over. He just didn't care. He got them in. He managed. He managed everything! He managed.

So you-

As I said, nobody could say 'No' to him.

So Lili where were you taken?

So, he arranged how did they- how did they want to do it. That he said, "Look there are a number of these children who have families here. Distant families, closer families. There are some families who- these families are prepared to take these children." "Oh, well then. It's fine. Then it's fine. They are responsible for them." So he tried to match up if ever possible the names of such a family with the name of a child. And I went to a family with my name! By the name of Stern. That's how he matched up…

But you were not-

… those children. Not related in the slightest. But that's what he did. He did the most am- maverick things.

So, it's like- he said it was a family reunion?

[0:32:46]

Family re- no, not reunion. These people are bringing that child over. That that child survived as an orphan and the family want to bring it and bring it up as their own. And they are responsible. No financial responsibility to the state.

Yeah.

OK?

So you went to a family Stern?

I went to a family called Stern. And this man Stern was waiting for me at the, at the dock, you know, where we docked. And took me home to them, to Stamford Hill. Cause mostly they were people who were in his congregation of course, you know.

Which was? What was his congregation?

Well, in Stamford Hill, I mean he was Agudas Israel. He was- his office was in Stamford Hill, you know… in Amhurst Park. So, those are mostly, there were some who were out of London also. There were some who were in the Polish Army and had some family, brought the child up and so on. But wherever he could, out of his own congregation he- and I went to this nice family called Stern but they were ultra-Orthodox people which I was not. I was secular always, from home- except for my grandparents. But, you know, so to me to be there was, was very awkward. Very awkward. But Doctor Schonfeld said, "Lili. This is- you're not going…" I was rebellious. I was a little rebellious, you know. And, and, and he didn't have it very easy with me, but he liked me very much. And I adored him. And he liked me. He liked me and he did a lot for me. And so, he said, "Lili, you won't stay here long. I'll take you to school. I'll take you out, but here you've got to behave yourself", you know. So I did and he did. And within I think, a week or so he took me out to his school.

Which was?

The Hasmonean, where I was a boarder. And he gave me an education – everything! Everything. I was at that school and that was also an Orthodox school as you know at that time, I mean, which I rebelled a little against. Because I, I said the moment I realised that I was up in the morning at six o'clock and had to pray. And then I realised what I was saying in the prayer, I got up, put the Bible down, went out. And it was very difficult; Doctor Schonfeld came and I explained to him. I said, "Look, I'm sorry but I'm not a man. Why should I say I'm grateful to be a man? To pray? I'm not; I'm not a man! So I'm out." And as he knew, that was logical. He didn't- he didn't have it easy but, he liked me. We liked each other. And so that was fine. And I did my matric– matriculation. It was wonderful. And within a year and a bit he brought my- the school brought my mother over. So, you know, I have a lot to be grateful for. A lot. Not only to admire him, but a lot to be grateful. I admire him enormously. I would go to the moon to talk about Doctor Schonfeld and about Mrs. Sendler. They are two people, I will…

OK.

No, no, but just to tell you. But- because I think that great injustice is done also by- to the Metropolitan, who saved me. Great injustice is being done by Yad Vashem. But- but I am grateful to him.

[0:36:58]

Can we just stop for one second?

[sound break]
So you went to the Hasmonean boarding school.

Yeah.

Can you describe it a little bit? When…?

It was wonderful! It was in- we were boarder-ing elsewhere and the school was elsewhere.

Aha…

So the- we boarded in a place called The Lodge – no, The Logs - The Logs. In Hampstead, on top of Hampstead Heath. Which wasn't bad at all, right? It was a place like out of books describing English schools and so on. It was absolutely an amazing place. Beautiful gardens and so on. Right on top of the Heath and the whole of London underneath you. I mean, it couldn't have been more beautiful and lovely, yeah? And we went to school every morning. We were going by underground to school.

And were the other children from the same transport, or who were this- other people with you?

No, no, no, not- oh, there were, there were one or two. Yeah.

OK.

Although not all, no. We were very fortunate. We were, we were about three boys…one, two, three, about three - four boys. I think four to five boys and… and two girls to begin with. Then after the second transport came they had smaller children at school.

And who- who were the people in charge then?

The teachers!

The teachers?

[0:38:36]

We had wonderful teachers. They were in charge, and the Master, I mean, the, the - you know, there was a head - head person and the teachers, who lived with us. Very good. Amazing teachers. I mean Oxford, you know, scholars and so forth. Wonderful teachers. And we- I, I had some privileges there too. I was very lucky. I had some privileges because the House Master was a man who was - what shall I say- feared by all, because he was German. They were- some were Jewish, some were non-Jewish even, but I think, I'm not sure possibly all were Jewish, but I can't tell.

Yes.

But he was a, a Jewish German- German Jew. So being a German Jew he was very strict, terribly, terribly strict and everything had to be just so. And he was a- very much feared. And I had great privileges with him, because he sang very nicely. He sang very, very well and he was very couth and cultured otherwise, being a German. I mean, music and all you know, literature - all of that. And when it came to, to communal singing and so, he suddenly noticed that I sang nicely. So he got me out and he said, "Lili, do you want to sing duets with me?" I said, "Duet? How do I sing duets?" He said, "I'll teach you some operatic duets." And so he did! So I, instead of going to bed like everybody else, I could be downstairs. Mr Frank would accompany on the piano and we sang duets. Mozart and not Mozart. Amazing. So, I- I- you know, and then he liked me also very much, so because of that I had some privileges which,

you know, important. So I used those privileges not for myself only. I- you know, somebody always, it was, "Lili, ask Mr. Meyer about this…" and, "maybe I can do…". [laughs] So, it could be useful.

What was his name?

Meyer. Mr Meyer. Yeah, it was very good. Strict – very strict.

So how Orthodox was it?

Very – very Orthodox! Very Orthodox. I mean, we had to get up at six o'clock and pray! We did, but when I realised what I was saying I thought, no thank you. Why should I?

What did you not like about it?

It wasn't my choice!

What did you not like about it?

I had to say in the morning, "Thank you Oh, Lord for having created me a man." Well, I'm not a man, I'm a woman so I don't need to come at six o'clock and pray! And I told Doctor Schonfeld.

And…?

Nothing. He said, "Yes."

Did he excuse you from the prayers?

[0:41:58]

Yeah, yeah.

You didn't have to go?

No… No. You know, so long as I didn't know what I was saying, I was like a- like a parrot you know. Read the Hebrew and so on. But I thought, "No, I'm not a man. I am not praying. Let the men pray if they want…"

And at the time was it mixed, or was it already separate?

Mixed. Mixed.

Mixed?

It was mixed, yes. Yeah. And… there were some very nice people, I mean, we had a terribly-terribly strict and very, very… also, I mean, a man who everybody just the name inspired fear. Our headmaster. But the school secretary was a lovely, lovely, warm wonderful man and so he… you know, I was an exotic person in that school because in my class. Cause they never saw anybody other than, than English – English Jewish and so on. And from their own, from Golders Green and so on. I mean- here was somebody who- I didn't know the language. I had to go to physics and maths and everything I never in my life did. Literature - all these things. It was not easy. But after a while, my compositions were such that they were being shown to, to the class because I had to take more care than they. They couldn't care less and I had to study.

[sound break]

Yes. Hasmonean.

Yes, what? What else?

What else- you said they managed to get- they sponsored your mother. So how did that happen?

[0:43:50]

Well, they- because I immediately started, you know, left, right and centre, I mean. Some parents of, of, of the children of my classmates started inviting me at the weekends for tea, because I was an exotic creature to them. They never knew what happened. They had no idea. No idea, had these people what was going on during the war for us. So they were inviting me and I started speaking more and more English of course. And you know so it was- I could communicate more easily. And the school equally. As I said, this secretary, Mr. Kassenberg was a lovely, lovely man. And he and- he and his wife, lovely people and they were- you know, I was the only one actually who… who was in such a privileged position in a sense. Not in a sense, in a great sense. And, and being invited here and there I said, "Look, I have my mother in Poland and I need to bring her over. I need to bring her over. I need a sponsor. I need a sponsor." And so they were all trying to help. And then Doctor Schonfeld and Kassenberg and so on, decided that they will be the sponsors. That the school will be the sponsors. Because he was very clever. He was just- not, not only his wonderful good looks. He was brilliant. He was a brilliant man. And so they decided that they're going to apply to the Home Office that a domestic is needed. No, there were no domestics. There was no English- they didn't want to work as such. No. They didn't; until today they don't, as you know. What would they do without those, those refugees or people who come here and work, right? So that's how it was. And- and he got a permit for my mother. And she got permit Number One - to come. And she came in May 1947. And… she arrived on a Saturday. On a Sabbath. She arrived at Victoria Station by train, it was- and of course I was going to- to meet her. But being Shabbat, they wouldn't let me. And I said, "How dare you call yourself people of God? How dare you? My mother is arriving. She doesn't speak the language. She is arriving with luggage at a- to London, a totally strange city, totally strange language. And nobody to meet her? Because it's Shabbat? Where does it say so? In which Bible?" They locked me up. They wouldn't allow me to go. My mother was allowed five pounds out of Poland. That's what was allowed. She was waiting, and waiting and waiting and nobody- can you imagine? At Victoria Station. And then some porter came up and said- she brought a sewing machine with her. She was allowed to bring it. And one suitcase and that's all. "What can we do for you? Can we help you?" And she, you know. So she gave the address. He took her to a taxi. The taxi took her from Victoria to Hampstead Heath. Three pounds fifty. And she was left with one pound fifty. And I said to them, "To come by taxi is allowed, yes? And to use the money and spend it on a taxi was allowed, yes? But I was not allowed to go and meet my mother. Where is your religion?" I told Doctor Schonfeld, "Where is it? How can that be?" and it was terrible. Terrible for me and terrible for her. Really terrible. And those

are the fanatics, you see. Fanatics are everywhere and its very, very bad. And I, I, I rebelled against these things. It wasn't for nothing. It was for obvious reasons. …It was very, very sad. However, she was here and she arrived. That was what was wonderful. And so I have all Doctor Schonfeld to thank for …everything.

[0:49:014]

And did she move in with you?

She was at school to begin with and then Doctor Schonfeld arranged for her to live in Finchley Road. There was a house there, 521 Finchley Road, which belonged to a gentleman and who was renting rooms. And so he put my mother in there. And there my mother could work! She brought the sewing machine and she could work. And when people learned what she can do, there was no end to it. No end. She- she- it was too much even, you know?

And did she learn English?

She never- of course! She spoke fluent English. Very good. She was- she spoke a number of languages, but she could never learn Ukrainian. That was the one language she could not- but that was, I think, psychological. Yeah. But hmm, it was like something in the air wouldn't allow her. But it had to do obviously with, with what happened to my father, my brother and so on.

And what happened to the other children who came?

Oh, they were- they were also spread around.

Yes.

Spread around. And some were in a school, in school and then, you know…

Yeah.

Then they got out into the world so to speak and a lot of them have families all over the world.

Yeah. And you said that you spoke to the English children about what happened to you.

Yeah.

Did you speak about your experiences?

Well, they asked. They were, "Who are you? What are you? Why are you here?", and so on. And I had to say that I come from Poland. "Oh… what…Poland?", you know. To them it was all exotic! And not only- later on, when I was working- I was working in the city- I was also an exotic person among all English non-Jews. I was an exotic continental you know, [laughs]

Yes.

…because I was the only one. They didn't know these people; they had no contact with them.

So what were your plans when you finished school? What did you want to do, or…?

[0:51:29]

Well, when I finished school I went to Israel. I worked - no, not immediately. I- I studied and then I went to Israel and with the United Jewish…no… Jewish International- Jewish organisation- student organisation to work on kibbutzim and so forth, for a little while. And then- and then I came back. I worked, here and then I met my husband-to-be in Israel. And he came over here and he studied over here and then- and then we went to America.

What did you study?

Languages. Languages and… simultaneous interpreting.

And you lived with your mother at the time, or…?

At the time yes,

You- so you both…?

At the time, till I married. When I married and my mother also re-married. After I married she re-married. She said, "Not before."

And who did she marry?

She married a lovely, lovely man. I'll show you a photo. Lovely man… who lost his wife during the war in the Holocaust. He was not there. Who lost his son not in the Holocaust but who volunteered the Polish Air Force and never came back from the action. And he wanted a family and he… just, you know, saw my mother and me and that was it for him. And he- he was a very, very lovely man. And very nice indeed.

And where did they settle?

Here. They were in London.

Where?

[0:53:21]

In Brondesbury Park. Yeah. And when she was married, that's when I went to America. I would never have left my mother on her own. In fact, when I went to America she went with me. We sailed together. And then she went back.

Aha. And why did you want to go to America?

I didn't want to. My husband needed- wanted to because it was very difficult for him to get a job here. He was an Israel- on an Israeli passport. He was an Israeli. He was an officer in the Israeli Army and he studied electronics. And in those days electronics was not like today. It was something brand, brand new. And to get a job in electronics, you couldn't have been a foreigner; it was very difficult. And so… he said, "I'm going to America. We're going to

America. Over there it's different", and so on. And true enough, I said, "Alright, you go first and we'll see. Because I don't want to leave in case it's not… And see what happens." And the next day, he sent me a telegram – the next day after arrival he sent me a telegram: "Have a job with Western Electric, American Tel and Tel, $85 a week." An amazing sum of money in those days and a phenomenal company. And he was with them until his retirement. He went on from better to better to better, you know. And that was America. And here he couldn't get a thing.

And where did you go to in America?

To New York. We lived in New York for ten years. Yeah. Karen was born in New York.

Aha.

She's an American.

And were you happy to be in America at that point? Did you…?

Yes, very! We had a wonderful life. I mean it was very, very interesting life in those days in the 50s and early 60s. Fantastic. And we had a lot of friends. We lived in a- blocks like this. And every time an apartment emptied another friend took it, another friend took it. So, we had- we were all friends.

In which part of New York? Where was it?

[0:55:55]

In Queens. And… it was fantastic. We never needed to put a coat on in the winter to have a party. Friday, Saturday, Sunday: we had parties all the time. And theatre. And we had wonderful concerts. I mean for us to go for a dinner dance, "Oh, what shall we do tonight?" "I don't know. Let's go- telephone Sid and book a table" and- to, to- I don't know. To Waldorf Astoria." "What's on tonight?" "Oh, Benny Goodman is playing. Let's go." It was normal. It was a normal thing. It wasn't like today – legends. In those days you went for a dinner dance and danced to Benny Goodman. And then also to Glen Miller's orchestra. You

know, I mean- it was such a wonderful life and everybody was, you know, after the war, had their freedom and wonderful life. They were working very hard. These people worked very hard. They were mostly- those who came over from- from Poland or from the, the refugees and so on. They were employed mostly by Helena Rubinstein cause Helena Rubinstein as you may or may not know, came from Krakow. And from very poor background. And she employed most of those people in her factory in [inaudible]. But they worked very, very hard. They started early. They came home late. They worked hard. But at weekends, oh, we partied. So you know it- it was wonderful, really - very nice.

So how did you then make your way back to England?

Because we divorced. Unfortunately that so happened. And so I went back with my daughter. Took my daughter, left everything behind. Left everything, everything – everything. Just what we could. And sailed back to England. And she was educated here at St. Pauls. At St. Pauls and Godolphin and Latymer. Afterwards, yes.

You didn't want to stay? So you wanted to be near your mother?

No, no. My stepfather insisted that I come back. That I come back and stay. "You've got to come back. You've got to come back." And I did! I loved England. I mean I loved being here. I really didn't want to go to America. There was no need for me to go to America. But, once there after all these years it was a life! We had a life. It was nice, it was good, it was all that. But this wasn't very good, so unfortunately when it happened he said, "No, you've got to come. You've got to come back." And so he brought me over, so to speak. But - and then yes, you know, this was also, I mean I never gave up my British citizenship and so forth.

Yes.

Never gave up or- or took on American- no, I didn't. I said, "My British passport is very good for me."

[0:59:14]

Yes. And did you work when you came back? Did you…?

Here?

Yes.

Of course, yes. Of course I had to work, yes. Certainly I worked. Bear in mind she was six years of age. It was very difficult because I, I needed to work and I needed to be with her and she, she was- you know, she missed her father. It was very difficult. But- yes. But we managed.

And what, what work- what did you do?

Translating. Interpreting. Translating.

Which languages?

I had- a number of languages I had at the time. I don't think I have any of them today anymore but- to speak of, but- I- Oh, I- apart from my own language which of course is Polish, you know, but I- I also had Russian and German and French and Spanish and Italian and- you know- a bit of Hebrew. So I had possibilities; whatever was needed.

And what sort of identity did you want to transmit to your daughter? I mean you-

Well, she was Jewish, we were very- yes, of course. My mother was a very traditional Jew- Jewish. Traditionally, not so much the- but also my mother every- every Shabbat, every Friday evening there was no way that we could have- I don't know, if I had- the Queen invited me to the opera or some- that was- we had to be at my mother's and my mother had ten people or twelve people to lu- dinner. And- and preparing everything herself. You know, up from eight till ten. I don't know how many dishes she prepared and how many cakes were baked and so on and so on. And everybody ate it all; I don't know how it all went. [laughs] How we could do it, I don't know. Every Friday evening… we had to be at my mother's. So, you know, from that point of view and there were all the- all the holidays. You know- Hanukkah- and Hanukkah. Every holiday was- was celebrated.

[1:01:22]

And you kept it also?

Of course, yes, certainly.

So the Hasmonean didn't completely get you…?

No, no- that was nothing to do with the Hasmonean. Nothing whatsoever. I was in a home where my mother every Friday evening she lit her candles…

Yes.

… and she prayed every- and we had a parcel sent by my grandmother as I said, with a challah in it and some cakes and things like that. We knew that was- I was a Jewish girl. I was in that school. I was in a very Catholic school. But I was the Jewish girl in that school, so-

So you continued your Judaism.

Oh, yes! That was-

Yes.

Of course it has. Of course yes. It continued until today! This is what I am. And I don't like it when, when I'm- sometimes in, in, in a number of languages in Polish they say, "of Jewish descent". I'm not "of Jewish descent". I am Jewish. Why not say Jewish? Why not say Jewish? "'Of Jewish descent' sounds better." No. Simply: Jewish.

And has that changed over the years, the importance of your Jewish identity for yourself?

No, of course not. Of course not. This is me. It's, it's, it's what you see. I mean… Who would I be? Whoever else I'd be, it wouldn't be me.

Yeah. And did you join a synagogue for example, or did you...?

No, I never joined a synagogue. I don't like to join anything. That I, I did not. But. But my mother where she lived, we went to the little *shtiebel* there every holiday, everything we went and stayed there for a while. Not all the prayers, not all the time- we were here and there. But that's where we went. But we- we never joined a synagogue.

And how then…?

[1:03:24]

You see, if we had joined a synagogue, we would have to travel by underground or by bus and that is against. So, I don't like that sort of thing. Either I do something because I-this is- it's against what we are doing.

Why, which synagogue would you- would you have joined?

Liberal of course. St John's Wood or something. Liberal. Yeah. Yes… If I joined.

Yeah. And so just tell us, how did you then, your private- you met your second husband.

Well I was for many years… 'non'.

Yeah.

And then- then I met, years later I met my second husband Eric, Eric Pohlmann who was- I never wanted to remarry at all but they always forced me to marry, so I married. But he was- he was a lovely, lovely man. Absolutely wonderful. Wonderful. First of all, it was important that my daughter should like him. You know, because… And she adored both Eric and- and Peter. Cause that's the kind of people they were. Not because the- but the kind of people they were. They were absolutely outstanding human beings. So that was wonderful, but unfortunately he died in 1979. He had a massive heart attack and- and died from one second to another. It was at the Salzburg Festival where he was playing. He was an actor. Very well-

known, not only here but- but on the continent or in Europe. He was a film and theatre actor and television actor.

What was his name please?

Eric Pohlmann. I have his name. …And…

[1:05:27]

And was he a refugee or…?

He was a refugee from Vienna, 1938. He escaped. He escaped through Switzerland and Switzerland would not allow him in because on his passport was 'J' for *Jude.* So they sent him back. But he didn't go back, he went to Paris and from Paris here.

And he…?

And he- and he- as he was an actor in Vienna before, he wanted to learn English very well, so that he can work in his profession. Which he did.

And what sort of roles did he get?

Character roles. All character. He was very big, very strong big man. Very often played baddies. Baddies. But his baddies were so good, that people loved him. [laughing] He was such a baddie, everybody loved him. So, you know, he- and particularly on the continent, you know. It was very difficult. One couldn't move with him; he was so very well-known in Austria, in Germany, in France, yeah?

So in post-war he starred in German films?

Oh, yeah, yeah – yeah, yeah, yeah.

What films for example?

Oh, my god, I have such a list.

Give me an example…

In many German films, in many Austrian. In television. On theatre – theatre. '*The Apartment*' for instance you know, the film. He was doing '*The Apartment'* on the stage. You know, I mean, he and the- he was in hundreds of films here. You know, the black and whites. And then he was, I don't know, in one of the Pink Panthers and then '*Mogambo*' and- with Grace Kelly and Clark Gable and so, you know... In hundreds of films. Hundreds of films. '*Ashanti*': those were in my time already and so on. I've got such a list of films. But on the continent even more. So that was it. And then he died in 1979.

In Salzburg?

In Salzburg.

In a play? In a-?

[1:07:54]

It was just before- just before the, the…the, the… oh…the, the rehearsal. They were- they were opening the following day. And of course the festival stopped when he died and…

What was he supposed to- what was he- what was he playing?

Well, it was a- "*Jedermann*". It was a- it's a classic. It's a classic called "*Jedermann*" - with Maximilian Schell. They were playing together. It was wonderful and then he was going to the- to the dress rehearsal and we were always- I mean he always had me with him. I was the only wife on every set. There were no wives- I was- I had to be on every set I was with him. And that was the only time he said- the weather was appalling in Salzburg at that time, it's really drizzling all the time practically- all the time. And on that day suddenly there was blue skies and, and, and sun – beautiful day, but beautiful day. And we were sitting at breakfast in the hotel and…and he suddenly said, "You know, the weather is so lovely today and you love the sun so much. You didn't have any of it here. Why don't you stay? Don't come with me."

I said, “Eric, what are you saying? You don’t want me to go with you?” He said, “No, because it’s so lovely. You’d be much better off on the swimming pool. Stay on the swimming pool and I’ll go. Three hours I’ll be back.” As he’s saying that, he has a cigarette in one hand, the coffee in the other and he’s falling down… dead. As he was saying it. …It was just before ten o’clock in the morning. So that was- I needn’t tell you what that was. So… And then, again, I didn’t want anybody. I didn’t want to get married. I didn’t want to know anything. I didn’t want to. And then- and then there was Peter. And with Peter we were for thirty happy years. Very, very happy.

Yeah. What was Peter’s name please?

Peter Janson-Smith.

And what was his background? What was he doing?

He was a well-known literary agent. And he was a man of books. That was his life. Books.

Yeah.

He was an Oxford scholar, but his life was his books. Actually he was a mathematician, and that’s what he excelled at at school and here and there and everywhere. But he- he, he studied- he was an English… He was an Englishman. He was half English, half Irish and books was his life.

[1:11:18]

And he became an agent?

And he became an agent. And a very good agent. And a very well-known agent and very much-loved agent, who helped many, many, many young and aspiring writer if he though, if he saw the future in that young man’s writing. And so there are those around whom he- actually today they are well-known, world-known authors, biographers...

For example?

Yeah! For instance. Richard Holmes for instance, I mean, Eric Ambler for instance. Kingsley Amis for instance. I could go on, I mean, Burgess – Anthony Burgess for instance.

Right.

I could go on.

He helped to publish them?

Yes, of course. Yes.

And he was [Ian] Fleming's agent?

And- of course, whom I did not mention yet, who was Ian Fleming, of course. And that's why he is known as 'Mr. Bond' because…because Ian Fleming- he was agent for Ian Fleming. Yeah. And Ian Fleming, among others, inscribed books to him: "*To Peter, Prince among agents. Ian Fleming*"

So you must have-

That's what he was known as.

So you must have had a very interesting…

Fascinating.

… life together.

Not only interesting, fascinating: wonderful life together. Because he was a very, very, very special man. He was wonderful - as a human being. And on top of that he was so very handsome. He was a lovely, very handsome and very - very special man. Compassionate to others. Kind. Good. Full of humour. Wit. I can go on. He was all these things, plus. And he was kindness personified.

But also…

[1:13:36]

My daughter adored him. My grandchildren adored him and he adored them.

And together you also started going to Poland.

Oh, yes.

So tell us a little bit please.

Oh, well, you know, me being Polish and so on and I had a number of Polish friends of course and so on. And on one occasion I decided yes, it's time I went to Krakow and I was asked by…by my close friend, Felek Scharf – did you know Felek Scharf?

I did.

You did. And you know what that kind of a- what kind of a person that was – wonderful man. And he was my close, close friend - close friend. And, and he kept insisting that I go with him to Poland: That I go. That I go. That I go. I never wanted to do it for- because my mother would never go back to Poland. Never. And I didn't want to do it to her to go. And I had actually no interest myself either. I had nobody- nobody in Poland. Nobody at all. But when my mother was very ill or started getting ill and I needed some help for her, I had some ladies by recommendation from Poland. They were coming and they were wonderful! Absolutely wonderful. She didn't want- she was a very independent person my mother. Hoh! You couldn't persuade her and she was stubborn. No, no, no she doesn't need anyone. You know how it is. I mean: No, no, no, no, no. But when she became ill and she fell and fractured, she needed apart from me. I was with her every day till late in the night and so on.

Every day you went to see her?

[1:15:28]

Absolutely. Every single day I went to her and while everything was good she was with us not to live, but every weekend, she was here. Whenever we were away on holiday she was with us. When I went- wherever we went- when we had a party nobody saw me without my mother. My mother and I were like this. She was always there. She was a very beautiful lady. Very elegant, very noble. And everybody loved Mimi. My mother was Mimi to everyone, and, you know. And so, you know- but then she needed help on top of me because I- I have to be here also, I mean, you know. And these ladies were absolutely wonderful, so I kept persuading her that not everybody is bad. "Look…"- And she started liking them and she liked them very much. And they adored her and she liked them. So I said, "Mimi, look…" And then Felek was coming and Felek started persuading her. And so she said, "Oh, all right. All right. Go." So I went with Felek the first time.

And what was that like?

[1:16:38]

And we went with Peter. Peter, Felek and I. And it was terrible when I first arrived. One of these ladies who looked after my mother with me, came from Krakow. It so happened she was a Krakowian, a young woman at the time. She came from Krakow. And when we arrived she arranged, you know, the hotel and everything that we should have the right hotel and the right accommodation and everything. And… when we arrived, she and her husband were waiting for us at the airport. When we came on the plane and I saw Krakow underneath, you know… I started crying. I started crying uncontrollably. It was- it was something which- not that I wanted to, no, it was something absolutely… I, I can't explain it. And when I got out of the plane, I could not stop crying. I could not- they were waiting with flowers, with this. I couldn't stop crying. And the husband thought that they were- or they thought that they were going to do some- something nice for me so they- to take us to the hotel via the street where I lived before the war. And the house- we were to pass the house. It was awful, because I could not stop crying. And I'm not a crying person. Really not. But I couldn't stop. Nothing could stop it. So this was my arrival in Krakow. It was really awful. And then I, I didn't want to go there. But, we had the centre and that was very, very interesting and very fascinating. And the people we met through Felek, right away, until today, are the closest of friends of mine. I don't have such friends here as I have there now. And none of them except for two ladies, are

Jewish. None of them are Jewish. So that's- yeah. None of it is a Jewish. They are all my friends and they are in touch; I mean… one is a professor of this, one or another… they're of a certain standing. They're marvellous people. Fantastic people. And I said to myself, how can it be? How can be one so prejudiced? How can one be so unfair without- without knowing? I mean, maybe – maybe if anything untoward would have happened to me at any time while I was going. If I had had any excess towards my person – personally, or so on - I would never have gone back. I probably would never have gone back. But- I never had from anyone the slightest anti-Semitic- nothing. On the contrary. So, so I fight against it. I find- fight against this injustice towards people. You can't go and say that all the people- all the nation is bad. No nation is good and no nation is bad. Something in between.

Yeah. And is it something you talked about…?

[1:20:28]

But I can tell you- I do! Of course I do. I fight against it. I do. I'm a fighter. You know- from- from early morn- my daughter was also a fighter from early. When she was so little and playing here in the garden around six, seven years, and the big boys when they were fighting she would come and put them apart and say, "Stop it, or else you'll have to deal with me." [laughs] You know. It's something in the- I don't know, in the genes or so. My mother was also a fighter for justice. Very much so. So… yes, and but, you see my daughter… I could not get her to Poland. No. Because of what she saw as a child on television. When she was watching the "*World at War"*, this program. I don't know why she watched that because she was very small. She was six years of age. And I was in the kitchen and I was doing something I the kitchen and she came and said, "Mummy, Mummy! Come, come! Have a look at that." And I came and there was- and I said, Why, are you watching this program? Don't…" "No, I want to see it. I want to see." So, I said, "No, this is not a programme for you." "Yes, I want to see it. I want you to tell me. Why do these people go like this? Why don't they fight?" …Why don't they fight? Go and tell a child that the Jew had nothing to fight with. That he was deprived of everything. Primarily of his pride, of his- of his… decency, of everything, right? What was he to fight with? "Why don't they fight?", she said. I'll never forget it. And so, from then on, and as it was in Poland, she- never, no. But… when I knew Mrs. Sendler, I wanted her and the children to meet her. To meet her and for the children to remember her all their lives. Now they live in America in Florida. It wasn't such

an easy thing, "Will you go?" They had to come to- and she wasn't going. She didn't want to. And then there was a Jewish festival… in Krakow. So, I said- we went with Peter for one festival we went to another festival. And I told to Karen, "Look, you should come for the children. It's interesting to see, it's the music, it's this- it's not just walking the streets. It's something you know, maybe. Come over, come to Krakow. Come once. And I want you to then go- we should go to Warsaw; I want you to meet Mrs. Sendler." And that's why she came… to actually meet Mrs. Sendler. And when she arrived in Krakow, she would tell you if she were sitting here now- this is what- and I kept telling her, "We know such wonderful people. They are wonderful. They're nice. They're good. They're normal people. And so you will see…" and all that. I mean, I had nothing but the good things to say. She arrived and we were going back to- from the airport, and the first thing she sees is a graffiti of a swastika and a Jew hanging on the thing. And she says, "That? And you say that this is good?" And from then on, I could do absolutely nothing…to take that out of her. I said, "Well, there are those, but there are also those who you will meet." "Yeah, but there are those, so don't tell me…"

[1:24:20]

Did you talk about your experiences with your daughter a lot or not?

Not a lot. Not a lot. But she heard a lot, because on a Friday when we were at my mother's she was the only child. She was the only child. They were all friends of my mother's.

And they were other survivors.

And they were survivors, and they talked about it all the time. So, she, she- she grew up on it, poor child. But- but – but we went to Warsaw. And we went to see Mrs. Sendler. With the children. And I would like to show you the photographs of Mrs. Sendler and those children who she not one word of English, because she didn't speak English at all. And they, not one word of Polish. And here sits a very old lady, invalid, can't move very well. Can't speak the language, old. But with outstretched arms and with an enormous smile on her face. And I have two boys aged eleven and nine and she and the girl. And the boys come to her and they come and are close and are being embraced by her. And sit and she kisses them and they like it. And that was music without words! It was the most extraordinary thing. Because boys don't like to be kissed. Don't like to be embraced very much and certainly not by old ladies.

Right? Who don't, who don't speak. But she- there was something about that woman, that even to such a child who- they loved her. And she loved them.

So you have to tell us, who is she?

You don't know who she is?

I know, but some people who watch this...

[1:26:30]

I'm talking of course about Irena Sendler, who was a totally unknown to anyone. Certainly not here. In Poland, maybe to a few, who for sixty years lived in total seclusion. Unknown. And who during the war, with ten- with a network of ten very, very close friends, saved two-and-a-half thousand Jewish children from the Warsaw ghetto. And she was the organiser of this complete- of this amazing action. And the main person who actually went into the ghetto and took these children out in various horrible ways. Under coal. In, in, in, in, in… in ambulances. Under lorries. In lorries. In all- in boxes, in all sort of things. And to me the most amazing person in the world. One talks about [Oscar] Schindler, yes? One compares her to Schindler. How can one compare her to Schindler? How? How? There is no comparison.

[sound break]

[1:28:00]

You were telling us about Irena…

Irena Sendler.

Sendler, yes.

Well?

You said she saved 2,500 children. And she was arrested. Is that correct?

Of course, she was denounced and arrested and tortured by the Gestapo in a terrible, terrible way. But she never divulged a single name. Not one single name. And she was- she was about to be executed, and all the announcements on the whole town were that so-and-so were executed.

Yes?

And she was one of them. But in the last second, the guardsman, told her to go. And she could hardly walk. She couldn't because her old feet were broken- everything- to run, to run. And she- and he let her, because he was bribed by an organisation called Zegota [Council to Aid Jews] who were- Zegota who were helping the Jewish people in- in some ways. And she was the only one who knew the names of all the children. She put the names- every child she took from parents or grandparents or wherever had a name. But she had to, for every single child, she had to have an assumed name. So she put the assumed name on little tissue paper. Put the assumed name against the name of the child and rolled it and put it in a jar. When the jar was full, she- in her friend's garden, she put it under a tree. And so she was the only one who knew all the names of all the children. And so they bribed that guard who was taking them. Everybody was executed, but she. And that's how she survived. But on the town the announcement- the huge, huge billboards were saying- were giving the names of those who were executed and her name was one of them.

So she's one of the unsung heroes…

[1:30:24]

She is a sung hero, thank God.

By now?

Because she- no, no. From very early. From very early: 1965. But they would not allow her to go- They would not give her a passport to go and plant a tree. [She] had to wait ten years, or some- until she went to plant a tree in…in Yad Vashem. No, but she was recognised. And not only she has many recognitions by now, but for sixty years she was, during the time of

the communism and so forth, she was sitting in a small room… and nobody knew. Until I came along with my Peter. And my Peter asked her- asked me, "Please ask Mrs. Sendler if there is a book? Where is a book? I would like to see about her." So she laughed. She said, "A book about me? Who would write a book about me?" And- he couldn't understand how it is possible that there is no book about her. So he said, "I will commission a book." So it took an Englishman to see that a book is written in Polish- written about her. It took him. And in that book there is- the first acknowledgment is to him and to me. And I brought her name over here and I spoke about her in all sorts of places including em- embassy as well, to, to bring her name to the knowledge of- nobody ever heard! Nobody ever knew!

And why did you want your children to meet her?

No, but- why? So that they remember her for life! So that they remember such human being. Such a human being. That is someone to remember. And they do. And they do. Any time there is anything about her now. Now she is a legend. Now she is a legend in the world. But in those days, no. So any time something about her on television or, or some- someone writes something they will immediately call me, "Oh, there was this and this about Mrs. Sendler."

So you helped to bring her story to life?

Absolutely. Not helped; I did it!

Yes.

I did it! Because, because there was nobody- I came back here after the first time I saw her and I, I asked among the Poles here, the Polish people whom I knew, "Does the name Sendler- Irena Sendler mean…?" "What? Irena Sendler? Never heard of it."

And when was that Lili, the first time?

[1:33:23]

2002.

OK. So fifteen years ago.

2002, about fifteen years ago. 2002, 2003- yeah.

Well, actually yesterday, on Facebook, somebody posted a short film about her.

About her? There you are. On the Facebook.

Yeah. It got on my- I got it on my site, yes.

There you go.

And I watched it and it was exactly what you were saying.

Well, of course it would be. I hope- I hope that they don't say anything because- I'm here to, to, you know, I won't allow a word to say against her that's- that's not right. Because I know everything from her lips. So nobody can tell me anything which isn't or which wasn't.

I understand.

So I wonder what film was on.

It was a very short five-minute clip with photos.

In connection with what?

I don't know. Somebody just posted it; I can show it to you later.

Interesting. Yeah. I'd love to see.

Yeah. I can show it to you later.

I'd love to see, yes.

But Lili, so is it true when you, yourself speak in schools, do you actually…?

I don't speak in schools at all. No.

You don't, but…?

Oh, I- I spoke in America. I spoke in my grand- and grandson's school and so on. But here, I spoke once or twice. You see, at- in schools one has to speak about oneself. I don't like to speak about myself. I speak here, because I have to. But I don't like to go and talk about myself. I can go and talk about Mrs. Sendler.

This is what I wanted to-

I can go and talk about Doctor Schonfeld. I can go and talk about all sorts of people, about the woman who said, "Yes." But to go and stand there and talk about me… I think that there are other people who have also something to say and perhaps more than I. I was, to compare with some others, very lucky. Very lucky. That's to say the least word. Because I was never in a concentration camp. I was spared. Neither was my mother. We were spared. We were spared by the humanity of other people, who would not have been spared had we all been caught. So. I'm a fortunate person. Who am I to stand there and talk about me? And that is why I don't speak at schools. But I speak elsewhere. Anybody who is interested to come and hear. The last time I spoke was at the British Library and it was- it was to the brim of non-Polish, of English people wanting to hear. By all means, I spoke about Mrs. Sendler.

Yes, so you prefer to speak about-

[1:36:20]

Yes. About those who… did incredible- who are ordinary people, who did such incredibly extraordinary humanitarian things in their lives. At the- at the worst of, in the darkest of, of, of times.

And your own experiences, have- has the importance of it changed in the years?

No. In what way?

So I'm thinking for example, do you think they shaped? How did your war experiences shape your later life?

I have no idea. I have no idea whether they, they shaped me or not. I don't know what I would have been otherwise. I can't tell. I try- or tried- you know, I was a very- always a very gregarious, positive person. …I used to laugh a lot, smile a lot. And it doesn't mean to say I didn't think about these things. Because I- there isn't a day I don't. But it didn't overwhelm me like it does overtake the lives of so many people. So I'm again fortunate in that way that I managed to live a so to speak normal life, despite all that happened. I, I think about it often. What I- do… very often - more than very often - think about and ponder about is, but I have no answer for it of course, is - is why it wasn't me. Why it was my little brother. Because he would have become something that would- someone who would have done something very extraordinary for this world. No doubt about it. Cause he was that way inclined. He was so highly intelligent and such an unusual child. Why did he have to go, and I stayed behind? So you know, this is my- I can't say it's a guilt because I haven't done anything towards it but, but that- that weighs on me. That weighs on me. Yes.

And you said that loss also stayed with your mother?

[1:39:03]

Nonstop. My mother was not like I; my mother… suffered all life long afterwards. All life long. And to her, it was a constant thing. "My little boy, my little Urich, my little boy-" when she saw a child that age. And he would have been now sixty or fifty or what- "My little boy." You know. Until her last breath she spoke about her little boy. And so, you know, I mean for a mother to lose a child is probably - not probably but I would say obviously - of far greater- I don't know, not just importance but far greater significance than- to lose a brother or to lose a father. It's, it's very horrible, it's dreadful, it's all that. But to lose a child - one of the worst things that can be. So, you know, she suffered enormously after that. And she also tried to live a normal life and do this. And she worked for ORT [Jewish educational organisation founded 1880 in Russia] all her life long, I mean voluntarily and so on. She was awarded by ORT for all her input and work and for them. And that was her- that, the love of her life was.

Here, in England?

Here. Yes, before the war she, she was educated by ORT and never forgot it. And she always said this is what made her survive. This is what gave her such a profession. This is what made her what she was. And, and so she always gave back to ORT. And she was very much respected and loved by, by the whole echelon of people, not just British, ORT World, and so on. So, you know, she did a lot. And she was an extraordinary person. She was- she was an amazing person. But this pain of the loss of that child and in such a way. Because you see when we were occupied by the, by the Soviet Russians in 1939, the boy, the child then was …four, five years of age. He had- he suddenly acquired pneumonia. And he was really dying. He was very, very, very ill. And one doctor came. He didn't quite recognise it by the time he was going down. And another doctor: "This is pneumonia, we have to give him some" - some horrendous medication, almost not for children. And he recovered. And my mother- would occasionally say- and of course the, you know they had the joy of everyone that the child recovered. She would say, "I wish he had died. I wish we wouldn't have done what these doctors ordered. I wish he would have died then. Because it would have at least been a natural death." So you know, what can I say? She suffered a lot. A great deal.

But you also had the experience of hiding and being in closed rooms.

[1:42:44]

Of course, I did. Of course, yes. And I always felt guilty that I am in a place which is warm and bright and those are people in the ghetto and I wanted to escape and be with them in the ghetto. They wouldn't let me. I felt very bad to be in such, in such a wonderful place. It was- it was luxury I was in. Luxury. Of course, it was danger upon me every second of- of the day, because of where I was. The house, the entire house full of- full of Gestapo high officials and so on. And, and the head of the Ukrainian police right under us. I was in great danger as was she, the person who had me. But. It was- it was luxury I was in because of that. But I didn't want to be here. I did not. I felt very, very guilty being there. I wanted to be where the other people are dying and being and - to be with them.

I know you are a member of the 45 Aid society…

Yes.

So which is- the question then…

I'm one of the boys.

You are one of the boys, exactly. So a question linked to this idea of- notion of guilt: Do you see yourself as a survivor? How do you see yourself?

Of course, I am a survivor. Certainly. What else. I am a survivor. In fact, if I may digress – digress?

Please.

…on the subject of survival?

Yes.

[1:44:31]

When Peter, my, my dear Peter was so very, very ill at the end, and I had to take him to hospital because he was always at home. I had to have him at home; I wouldn't dream of anywhere else. And we needed to be in the hospital and we arrived and there was no room and all the usual things. And we spent the night in a terribly cold place and blowing, the air conditioning. And I was sitting the whole night with him. He was lying down so I was sitting there. In the morning, I think he was the head doctor but I'm not sure. They, they- he was with great reverence looked upon. He came- he came and I got up and I said, "Well, thank you for coming." "It's about time", I nearly said. And he said, "Yes, I'm here because I'm going- young lady, because I'm going to send you home to sleep." And I said, "I'm sorry Doctor, I don't know your name, please tell me. You're not sending me home because I'm not going home. But I am not your patient. This is your patient here. And he- would you please look after him, not after me?" "No, you must go to sleep." I said, "No, thank you. I have slept enough. Thank you very much. Would you please look- where is our room? Where

is the room for my husband?" "Well, we didn't have-" he said. "Why are we here? You shouldn't have asked us to come. But if we are here, we need a room please." So three hours later there was a room. OK. The following day, he came, and the same thing. "My dear young lady, if you are not going to go home to sleep then I'm going to put you in one of my beds here to sleep." And I said, "Thank you very much for your great concern for me, but as I said, I'm not your patient. I am not a patient here." "My patient is here- your patient. Would you please look after him?" "No, you have to…" I said, "Look, I can't…" "Because you will be- you- you will not…" I don't know, he started telling me whatever or what will happen to me if I don't sleep. I said, "Look, I can tell you one thing…" And he was a German. He was a German who was here since many, many years. And you know, he must have been I would say fifty, sixty. I said, "Will you please stop worrying about my well-being? Because, you know, I don't know, but you may remember what it means, the word 'survivor'. I am a survivor, and if I survived the Holocaust, I can survive not sleeping." He never said another word. Never said another word. …Wonder what he was doing during the war. Yes. He was worried about me. I mean here is a man who is in his last days, and he is worried about me not sleeping.

Lili was it important for you to meet other survivors?

[1:48:11]

Yes, of course! In a- not in particular to go because they were survivors, but to meet them as, as friends, people- we... Yes, certainly. And if I lived, say- if I today lived closer to Hendon or so I would go to the centre. But as I live so far away from them, it's very difficult. It was impossible when my husband, when Peter was so ill. I couldn't possibly; I didn't go anywhere at all. But- but even now, London is huge and it's difficult. But if I lived anywhere around there, I certainly would.

To the Survivors' Centre?

Of course, yes. I would go, for the people whom I know and so on. And maybe some I don't know. Events and so on. Yes.

And what is your attitude today towards Germany or Germans? You mentioned-

I have no attitude towards Germany because I do not put the whole country under one denominator. I have an attitude about those who one knows. I have an attitude about all that happened during the war, and I have an attitude when I hear about that one and that one being still alive or, or working and doing magnificently and what he was doing when- I have a great attitude and I'm not the only one.

Yeah.

But apart from that for a whole- as a whole country, I don't. I don't consider that those who were born after the war are guilty for the sins of their fathers. I don't consider that unless they are proven guilty.

And also linked to this, you said with your second husband that you went to Germany-

I never went before.

- when he performed?

[1:49:57]

Never. Not my mother and not I. We never went to Austria and never went to Germany. Never.

But with him?

Only I had to go with him because- it- I had to otherwise he was not going to go. He was not going to go. And he would have missed all his- in his professional life and so on. I was in a terrible, terrible predicament. I, I was- When I first came with him- We drove always, because when he was playing the theatre it always was for a certain amount of time. So we drove. We took his car always. And when we first were going to Munich and when I heard Munich I thought, I can't do it. I can't do it. Impossible. But what could I do? There he was playing the theatre. So the first thing I saw when we were approaching, I saw an indicator, "Dachau". When I saw that I thought, I've got to go back. I can't do it. And he started

pacifying me and this and that. When we arrived in Munich in a hotel they gave us a penthouse apartment. That was this terribly hot summer of '76; it was a dreadful summer. It was unbearably hot. And I said to him, "Look," - and the theatre was opposite. So we had the hotel literally opposite the theatre. And he had rehearsals to begin with. Quite a few weeks of rehearsals before the play came on. And I said to him, "Look, I, I'm not going to go out from here. You have to forgive me. You are doing the rehearsals, you are there, fine. When you finish and you come back, you will find me here. I'm not going anywhere. I will not go into the street." I could not hear this Bavarian accent. I could not- I could hear the steps from during the war. I could not go out! And I didn't. I did not go out from the hotel. I was staying in the hotel and when he would come, he would rest and then he would drive me out of Munich. I couldn't be in Munich.

So it was quite traumatic.

It was absolutely traumatic for me. It was absolutely traumatic. I- I never thought I'll go to Germany in my life, you know? Or...

And did it get better the more often you went or did you…?

[1:52:35]

Well, a little bit, because again, I met people. That's what does it, you see? I mean, it's not the country, it's not the beauty of the country. The beauty made me even more unhappy, when I saw how beautiful and how glorious and how- but, but it's the people. And the people I met whom he knew and so on, they were wonderful, wonderful people. Nice, good, normal, you know, nothing to do with all that horror. So, I thought to myself I mustn't be so prejudiced. I must not be so prejudiced, because there are decent people among those people too. And so slowly, slowly I- and the same thing with Austria. You know. I know until today people who are considerably older than myself because my husband was older and he played before the war, so, you know these people are older but they're still my close, close friends. Cause they're wonderful people; I cannot- I cannot condemn them for, for, for something they never did, or, or, or, or their, their political-

But for him, it was possible to go back?

With- with difficulties also. No, he didn't want to. He did not want to. He didn't want to but they – oh! – they were after him and after him and after him. And eventually he went but he didn't want to. When he played Salzburg he told me once, he said, "Please, please, persuade me. Do something next time. Don't let me go to Salzburg anymore. I cannot be among these people here. I can't." It was very difficult for him also, yes. Yes. But, he knew some outstanding people. I mean, outstanding in the sense that they were wonderful, normal human beings and not- had nothing whatsoever to do with what happened. Nothing whatsoever.

But also, as an actor. It was a big- it's difficult to be an exile actor.

Very difficult. It was very difficult for him here. This is why, when he came over, he decided he's not going to be in the Austrian ghetto or the German ghetto in Swiss Cottage and their-

Did he not?

[1:55:00]

No, he is going to go to the country; he was in Castle Howard. He got a job in Castle Howard and he was a- a cook there. A very good cook he was, too. He was a cook there because he wanted to learn English the way it's- it was the King's English in those days, the way it was spoken, so that he can do his profession here.

So he didn't-

And he did.

He didn't perform in the Laterndl, this Austrian…?

No, no. He didn't want any of that. No, no, no. No. He said, "This is wrong-" I mean, he was on the radio. He was on the BBC. He was during the war in the German section BBC. And it so happened when I was listening with my Frau Wieth to the BBC World Section, and when she listened to the German section, I heard him. But how did I know? I didn't know until later on.

Really?

Of course. Cause he had a very, very specific voice. He had a voice like an orchestra. Beautiful. When you heard his voice, you closed your eyes and you listened like you listen to music. Yeah. And that was the voice which I remembered. It wasn't the name or anything. No.

Amazing.

And that was the voice I remembered, this beautiful, soothing voice. Gorgeous- a gorgeous voice. Known for it, he was, you know. And, and so years and years later - yes, absolutely. Incredible.

What…?

Not that he didn't know or, or, or was friends with those people who, but he didn't want to be complete apart when he was here. When he was in Lon- he knew all the- because they were colleagues from the BBC.

Right.

And friends, and…

I understand. Lili what happened to you? Now you mentioned this Frau Wieth. What happened after the war with her, and? She stayed?

I found her, I found her after the war.

[1:57:05]

How did you find her?

Yeah, now, that is a film, you know? That- that part of it. All of this, is nothing. It's that part of it. How I found her. I found her… just before I was going to London. Because all I had of her was a tiny - like this, like that - photograph, passport photograph, which she gave me in Lwow. Her passport photograph. That's all I had.

And the name.

The name I had. But the pass- the photograph was something. That's all I had. And …in Krakow, you know in those days it was immediately after the- after the end of the war, '45. The war was still on and then immediately afterwards. Men, men who came back from wherever, and who had- some had families, some had none- they had to make a living. So they were bartering. There was a lot of barter. And black market. Black marketeering something awful. It's something you see on films from during the war, maybe. And- and I had a friend from that committee from the school there. We were very, very friendly. And she would come to me, I would go to her. And when I came to her, she had survived with her parents. And so this was a house where you know, there was a family. So a lot of people came there because there was a family. And there were these men who were coming… and bartering. And going abroad. Going mostly to Czechoslovakia and to East Germany. Black marketeers.

Trading?

[1:59:07]

Marketeering and they were taking this and bringing that and selling and all that sort of thing. And these men were coming there all the time and saying, "I brought this; do you want something? Have you got?" You know, that sort of. You know. So at one point I thought, they're going to Germany and I brought this little photograph with me. And I thought, maybe they can find her for me. So I started showing this photograph to these various men and I told them, "This is it. And she saved my life and my mother's and so on. But this is a tiny photograph. There's just this photograph here, made for- but she is-" and I described her what she looks like. That she is extremely tall. Over the usual thing for a woman. Extremely tall and probably head up in the air like this and she might be wearing and her hairstyle- I described her exactly. "Now, should you come across anywhere such a person, come up and

ask her if that's her name." But nothing happened. Next time I came, they came back. "No, we didn't see anybody." OK. That was that. Of course not. I mean, it would have been like needle in the haystack, I mean, you know. OK. And then I'm going to London so I came to my friend to say goodbye. And, oh, we were crying and leaving and that sort of thing. And a man walks in who used to come there quite often, and so on. And I still remember his name and all that. And I remember what he was wearing; he was a good-looking man and wearing a lovely coat. And in those days it just wasn't like that, you know. And he's going now to Czechoslovakia and then to East Germany to- black marketeering and so on. "What do you need? What do you want?" And I said, "Look, may I ask you to wait?" And he came to say goodbye too. I came to say goodbye for London; he came to say goodbye. So I said, "Look, could you do me a favour? Could you wait a few moments? I will just write a few lines, a note. Maybe you can take it with you and I'll tell you." And then I wrote the note. I wrote to her. "Dear Frau Wieth," in German of course, you know. "This is my last possibility of trying to find you, as I'm going to London in a few days' time. I should be leaving here on the 23rd of March and probably arrive in London towards the end of the month. And I won't have any other possibility. Hopefully this letter reaches you. I just want you to know that we are alive." That's all. And I put it in an envelope. Put the name on the envelope. Showed him the photograph. Explained what she looked like, the usual thing. And he took it and that was that. Finished. Goodbye. And I'm at school. And about three, four weeks into the time I'm at school, I'm asked to go and see the head, the head of the school Mr. Stanton. And of course everybody shivered when they heard his name. And, and I thought, my God, what have I done? I haven't done anything. Why does he want me? And he was slightly invalided and was walking with a stick. And he used that stick for [sound like punishment caning] like they used to. And he's going probably to hit me or something. What have I done? I haven't done anything! I come in and there's a police officer standing there. And he says, "Lili? You're now going to go with this officer." …I said, "But why? I-" "Don't ask questions. Just you're going to go with the officer." So I went with the officer. In a car. He didn't speak to me at all. He didn't say a word. And I was here a- about a month. I mean, my- my English was very, to say the word 'limited' is an hyperbole. We arrive in Piccadilly, at the main Aliens Home Office, I don't know, police station. And he takes me upstairs and opens the door and asks me to come in. And there is a huge room and there is a desk and behind this desk there is an officer sitting without a cap on. "Come in. Sit down." I come in; I sit down. "What is your name?" And he starts giving me a third degree. An absolute third degree. Part of it I understand correctly. Part of it I have to ask again. And he knows everything about me, of

course. He knows absolutely everything about me but he asks. So I answer the questions. "When did you come back?" "When did you come here?" "Why did you come here?" All these sort of questions. And you have to understand, it's very close- very, very soon after the end of the war.

[2:05:04]

Yes.

And I answer the questions. And suddenly I look at the desk… and I see there is a letter with- and the writing, and I know the writing. And I said, "It's Frau Wieth!" Because she had a writing- as tall as she was, so was her writing. And her writing was gothic. And her writing was not to the right but to the left, like this. And he says, "Yes. Frau Wieth. How do you know Frau Wieth?" So I said, "Well, she saved my life. She saved my life, my mother, she saved." "What do you mean she saved your life? She is German." And there was a terrible tit for tat between him and me because he could not understand how a German could have saved a Jewish life. And to him it was terribly suspicious. And what's happened? She spoke three languages perfectly. She spoke German, English and French. Perfectly. And that man, whom I never saw again, ever, I never even could say thank you to him. I don't know where, how. He was in Czechoslovakia and he came to a camp to do his bartering or something. And there was a queue for food, or… and she towered about, above everybody else, because she was tall. So he came up to her and asked her, "Are you Frau Irmgard Wieth?" And she said, "Yes." He said, "I have a letter for you." Gave her the letter and disappeared. Now, is this a film or not?

Yes.

And if it's a film, do you believe it? No.

Almost not.

No. She got my letter, and on the basis of what I said that I was going to London, that's all I said, she wrote a letter to the Aliens' Department – she knew where - in English. That the girl by the name of Lili Stern born, so and so and so, should have arrived in London on or about

that date. And I am looking for her. And they found me. They knew, because they had it all. So he knew all about me, but the questions he asked me. I can't begin to tell you. And he could not believe my story. He couldn't believe it's possible. I said, "Yes, but she really did." And I had to start telling in my very, very broken English… what happened. He looked at me like as if I fell from a planet or something.

So he gave you the letter? Then?

[2:08:12]

I think he kept the letter. He didn't give me the letter. He kept the letter. But he gave me her address where to contact her. And that's what I did. I contacted her. Managed, yes. And we brought her over.

To Engl-?

When my mother came, because my mother wasn't here yet.

Yes.

And when my mother came over, we brought her over. Mnhnn. And she was with us for a while and she didn't want to be dependent. We, we didn't have- I was still at school. My mother was work- and she did not want to be dependent on us. She wanted to work and you know. She was a very, very principled person. Very principled- that matters. The principle, that is important, something. You know. So, she wanted to work- she wanted to go to- what work could she do? Being a German, you know, a German German, not a Jewish German. So my other somehow among her clientele found some Jewish family who employed her as a cook or something like that. But they were so nasty to her. She never said, of course. Nobody ever knew from her what she- nobody ever knew. No. And so they were nasty to her because she was German. That we took her out and she said, "You know something?" Like my then husband. "You know something? I think maybe I should go to America. In America it may be different." So, we started- my mother started looking and among some of those people whom she knew here by then and so on, and so on, they made it possible that she was invited. She needed an affidavit, all that. Was invited by- he was then in Virginia I believe, if I remember

correctly. It was- he was an Admiral of the Fleet for his family a governess or something. And she went. And she went there and then she became an American citizen and then she changed the job because she was good looking so he was making passes and she didn't like that being there employed. So she left and went to New York. And then we came also- also in New York. So that was wonderful; we were all together. And she worked for a wonderful Jewish family whom she considered her children. "These are my children." They were twenty, thirty years – older – then, "They are my children." And so she worked for them. And when I came back to London she was coming for holidays and, and always coming here and then going back. And when they died she always wanted to live in England. She always wanted to live in England, because she- and in the country. She loved the English country. She loved the English people. And she, after the war, never uttered a German word. Never spoke German. Even with another German, she never spoke German. And my mother corresponded with her when she was in the States. My mother would write in German, she would answer in English.

[2:11:28]

And did she come to England?

Yeah, of course!

To live?

And yes. Yes, she died here in England. She was living- yes, we found a place for her where she wanted to be in Worthing. And she didn't need anything. Whatever she had in a suitcase was absolutely enough. No, I couldn't give her a television; she doesn't want a television. A radio. And- and some books and illustrated magazines. French magazines and English and that's all. And as happy as a bee, she was. She was so happy. She was always smiling. And from there we always had a date during the week, or she would come for weekends here. Stay with us here. With me, I was alone at the time or with Karen of course. And, and she, you know, would come during the week and we had lunch at Selfridge- Selfridges and then she'd go back and – yeah!

So you always stayed in-

Absolutely.

You were in touch.

We were her family. We were her family. Oh, yes. And she considered, you know, she thought nobody in this whole world is like me and nobody in the whole world is like my Karen. Nobody in the whole world. "Nobody is as, as clever" she would say, you know, if you spoke to her. You couldn't hear what she could do, you know.

And was she recognised as a Righteous Gentile?

Of course, yes. Immediately after Mrs. Sendler in 1966. And not only, I had her recognised by the President of Poland also- which was- which is a unique thing. Because she is German, not Polish, you know. He recognised her with the highest, highest accolade. Polish medal, highest. Yeah.

But you also were recognised by Poland?

[2:13:22]

Yeah, I- yeah. Yes.

Yes? What did you?

I was- for what I do here and so on. But, you know. I- I don't know why I deserve any- any medals for it you know, but. I have, yes.

That's amazing that you managed to trace her.

And how! And how. The last letter. All these other men- I gave at least to five different men. At least. Showed the photograph, told them the same. But here, I wrote a thing. I mean the others, I only told them. But- but I was still in Krakow. Here, I was leaving. And I really

would not have had any possibility from here, because what possibility? I wouldn't know where to look!

But did you know that she was in Czechoslovakia? Did-

No! Of course not.

She could have been anywhere. Amazing.

We didn't know what happened to her, because, you know, we were trying to contact her mother in- I knew her- look, I was doing her correspondence, as I might have said before. So, I knew all the addresses of her family in Germany. Of her aunts and her mother. So, we wrote and asked and they had no idea what happened to her. So, I wouldn't have known where to look from here. If that letter hadn't reached. Can you imagine? A man goes and only by the description that she will be taller than anybody else.

Unbelievable.

It really is. You see a thing like this, it's like we don't believe that we were with this horror for two weeks the same- a smaller flat that this.

[2:15:06]

Yeah - yeah.

No, so this is why it's difficult for me to, to, to say things to, to the- they won't believe it! It's like… you know. But there it is and so we helped her. And Eric, my, my then husband, wanted to make a film about her. And brought her over to Berlin when he was- when he was playing in Berlin. Brought her over and she didn't know. If she had known she wouldn't have come, you know. But it was just to come and visit and be with us for a few days. And she came, from here. And it was lovely. We went out together. And she- it was lovely. And that's it. And he had a script almost. Everything was prepared and then he died and nothing was done. But if he hadn't died, we would have had a film about her. But, the strangest thing is, you see, that I wanted to her to be awarded by Germany, because this makes the most sense.

Right? But no. It was the Polish President who awarded her and the German one, no. And I- I was invited to the German Ambassador to speak and he said, "I'm sorry, we can't. Posthumously, we don't." But she was posthumously awarded here! No. Which is a great shame because I think that ought to be.

Amazing. Lili just to ask just some more general questions. How do you think your life would have been without Hitler?

It would have been very nice. It would have been lovely, I'm sure. I don't know how! Maybe I would have gone to England to study if I had been a good pupil at school. If my father had considered that I had all the wonderful, you know, five, five, five – or very good. Maybe. Maybe, maybe not. Or maybe we would have landed in Palestine. I- I don't know. But it would have been a very happy life, no doubt. No doubt. Because we were a very happy family. I had a wonderful mother. A wonderful father whom I worshipped, adored. Mother who was very successful. Loved doing what she was doing. I had a beautiful, lovely brother. I mean, what could be bad? What could be bad? And a city I loved to live in. What could be bad? We can't- we can't say.

And do you still feel connected to Krakow?

[2:18:01]

Yes, I always have been. I always thought of Krakow. I always- that I always had in mind. Not only, you know when you are on the phone and you scribble and you doodle and God know what, whatever I did, it was always 'Krakow'; I always wrote 'Krakow'. Always. I didn't know. Subconsciously. Completely subconsciously. Like some – those circles or faces or- I wrote 'Krakow'. So it was always in me. I love Krakow. So, I- to answer your question I probably would have been extremely happy living in Krakow. No changes.

And today, how would you…?

And Lwow! Because we were always going to Lwow.

Aha. Sure.

It was also lovely.

How would you define yourself today in terms of your identity?

I wouldn't know how to- you define me, not I. I can't define myself. In what way? What shall I say about myself?

Are you British? – British?

British. Of course I'm British. I'm- I love this country and I cry for what happens to it now. Because it's not the country I came to and I lived in before. I mean, the town. I- I haven't lived anywhere else but London. But I have always loved and when I lived in America for ten years I never wanted- I was asked to, to take on the nationality and so on. I said, "No thank you very much. I'm very proud I have a British passport. Thank you." No, I love this country; the country gave me everything. And my mother! Everything. Freedom! And… so much more. How would I not love it?

And Polish? Polish?

[2:20:00]

Yes. I am very Polish in the sense that I, I have- it is, again, it's something innate. I can't take it away. When I hear Chopin I love- I love it more than I like Beethoven in some sense, you know. If you let me hear this or that I probably will hear Chopin. In literature, the language I- the language is very nice if it's spoken well and if it's written well. And I have a lot of sentiment for the country. Of course not, not for everything that's going on there. Certainly not. And that's very upsetting. But I have wonderful, wonderful friends. People there. Wonderful people. Very, very uniquely so. And so- and I, I do feel Polish. Certainly I do. Yes, I can't- I can't help it if- if anybody ever asks me because of my accent or something, "Where do you come from?" or "Who are you?" I say, "I'm Polish." You know, automatically. Even though I'm British, I would never say, "I'm British." But I am Polish. I come from Poland. I was brought up on the language. My father had me on his knee and I had to pronounce everything beautifully. Hence… the language means something to me.

Yeah.

You know?

But did you speak Polish to your daughter for example?

We spoke Polish at home, yes, so that she should understand. I mean, she was around and she understood everything. She speaks Polish, some Polish, yes she does. Even though I don't understand how she does because over there she has absolutely nobody. And all- all these years, but she, she does. And she corresponds with one of the ladies who was looking after my mother with me, who is a Krakowian and she doesn't speak any English. She writes to Karen in Polish, and Karen writes to her in English. And she learns English from Karen and Karen learns Polish from her. And yes- and- and she does speak now. And she understood, yes. We, we wanted her to understand. Because we had a lot of Polish, Jewish friends. I mean when we lived in America in New York, we had in this same house so many friends. We were about the same age and, and we were all survivors. So we spoke Polish, obviously not English among each other. So she grew up around it. And wanted her to understand.

And Lili, to get-

She made some very funny mistakes, of course. Because she would translate from the English very often, idiomatically. From the English into Polish which made absolutely no sense in Polish. Was very- came out very funny in a way, but, but- but she did.

And Lili where would you- where do you feel at home?

[2:23:13]

Here. Of course here. I'm constantly asked to go and live in Krakow or in Warsaw. "You've got to come. Why are you here? What do you want? Why do you want? What keeps you there?" and so on, and so on. …No. It's one thing when you come as a guest, as a visitor and another thing is to actually live there. Maybe it would be quite good but I would always miss it here. And when I go to my daughter to Florida where it is beautiful and gorgeous and

lovely. And you can sit in sun and sun and what- I miss it here. I'm glad to come back home. Yes. I don't think I- if I had to I- I would maybe, yes. Volunteer, I wouldn't.

I think we have discussed many things. Is there anything else we haven't said you want to add?

No, I would only want to add that I would like to have the people who were not recognised by Yad Vashem to be recognised. That's what I would pray for. Fight for. Beg for. Write about. Do any- if I could help.

So in your case, who would that be?

Would be- would be the Metropolitan Sheptytsky who saved 150 children. And who Yad Vashem would not award because for political reasons which I am very, very against it. Because I consider that Yad Vashem is a humanitarian, surely, organisation. Not a political one.

[2:25:00]

Just to clarify, this was the Ukrainian Greek Catholic…Archbishop.

Ukrainian Greek Catholic…Archbishop- yes. Who saved not only little children, tiny children off the street and so on. But he also saved rabbis, and rabbinical children. Children of rabbis. And so, I mean, you know… one life. One life. So where is it, from Yad Vashem? Where is that one life for him?

That's him, and who else, Lili? So that's one…

And Rabbi Schonfeld. Because the others were awarded. I mean I- we- we, we did our testimony and against our testimony they awarded Frau Wieth, they awarded the Mother Superior. And Mother Superior was also awarded in the, in the convent which we were in. And Mother Superior also awarded- sorry - and the President of Poland also awarded the Mother Superior.

And her name, just to-

Mother Iosifa – Sister Iosifa. Olena Viter. They were awarded. But not the head of all of this. Not of the church but of the, of the church in, in- in Lwow. He is not until today despite the fact that we petitioned, after petitioned, after petitioned since years. Nothing has been done. And Doctor Schonfeld which I think that Yad Vashem ought to have some kind- if it's not under the Gentile Righteous then they should have the Jewish Righteous also, of some sort.

Maybe there should be a plaque for him here in London, as well.

[2:26:50]

There is, there is. In London they have a square, there is a Rabbi Schonfeld Square in Stamford Hill. There are things like this. But this is not on the world scale. I mean he should have a proper documentary. Television. I'm not talking about films, because films are fabular; it's not the same thing. But a proper, proper documentary about him with everything that he did, properly. And no, no gilding the lily this way or that way. And that he should be recognised like the Gentiles are. That people like- if- and there are some people like this. There were people in Europe like that who did a lot. Maybe not people but they would document. Look, like- like Nicholas Winton was awarded, right?

Yeah.

OK. He brought the children out – rightly. They should award people like that. That's what I would be- what I would like to see in my lifetime.

Lili, the last question is, do you have a message to anyone who might watch this interview in the future, based on your experiences?

My message, what message? What could I give that- the message is, that it should be a better world that we don't have to tell stories like this again. That should be my message. But if you ask me to, to, to talk about – I don't know – about some of the films of my husband, I would much rather. Than about stories like this. There should never be stories like this to be told again by anyone. By anyone.

Lili, thank you very, very much-

Thank you.

… for allowing us to interview you. And we are going to now look at your photographs.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

Thank you.

It was a pleasure. Thank you very much. A sad, sad topic, but a pleasure. And thank you for doing it. It can't be easy. Thank you

[End of interview]
[2:29:00]

[2:29:20]
[Start of photographs]

Photo 1
OK, this is my grandmother. Her name was Hilde Brück and I don't know where this photo was taken. Possibly in Lwow.

Photo 2
This is my grandfather, married to this lady, my grandmother. And that must have been taken during the war, I imagine, because I think it was part of a passport or something. *Kennkarte* [identity card]. Yeah, and he wasn't looking so very well anymore

Photo 3
This is my mother and her friends at the ORT school I think, in Lwow, before she became a teacher in another school elsewhere.

Which year?

It would have been, I- I don't know which year. It might have been 19…16 – 19…1920-something. 1920-something.

And where is your mother?

Here.

Photo 4
This is my father, leading a group on what was known as a *Hakhsharah* in a very small place in Poland called Ustrzyki Dolne. And they were all going to Palestine at the time. That was in 1927 or something like that. But unfortunately my father fractured or did something to his knee and he couldn't go. They all went. He couldn't.

[2:31:01]

Photo 5
My mother at the age of eighteen in Lwow. Known as Czesia.

Photo 6
And my father; their engagement photograph, which was made, I don't know. Maybe in Lwow, maybe in Ustrzyki Dolne. I don't know. Probably in Lwow.

Photo 7
My grandfather and myself. I don't know what age. I would have been two or something like that. In front of the house I was born in and where my grandparents lived. Because I was born in their flat.

What was the address?

In Lwow. In Lwow. Zhudlana 39.

Photo 8

This is in Krakow under the Royal Castle Wawel. My father, my mother and myself, aged three. Well in 1933- 1934. I…

Photo 9
This is a skiing expedition with a number of my mother and my father's friends. And here is my mother and two of her friends. Very closest friends from Krakow. And myself. Skiing.

Photo 10
This is I on Krakow's Planty, which is the garden that goes through of the whole town of the old city. Planty. And I'm being chased by my uncle, my cousin- my father's cousin Henrik Schiffman. And that must have been- I think I was about four years old here or five. I'm not sure.

[2:33:13]

Photo 11
This photograph was taken at Passover. Pesach time. In Lwow. Where we used to go from Krakow with my mother. It's my mother, my- my mother, my little brother and myself in a park, in Lwow. Must have been April 1939.

Photo 12
Lwow, that was in Lwow at Passover, with my grandparents in a park. In 1939.

Photo 13
This is Krakow on the main square Rynek. In and this house behind us is known as Cloth Halls or Soukiennice in Polish and it's always full of pigeons. And even until today, lots of children come to feed the pigeons and like in- sense in Venice on San Marco. And this is my mother, my little brother, myself and an aunt who came to see us from Lwow.

Photo 14
This is my one and only family photograph. Family unit. The one and only I possess. Taken just before the outbreak of war, 1939, in Krakow, on Planty. And this is until today the fountain. It's still there. There's a lake and fountain and that's where we were. On a Sunday, taken by a street photographer. My mother, my father, my little brother and myself.

[2:35:19]

Photo 15
This is my little brother Uriel known as Urich on my scooter. And the scooter was larger and taller than he was, of course but he- it was his dream to go on that scooter. In Krakow. And he must have been three years old here. Would have been 1938, '39.

Photo 16
Here we are. This is my little brother, his close friend Wodya Neuberger and myself, about two weeks before he was taken away, and I believe that boy also. And he landed in Belzec. In Lwow- in Lwow on the balcony of Doctor Panzychen who was Ukrainian doctor. Very nice family. Very special family.

Photo 17
Right. Well, it's difficult to explain but this was a sort of a habit at the time, that there were these bears walking around the street and coming and photographing with children. And that was therefore taken on our balcony in Krakow. My little brother Urich, who was about two years old and very frightened but didn't want to show how frightened he is. He didn't want to cry, so he looks a little frightened here, and myself. I'm laughing but he's frightened. [laughs] I was always laughing; I never cared about anything really, or something. I don't know.

Photo 18
This was taken in a convent- in the convent where I was in hiding as was the other girl. Both Jewish girls. In a Ukrainian convent. 1944. In hiding. And that's it. We are in Ukrainian dress, which my blouse was made by- was made by my mother but embroidered by the Mother Superior. In Lwow.

Photo 19
This is Mother Superior, of whom I just spoke. Mother Superior known as Sister Yosifa and her name was Olena Viter and she was the Mother Superior of the convent which had us in hiding thanks to the Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky in Lwow. She was awarded. She is a Righteous Among the Nations and was also awarded one of the highest accolades by the Polish President, Lech Kaczynski.

[2:38:20]

Photo 20
That was 1946, in Krakow. On Planty in the garden of Krakow. Interesting thing is what I'm wearing. My mother made this coat for me and the hat and the muff, out of a- a German soldier's coat which she bought on a market. And she made that for me. And it was wonderful. Really, I was dressed like a princess in those days, cause she could make anything out of anything.

Photo 21
This is my mother and myself in a school uniform in my school. Hasmonean Grammar School in London. After my mother arrived in London, in 1947.

Photo 22
My mother and my stepfather, Czesia and Karel Abraham in Switzerland at one of those dinners. Maybe in 19… I would say 1960, '62 – something like that.

Photo 23
This is my late husband Eric Pohlmann, the actor, and myself in Forest Mere, which is a health farm, outside of London. 1975 I would say.

Photo 24
Frau Irmgard Wieth, who saved the lives of my mother, myself and another couple. She is a Righteous Among the Nations from 1966. And a recipient on of the highest Polish accolades – medals – from 2000 year- 2010… No. The year 2009 or 2010, accorded, awarded to her posthumously to me, by the late President of Poland, Lech Kaczynski.

[2:40:55]

Photo 25
This is Frau Irmgard Wieth receiving the medal of Righteous Among the Nations at the Embassy or Consulate, I'm not sure - Israeli Embassy or Consulate in New York. 1966.

Photo 26

Sister Chrysantia in- at the convent in Lwow, 19- sorry, no. 2000 – 2010. Around 2010, when I was visiting and taking a group of Germans, Danes, Dutch, et cetera, who wanted to know all about Nazi occupied Lwow. And this is the Sister Chrysantia who was at the convent as a young novice where we were, my mother and I, in hiding. And she remembered us. And I was in touch with her until she died. And I was sending things for them.

Photo 27

My daughter - Karen. My granddaughter Kalyn, my grandson Daniel and my grandson Cory. In Florida. The year, I would say last year or so, which is 2015.

Photo 28

Now, that was taken at Stoke Poges. It was an event for the Bond, James Bond films. And golf tournament and a great event. And a party – big do. And my husband, my dear Peter, with whom we were very happy for thirty years, who died recently only. He was a well-known literary agent among whose authors was Ian Fleming. And he was known as Mr. Bond because of that. He- what can I say? There you are, you can see – a happy picture.

Lili thank you very much again for your interview and sharing your photographs with us.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[End of photographs]
[2:43:36]