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Lilly Salcman and Arthur Salcman oral history interview by Carolyn Ellis and Chris Patti, May 4, 2010

Lilly Salcman (Interviewee)

Carolyn Ellis (Interviewer)

Chris J. Patti (Interviewer)

Arthur Salcman (Interviewee)

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Carolyn Ellis: Today is May 4, 2010. I am interviewing survivor Lilly Salcman. My name is Carolyn Ellis. We're in St. Petersburg, Florida, in the U.S.A. The language we are using is English, and the videographers are Jane Duncan and Richard Schmidt.

Tape one. Okay, Lilly, let's start with your telling us your full name and spelling it for us.

Lilly Salcman: My name is Lilly Salcman, L-i-l-l-y S-a-l-c-m-a-n.

CE: Okay, and what was your name at birth?

LS: Rapaport, R-a-p-a-p-o-r-t.

CE: And then any other names you have gone by?

LS: Yes. My first marriage was Salamon, very little difference from Arthur's. It is S-a-l-a-m-o-n.

CE: Okay. And didn't you have another name that people called you when you were growing up?

LS: Simi, S-i-m-i.

CE: Is it—

LS: And it means in Hebrew “joy.” That’s what my parents thought. (laughs)

CE: That’s nice. Can you also spell that? S-z-i-m-i?

LS: Yes.

CE: Yes, I thought so.

LS: Yeah, because in the book that’s my—the Hungarian spelling is S-z-i-m-i. I really was born in Czechoslovakia. But the part of Czechoslovakia where I was born belonged to the Hungarian-Austrian—actually, the whole Czechoslovakia belonged to the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy. And after First World War, the monarchy was—they lost the war, so the three big countries, U.S.A., Britain and France, divided the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy into Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Austria. Austria was the—

CE: Okay. It’s very confusing, isn’t it?

LS: Yes. It’s very confusing for a non-European.

CE: Yes, yes.

LS: Because—

CE: Well said.

LS: Here we have the United States of America, and there is no difference whether you live in Massachusetts or in Florida or in Washington State.

CE: And what was the date of your birth?

LS: It was September 28, 1922. And I was born on the day of St. Wenceslas, and so whenever I had a birthday the whole country celebrated with me.

CE: How nice. And how old are you right now?

LS: Right now I am eighty-seven.

CE: And could you tell me the city and country where you were born and spell it for us?

LS: I was born in Huszt. When I was born it was spelled C-h-u-s-t; then it was spelled C-h-u-s-z-t, during the Hungarians; and now the Ukrainians are there and it is spelled K-h-u-s-t.

CE: And what is the spelling, H-u-s-z-t?

LS: That's the Hungarian.

CE: That's the Hungarian spelling. That's what your daughter used in her book.

LS: Yes, yes, yes.

CE: Okay. Let's start with your childhood, then, and just tell me a little bit about what you were like as a child.

LS: I always was a free soul, because—they called me genius when I was four and five. I could multiply like 452 times 367. Today I cannot do it. Like a calculator. I don't know it happened—

CE: Do you know how it worked in your mind?

LS: Nobody in the family had it.

CE: How did it work in your mind when you did that?

LS: I have no idea.

CE: You don't know?

LS: But I know that my uncle was in the bank; he was the cashier. And I used to just drop in and say hello to him. I was always small and always on the street roaming around. Nobody ever—no kidnappings at that time. The town that I was born in had 25,000 people, and it was a nice town. We had a *gymnázium*, which was the high school, from where you went directly either into medicine or law, or whichever profession. That was like the four years of college, almost.

CE: Did you like school?

LS: I loved school once I started going there. But I was not even six when I started school, not even five. So I went through four years of grade school here and then one year of in between, because to the *gymnázium* you had to be ten. And then I had to learn Czech, because I went to the Ukrainian grade school. So I had to take an exam. You had to take a test anyway to get into high school—I think here it is the same—and so I took the test. And also, my Czech wasn't the best, but we had—the Catholic priest was our neighbor, and he was the Catholic religion teacher. We had religion in—once a week, we had a class of religion. Each religion had their own class. So he knew me, because we were neighbors, and he knew me since I was very little. And he says, "Don't worry about her Czech. I make a bet with you that in one year she will be better than any one of these students." I was a very good student; it came easy.

CE: How many Jews lived in your town?

LS: Five thousand.

CE: Five thousand, out of 25,000.

LS: Twenty percent.

CE: Twenty percent.

LS: Twenty percent of twenty-five.

CE: And in your school, were there a lot of Jews in your school?

LS: Yeah, everybody—school was compulsory until you were fourteen; you had to go. So if you—most of the Jews did not go to *gymnázium*, because in *gymnázium* you had to go Saturday to school. So the Jewish holiday is Saturday and the parents wouldn't let them go. They were—in my class, there were all together two girls and two boys, and that was a class of forty. So yeah, you know, about 10 percent.

CE: Ten percent. And what were your parents' names?

LS: My parents'—my father's name was Nathan and my mother's name was Bertha.

CE: Bertha? B-e-r-t-h-a?

LS: Yes.

CE: Okay.

LS: That's the English spelling.

CE: The English spelling.

LS: The Hungarian spelling was without the H, was Berta.

CE: And where was your father born?

LS: He was born in Volove, V-o-l-o-v-e.

CE: In Hungary?

LS: In Hungary: again, the Hungarian-Austrian monarchy. And my mother was born in also Hungarian-Austrian monarchy, but in Huszt. We were born in the same courtyard. My grandparents used to live in the front house. That was the only two-story house in Huszt, and we lived inside the courthouse next to them. We are not next to them, because they saw the front—on the street—the two-story house to Bata. That's B-a-t-a, that's—even today, if you go to Jamaica or Canada, they still have the Bata stores. That was the famous shoe store.

Actually, Mr. [Tomáš] Bat'a was here in the United States, and then he came back and he started this small shoe factory. It became a city. The city's name was Zlín, Z-l-i-n, and everybody that lived there worked in his factory. And then he built stores all over Czechoslovakia. And then my grandparents sold their house to them—no, they sold it to somebody else, because they left Huszt in 1910 and they moved to Satu Mare, which was—became Romania then, but it was still the whole Hungarian-Austrian monarchy. And then Bat'a bought it from whoever because they started building the—it was the shoe store was down, then on the second floor was the repair shop, shoe repair; and on the third floor, on half of the second floor and the third floor, was occupied by the employees. The manager and whoever wasn't from the town lived there. It was the first three-story building in Huszt. And then when I got—when we went to visit with Julie, so what the Russians did, they expanded this building, and they took in our house and seven more houses and built a huge shoe factory.

CE: Wow. Let's—

LS: The Russians did everything huge. When you went to Russia, you see Stalin's—Stalin was all over there, just like Saddam Hussein, the huge monuments of him.

CE: Let's go back to your childhood for just a moment, and tell me how many siblings you had.

LS: I had two sisters and two brothers.

CE: Do you want to give us the names?

LS: And the name of my older sister—I was just an accident, because my oldest sister was fifteen when I was born. The second one was thirteen, the brother was ten, and the youngest brother was—well, ten and a half and nine. They came—usually the two were very close together. And my mother was sixteen when she got married; by the time that she was twenty, she had three children.

CE: And what were their names?

LS: Their names: Elizabeth was the oldest, then Rose—it was Rachel—and Julius. My brother Joseph was my younger brother. And I was the sibling, the youngest one, and I was born eight and a half years after my brother.

CE: And now, tell me about your parents. What kind of work did they do?

LS: Well, my father had a hardware store, but during the Depression times nobody bought anything, so they closed down the store. But he also was a lumberman. It means—my grandfather was a very famous man. He couldn't sign his name regularly—he signed it either in Hebrew or with the crosses—but he owned 10,000 acres of woodland. We were very rich but never had money, because they just really cut so many trees as to pay the taxes, because in Czechoslovakia we had everything. They had to build schooling. Most of the people there were *analfabet*, they didn't know how to read and write. And it became compulsory for everybody to go: you are six years old, have to go to school, just like here. And they were great. Czechoslovakia was called the “little America of Central Europe.” There was no discrimination. The universities were free for everybody; you just had to have the grades. If you passed *gymnázium*, you could go.

CE: So there wasn't any anti-Semitism at that point?

LS: I never felt it.

CE: You never felt it?

LS: I had—our first neighbor was the Catholic diocese and the priest, and we were very good friends. We brought water from his well because my mother thought that his water was better than ours. And I went to the Catholic Church. We had the Reform church, when my friends had anything to do. The Jewish girls never went

to synagogue, as girls; we just went on the high holidays to visit mother, you know, for ten minutes or so,

CE: Okay, so for the boys went, but the girls—

LS: The boys went, the girls didn't. And, you know, I get the girls were second citizens in the Jewish religion. Now they are bringing back the matriarchs, but in the—

CE: So it sounds like—did you live fairly well? You had everything you needed?

LS: I would say very well. You know, I always tell my girls that there is just such a surplus here in everything and people just buy too much, you know; everybody wants to keep up with the neighbor, and you just buy so many unnecessary things. And I know when you have to move and empty out, nobody wants it anymore. Luckily, I had—like in Seaman we had the farmers, so when we left there I told my farmer, “You go take what you want and get rid of everything else.”

CE: So at what point did things start to change for you?

LS: Even when the Hungarians came in. Now, for me, the big change was that I was a junior when they came in—

CE: In school?

LS: In school, yeah. So during the Hungarians the Ukrainian school was on, but the Hungarian classes went only to the fourth grade, like here it would be middle school, right? Then came the high school: five, six, seven, eight. And they didn't have the Hungarian because I would have gone there. So I went to Brno—that's Moravia, Brünn—and my sister lived there so I went to stay with her to finish school. This is thirty-eight [1938], November. And thirty-nine [1939], March, the Germans came, stepped in, because in thirty-eight [1938] they took the Sudeten[land]. The Sudeten—that was the Munich Agreement, when they sold out Czechoslovakia, and Mr. Chamberlain went back to London and he said he made peace for our lifetime.

Well, within six months the whole Czechoslovakia went. We woke up and there were the radios blasting all over the loudspeakers, the city, “Stay inside, don't try to do anything.

The Germans have occupied Czechoslovakia.” They just walked in, because the Sudeten had all the fortresses and it was all woodlands. So when they got Sudeten, all they had to do is just march in. And nobody wanted war, so neither America nor Britain nor France were prepared for it. And that’s why Hitler went—occupied after that France. Poland was before us, because the Polish people were coming through Huszt and some of them stayed in our house because, you know, they didn’t have where to go. And some stayed there and started teaching in the Ukrainian *gymnázium*.

CE: So you had some warning, but did you feel like somehow it wasn’t going to happen in Czechoslovakia?

LS: We never thought that it will happen to us. You know, it is like—like history repeats itself, and they say if you don’t learn from history, then you are lost.

CE: So do you remember a day when you just felt your life change? Was it the day you heard all the loudspeakers?

LS: Yes.

CE: That was the day?

LS: Because I knew I have to go back home. Because my home became Hungary and this was—you see, when I left I went from Ukraine to Czechoslovakia, to Moravia. And when I went back, I went from German occupation to Hungary. But with the Germans I was there a few days only, and I went back because I had to go back to my parents.

CE: Okay, let’s see if we can spell that out a little bit more. So where were you living when the Germans came in?

LS: In Moravia.

CE: Moravia. And where were your parents?

LS: In Huszt.

CE: Huszt. And why were you in Moravia?

LS: I went there to finish Czech *gymnázium*.

CE: Okay, so you were finishing school there, and were you living at school?

LS: No, I lived with my sister.

CE: You lived with your sister, okay.

LS: And I was like a junior in high school.

CE: Okay, so now you know you have to go back home to Huszt.

LS: So I went back to Huszt. And I had to cross the borders to go from there.

CE: You were by yourself?

LS: I was by myself. And I came home and I finished the eleventh grade, and I had a wonderful—what do you call?—a class teacher.

CE: Class teacher?

LS: You know, who was—like here, too, you have—

CE: A tutor?

LS: The one teacher that is in charge of your class. Is there such a thing?

CE: Head teacher? Head teacher or—

LS: Well he was teaching Russian, and we learned everything in High Russian—Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, you know—that I didn't know. And this teacher, I met him. I knew him and I knew his wife, and I met him every morning at six o'clock and we were working along the tracts and he was beating it into my head. And because I knew the Cyrillic writing, because you know Russian is different ABC than the American, than the Latin. And so that didn't give me any problem, but the problem was that Russian is different than what I went to grade school. But I learned it.

CE: Okay, and then what happened after that?

LS: And when I graduated, I couldn't go on because Jews were not accepted in the Hungarian university.

CE: So that had been true for some time?

LS: It was true even before the war. They had the *numerus clausus*; that means only such a percentage, as small as 3 percent, of the student body could be Jewish.

CE: And what was the rationale for that?

LS: Well, just because they felt that too many Jews would go to college, and they didn't want them. It's the same old story, same old story now and then. Here there is no *numerus clausus*; in Czechoslovakia there was none. My brother went—Joseph went to medical school. He had three years of medical school when he had to give it up, and he never went back.

CE: So you didn't feel any anti-Semitism growing up, and yet there were these laws and rules that were certainly—

LS: Not in Czechoslovakia.

CE: Not in Czechoslovakia.

LS: Not in Czechoslovakia.

CE: Okay, okay.

LS: In Czechoslovakia there was no rules, no laws, government laws. You know, Czechoslovakia was put together; our part was the poorest spot of Czechoslovakia that used to be—well, it also belonged to the Hungarian-Austrian monarchy. Slovakia was also poor, but they were Catholics. In our part they were Orthodox Catholics, you know, the Russian Catholics. Very few Catholics were there: the Hungarians.

CE: So, talk about when the Germans came into town.

LS: Well, this was already forty-four [1944].

CE: Nineteen forty-four?

LS: We were with the Germans only four weeks. They came in on March 15. And at first—for instance, in our house we had one room that was separate, so we had their two German officers staying. And they were very nice; they were very courteous to my mother. We didn't see them too much, it was completely separated, but if we did they never, never showed—you know, with the Germans also, it was a difference between the *Wehrmacht*, or the regular army, or the SS or the SA. The SS and the SA were the Nazis. They didn't always see the same way, you know. As a matter of fact, there are many books, among them *The Odessa File*. I don't know whether you ever saw the movie of the book, where there is an encounter of German Army officer and an SS officer. Horrible.¹

But as I say, the only thing was that when the Germans came in, then we didn't have a store, because the stores were already under the Hungarians. They were taken over by gentiles, you know. But in many cases the Jews had—their foreman was a gentile or somebody, so he was the owner all of a sudden. But you know, the Jew would be there and giving him advice.

CE: And still being—

LS: But it only lasted very short, very short time.

¹Written by Frederick Forsyth in 1972, and adapted into a movie in 1974.

CE: That was what happened in the four month period, some of that?

LS: Now, in the four weeks—

CE: Four weeks, I'm sorry. Four weeks.

LS: When the Germans came in, in four weeks came the order and they came—this was right after Passover, the Sunday—the Passover finished on Saturday night and Sunday morning the two Hungarian gendarmes, they called them; this was the horrible police. They had these big feathers standing out. And they came to the door and they said—I opened the door. It was seven in the morning, and he says, “Where is your father?” So I said, “He’s still sleeping.” He says, “Well, let him get dressed, because he’s coming with us.” So my father got dressed and they took him. They took ten of the so-called more prominent Jews, took them to a synagogue, and there they gave them straw to sleep on and the Jewish community sent them food, and they took them in for hostages, that when the Jews will be taken to ghettos everything should go smoothly.

CE: Oh, I see. Okay.

LS: So I—we had a very good friend: he was a doctor and he was Jewish, but he converted already when this thing started even in Hungary to Catholicism. The priest was his patient, they were very good friends, and so the priest would come there to their house. They lived in the center of the ghetto, but their house was so-called “white territory”; that means he could go in and out. And he was—he went to the ghetto and he took care of his patients, and so he took me and my two girlfriends. We stayed with them that we are housemaids; they need somebody because they were so-called older people and they need help. And so we stayed there, and we really had a great time with the girls because it was a beautiful home, nice garden. And we did our chores, helped out Mrs.; she was a great cook and you know, we all ate together.

CE: Did anyone know you were Jewish at that point, other than the people you were living with?

LS: No, no, we were there as Jews.

CE: You were there as Jews, okay.

LS: Yes, we were there as Jews because they asked. And you know, they were very well known, and so for the time being it wasn't the Germans they had to talk to; it was the Hungarians.

CE: And tell me about the ghetto at that point that got set up?

LS: They separated two streets—L shape, you know—and that was the ghetto. So my mother went—her friend lived in the ghetto, so she went there and there were eight or ten people in one room on the floor, also living. But they all brought whatever they could, you know, like rice and flour and potatoes, and I guess they cooked together. I am not sure because I got there. Then there were the Jewish boys who were patrolling the street, you know, in the ghetto. And they would always stop, I would ask them, “How is my mother?” and they would give me—because she was—we were only the three of us home: my father, my mother and I. The two brothers were in labor camps.

So one day, after four weeks, he comes and he says, “You know, your mother—your father is going to be brought back tonight from the synagogue to join your mother, and they are going to be taken tomorrow.” But we still thought—and looking at it today you can't understand how naïve, how stupid we were, you know, that we thought we were going to a place where people will be working and wait for the war to end. We knew that the war was very close to the ending. The Russians lost their fight in Stalingrad [*sic*] and so, you know, we were waiting for the United States to be sure and finish it.

CE: And where were your sisters?

LS: In Palestine.

CE: They were in Palestine already?

LS: Yeah, they left. My sister from Brno, you see, they went for their honeymoon; they went to Palestine. And my brother-in-law—you have to know that the people in the Czech Republic that is now were much more secular than we were. My parents were religious, not—you know the religious and the religion, there is difference. Also, they are the Orthodox and they are the Conservative here. So I would say like the Conservative, only nobody drove on Saturday. And so the Czechs were very modern, very secular.

And so, when—yeah. I really don't know, but let's—yeah. So when I went over to my mother the next morning—the same evening, rather—that was the one night that I spent there. And these guys who were guarding the street took me over. And so next morning we had to pack. They let you take one little suitcase; and actually we didn't even need that, but we didn't know, so everybody put on two, three dresses, you know, and coats because we didn't know where we are going to have there something.

CE: Could you have stayed with the other family, had you wanted to?

LS: Well, it didn't help them that they converted, because in Hitler's time if you weren't three—they went three generations back, and if by any chance your great-grandfather was Jewish, which here we have a lot of it, then you were a Jew.

CE: Okay.

LS: Then you were a Jew. Didn't help you any.

CE: Okay. So you packed your suitcases—

LS: So we packed the suitcase, the one suitcase; left everything there, the rest. And we went and they took us next day to the train. And you know, you march down the main street and you see friends standing on both sides of the street. And you thought, "Wonder what they think?" you know, and wonder why they don't do something, and later on you realize that there was nothing that they could do, nothing.

When I was there with our friends, with the doctor, so my very good friend, he was the—what would you call him here? There is the mayor, and next to the mayor the assistant mayor or something. And he would come and talk, you know, and at that time they didn't make a big issue out of it that a Christian would talk with a Jew. Not so in Germany, but this was there and this was the first four weeks. And he said that it is horrible what they are doing to us. He says, "We are absolutely helpless." They just didn't know.

Some of them, like in the book you have this Dr. Klein that we visited; there is the old woman in the picture, in the window. So one of his patients came and took them, the whole family; they had one son, so the three of them. He brought gentile papers and he took them on a horse and buggy to the second town and put them on the train. They went to Budapest and that's where they survived. So they were never taken out. So then after the war, when they came back to Huszt, they were greeted with ovation. They didn't

have doctors, because but for one doctor all of them were Jews, you know, in the big town. So he was the only one that came back, and they were so happy to see him. And you know, he got back his house and his work, and he stayed there.

CE: So they marched you—they came and got you and marched you—

LS: They marched us to the station, which is about one mile. And there it started out, you know.

CE: Is it you and your mother and father?

LS: And father, yeah. And they started—you know, the Germans had the expression, *Schnell, schnell*: “fast, fast, fast.” They didn’t let you think. You took one suitcase, they didn’t examine the suitcases: they know what is happening that you come to Auschwitz and everything is taken away anyway from you. And then the trains were guarded by these Hungarian gendarmes, and there was just a small opening because these were cattle cars, and you can see them here at St. Petersburg Holocaust Museum. And so the Hungarian gendarmes were yelling, “If you have any jewelry or if you have any money, give it to me, because if they find it on you they will kill you.” So we threw out on the other window—you know, the opening—and I know that people either found it or not along the tracks, because everybody did the same thing rather than to give it to them: let it go. And it was a horrible ride for two nights and two and a half days.

CE: Could you sit down, or were you standing?

LS: Well, you barely could sit down.

CE: On the floor?

LS: On the floor, or standing. And you know, for a young person it’s all right, but my parents at that time seemed old. She was fifty-four, my mother, and my father was sixty-four: ten years difference. So when we got there, the same story happens.

CE: Did they give you any food on the train?

LS: No, no.

CE: No food? Or water? Did you get water?

LS: No, we got—we had one pail to use for the toilet, and that's it. No food, no water. Everybody took with them, you know, sandwiches, because we didn't know how long it were. And nobody could eat, really.

CE: Really?

LS: It was—you were like herrings pushed—100 people in that one wagon. So when we got there, again the doors opened in Auschwitz, you go through, and at night—it was night and you see the big fires, the big fires all over, but we didn't know what it is. We did not know that that's where they were—at that time they gassed the people and then just threw them in the ditches and burned them. And the stench wasn't terrible.

And they took us, and I—when I stepped down and I helped my mother and they start—there was Dr. Mengele. Mengele is the “angel of death,” they call him, and Julie always mentions it that I said he was so good looking, you know, because we were—we all looked horrible after that ride. And there he was standing, pointing with his finger to the left or to the right. So he points me to the left and my mother, and I go and then I turn around and I see my mother is going the other direction, so I turned back; I want to go after her. And he said, “Didn't I tell you to go there?” I said, “I want to be with my mother.” “You'll see her tomorrow.” And this was his saying, because even my niece that lives here that you may interview will tell you the same story.²

CE: What about your father?

LS: My father—the men were separated right as they stepped down, so they went already by the Jewish—those were the Jewish kapos. The kapo was working in the camps and they had the striped suits, but they were working for them. And everyone that worked in the crematoria every three months was killed so that they cannot be witnesses. And so we were taken first into where they shaved us, first of all, shaved the whole hair. And I'm yelling at my friend Nadia—we assumed we were together. I said, “Where are you?” and she's right next to me. So you know, we looked at each other and we didn't know whether to cry or to laugh, didn't recognize each other. You know, it is such a change when you lose it.

²Ella Schlanger, who was also interviewed for the Holocaust Survivors Oral History Project. The DOI for her interview is F60-00035.

CE: Do you remember what you were feeling at that point?

LS: I don't think I thought of anything. I just saved—when they said throw away everything, I saved my toothbrush. I held on to the toothbrush through my whole stay in Auschwitz.

CE: Wow.

LS: And then they took us to one part of Auschwitz. Next day they took us to Birkenau. Birkenau was the new *lager* that was built for the inmates, because it was overflowing. That's why I don't have the number anymore, you know, because when they were taking us—so my niece has the number; she was in there about ten days before I. But by the time they were coming—you know, it was Eichmann. He was the one that wanted every Jew to be taken, and he requisitioned all the wagons that he could just to get it moving. That's why I always say that when they were asking the Americans to bomb the tracks, you know—so they said that they have to do the German towns and not the tracks. Well, if they would have bombed, who knows? It would have delayed it anyway, maybe, maybe. Anyway—

CE: So they cut your hair, and then what happened?

LS: And then we went through the disinfection: that means they took us through the showers. And at that time I didn't even know, because my niece was just bringing it up last week, that when they went they heard the screaming inside and they never saw them come out. So they didn't want to go in, you know. Those were like a huge room and showers every so often, you know, and in some cases water came out and in some cases cyanide. So when they were killing people, the cyanide came out. And my niece was saying that they didn't want to go in, and then they said, "No, no, no, it will be just a shower. You want to see the men?" And they brought a few of the relatives, the younger men that went through.

But we didn't know. We had—I had no idea, and I'm sure none of my friends had any idea, that what we are looking for. They said they have to save the heads because we will be in the *lager* and that lice shouldn't develop. And so we went through the shower, and then we were looking for our—but they said when we were going in, "Just throw everything there, throw everything on a big heap." And when we came out, we got rags. I got a navy blue dress, which was just hanging on me—it reached the floor, almost—and nothing. No underwear, nothing.

CE: Were they mean to you at that point or not?

LS: Nobody touched us, really. I never—

CE: But did they speak in a mean way?

LS: I never was hit by a German.

CE: Okay. But did they speak in a mean voice, or was it—?

LS: It was all just—they didn't speak. They just said constantly, "Fast, fast, fast! Come on, get ready, get ready!" And all you had to do is just undress, you know, fast and go inside, and you did get the shower. And then you barely had time to wash the soap off and then you were out on the other side and there you got the dress, and I got some wooden shoes, like the Dutch wear. And then they took us to that place in one of the bunks, you know. That was horrible, frightening, because you were like—and they were like three stories. Those were built out of brick; those were the original, you know.

Actually, Auschwitz was built for political prisoners in Germany. Then there were too many political prisoners and that's when they started to bring in the Jewish prisoners, so there was not enough room. And that's why—actually from Slovakia, where Arthur is from, the young women were taken out in forty-two [1942]. They were taken. And when we got there, most of them who survived—this was just very few of them, and they told us, "Don't complain. You have no idea when we went through." They had to build a water system, they had to build—they were like—I always thought that this were the stables built for horses, maybe; but no, they were built for incoming prisoners. They were like huge wooded structures, and then there were the bunks that were three stories, and on each one we were sixteen people, eight and eight, so we were like herrings. Yeah, the legs, the feet together.

CE: And they were built for how many people to be on?

LS: Altogether six, three and three, and there were sixteen.

CE: Sixteen, wow!

LS: So if one had to turn—it always reminded me when my kids used to sing the song that if you turn around everybody had to turn around. But I was—I always say I was always lucky. I was lucky because before we went I read *Gone With the Wind*, and *Gone With the Wind* was my bible, you know. I knew it. Even today you can ask me, any page you open and ask me about it. I can tell you where it is, which section it is.

CE: Wow!

LS: And I just loved that book, and Scarlett O'Hara is—I saw the movie. That was the first time I saw the movie, then, in New York in the Rockefeller Center.

CE: Have you seen it since?

LS: Oh, yeah, quite a few times.

CE: Okay.

LS: Yeah. So anyway, I became the storyteller because—you know, I got on the same bunk as—there were girls from my hometown who knew me. I knew some of them, but most of them I didn't. But they were like carrying the soup kettle. You know, everything came in this, like here are the milk cans, you know, in the big kettle. They brought them from the kitchen and they were dishing them out. I never touched the soup because it had some, like, sandy grit in it and I couldn't take it; but they gave me from the bottom potatoes, and then I washed the potatoes out. And I—yeah, I lived on potatoes and got pretty big. When everybody was losing weight, I gained weight.

CE: And they gave it to you 'cause you were the storyteller? Yeah?

LS: Yes. Every day I would tell them, you know, half a chapter, about, when they finally came up and the lights were out.

CE: Did you have to work during the day?

LS: No.

CE: No? So you were just—

LS: Did nothing.

CE: So you were just in the—

LS: We were just either on the bunks or we could go outside. I would go over to the third or fourth one where my friend from my hometown was—they came with another transport, so they were a little bit later—and her mother. And I envied her in the beginning that her mother is there, but I used to take the mother a few potatoes because, you know, the soup—I understand that what they did, they put in the soup something so we don't menstruate. I was the only one, I think, in the whole *lager* that did, because I didn't eat the soup. And it was not good.

CE: You know, isn't it also true that if you're malnourished you don't menstruate, so it could have been also because you had the potatoes?

LS: I don't know.

CE: Yeah, I don't know either.

LS: I don't know. I did. I menstruated every month on the dot. And it was not good because you didn't have there anything to protect you. So you would take out—you know, if some of the girls got comforters—the boys would come and clean the latrines, and they would sometimes bring—you know they had access. I don't know how they had access, but they brought some and gave it.

CE: Some food?

LS: No, like comforters.

CE: Oh, comforters, okay.

LS: Yes, so we took the inside of it and used it as cotton.

CE: Yes, okay.

LS: So—

CE: Maybe we ought to—I hate to stop, but maybe we ought to stop here. But don't lose your train of thought, okay? She has to change the tape, okay? So, just stay there.

Part 1 ends; part 2 begins

CE: This is tape two with Lilly Salcman. So, you were telling us a little bit about hygiene in the camp.

LS: The hygiene was that they had there one barrack that was the latrine. That means there would—it was built out of cement, like an outhouse, but connected, one next to the others. So there was just no shame, you had to do everything together; but it was only girls, only girls. So we had the latrines, and then the men were cleaning it out every so often, you know, when it accumulated. And then there was another barrack, or we called it barrack, another one that had the same way, only faucets next to each other, so everybody could go there and wash up. And then—

CE: Did you have a washcloth or anything? You just—

LS: Nothing.

CE: You just had water—you could just put water on yourself.

LS: That's right. And sometimes we had a piece of soap from the boys that brought it from some of the girls that worked in sorting out the clothes. But not from ours, you see, not from our block. I was in the so-called children's block, but how many children were there out of—in each one of the bunks there were 1,000 girls, 1,000. There were thirty-one barracks and there were 31,000 people. And we had to stand *Appell* every morning, row of five, and stand there until the Germans came and counted everybody. Now, we were in number eight. That was the first one of the even numbers, and next to us was number ten and there (inaudible), so everybody was running away from there.

So every morning the other—*Älteste*, we called her, the leader—would come and get—because many came to our place and they got us to go and stand *Appell* so when the German comes she has the number. The German's name—the SS woman's name was [Irma] Grese, and she was very pretty, you know, when you are shaved and have rags on you, and there comes this woman in a uniform, blonde hair. And she had a helper who was a Jewish prisoner, but she was so ugly—I always said that Messiah couldn't come from her (laughs)—and thin and very strong. So she would go along, and if somebody had to be punished, then she did the punishing.

So from the number ten, the leader says, “And I want you to stay here. Don't go back to your original place, because if not you will see”—and I finished it. I have a big mouth, and I said, “We'll take you to the gate, and that's your end.” So she comes up. “Who said it?” No one says, nobody says. And I am the second one from the end. Next to me stands a woman, because she must have been maybe thirty, beautiful woman, but she was married. And so she was—we're standing *Appell*, and comes Grese and the redhead. And so the head of the thing, “And this one said that”—you know what I said.

So the redhead goes to mine, first one, and gives her one that all five fingers stayed on her. She said, “No, no, that wasn't her,” and points at me. And I looked at Grese very innocently and then the redhead comes to give me one, she says, “Stop it.” I tell you, I always think that I must have something in me that I went through life lucky, you know. Unbelievable. So she stopped, but we went back, sure enough, to the other place. This was already after—I was in Auschwitz really from May 21 till about November 20 or 22, and then they started emptying out Auschwitz because the Russian Army was coming near.

CE: Okay, before you go away from Auschwitz, let me just ask a couple more questions. So since you weren't working but you were together all the time, did you talk a lot with each other?

LS: You know what, we were talking, like, I guess. I really don't recall, if I want to be really truthful. I'm trying to think what did you do all day, but you know, then I ask myself, “What do you do here all day?”

CE: (laughs) Good point!

LS: You know, the time just goes. I'm looking—I go by the minute because I have so much to do, and all of a sudden it's 10:30.

CE: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That is a very good response.

LS: But there too, you know, all you think of [is] “What will I eat tonight?” Because at night, in the beginning, we had about three or four nights we had the best—it’s like oatmeal, but it was very refined oats, so it was like—like the children get.

CE: Like the Cream of Wheat?

LS: Cream of Wheat or cream of—but it’s not oats, but it’s very finely prepared. And we got it for about three nights, and I just was crazy about it. I exchanged my bread for it, you know, because some girls didn’t like it. But they were hungry, so I gave my bread and they gave me the thing. And then there was for three days, or maybe four, they had the Limburger cheese. You know, it smelled terrible and many girls don’t like it. I loved it. So I would get in—they brought it in wooden cases, so they dished it out and then the wooden case would be thrown away, and I would always get the paper from it and just ate it. I still love it, stinky cheese. (laughs) And I still love potatoes. Anyway—

CE: So why didn’t they have you working at that point?

LS: They didn’t have work to do, you see, because over there, there was no work really. The men were taken to the mines or to—I don’t know what else they would be doing there. And my father was taken really to the mines, and then about four weeks later they brought him back home pretty emaciated and killed him.

CE: Did you see him?

LS: That I know from the boys. No.

CE: But you didn’t get to see him?

LS: Never see him.

CE: And your two brothers, where are they at this point?

LS: They were—well, my older brother was in Poland. He was picking up the mines for the Hungarians. You know, the Russians, as they were retreating, they left mines dug under the road so that when the Hungarians come it would blow up; but they send the Jews ahead to remove the mines. And my mother, who at that time was fifty-two, fifty-three, she had beautiful dark hair. She became completely white, she was so worried. That was her favorite son, and we didn't hear from them only once in a while. But once in a while we heard from his sergeant, who would come home—he was a Hungarian, and he would bring a note from my brother that he gave him a little bit of bacon and extra bread, and we would give him money. So I would go to his hometown and I would take him the money.

But one nice day they caught him, and they found a little black notebook that he had and there were eight young men that he was giving them extra rations and that he was collecting money. So when they brought them home, they brought him home. He was court-martialed and the eight young men were also sentenced to thirteen months in prison. So my brother actually, when they took us, was in Hungarian prison. And I was at that time—this was in forty-four [1944]—forty-three [1943] end of forty-three [1943]. I was in Budapest, and I tried to get him—that they should let him come home for a furlough, you know. So I went that—you had to go to the highest people to get, and there was a very nice old gentleman and he says to me, “Well, I think now it is the attorney general's hands. You can go and ask him. Maybe he'll agree, and then you come back here.”

So I went there, and the attorney general was a short fellow, very nice, offered me a cigarette. I said, “I don't smoke.” And so he said—I presented to him; my story was that Mom is deathly sick and she wants to see her son to come. Give him four weeks of furlough. So he listened very politely, escorted me to the gentleman to the end, to the door, and so Monday I go to the old gentleman, who was the head of the—like the chief of the army here. And so I go in, and I was so sure that I got the agreement from the other one. And he says, you know, “The attorney general refused.” So that was one time I broke out in a hysterical cry, you know. You know, you work yourself into to it. Your mother is sick and she wants to see her son—

CE: Right. You believe it, right?

LS: I believe it, yeah. And I started crying. I said, “I cannot go home. I told my mother over the phone, I called”—you know, there wasn't a telephone in every room. I had to call and then they called; she had to go to the post office to talk. Maybe in the small towns it used to be like this before; not lately. When we came already, we had the telephone, only we had the operator—you had to go through the operator.

CE: Right.

LS: So anyway, he said, “Don’t cry, don’t cry.” He said, “Let me see what we can do.” So he went into the other—the elderly gentleman—and he came back. “Okay, your brother will go home for four weeks.” So I went home elated. Wonderful, he will be coming home! And I wrote to my brother, and sure enough, this was already when the ghetto was established. They let him out, so he went to my aunt’s house, which was very close to where he was incarcerated, and he wrote a letter that he is not coming home. He’s going back to the jail, because he knows that where we are going he can be helpful more from home—he was a very bright young man—than if he comes with us, because he just came from Poland. And, you know, Auschwitz really was in Poland; it was the East German Poland, Polish quarter.

But he said, you know, to “Send me a change of clothing, so I have it here if I come out from”—he thought that they will keep him there, you know, he had to serve thirteen months, that he will serve maybe a little less, but he should have that. So I packed up for him a suit and we sent it to him. And then came the ghetto, and my mother was in the ghetto, and then they took us. So really we never saw him again, because he was—he was taken from the prison to Mauthausen, to the concentration camp, and he survived. He survived to the last day, and then came the British and they served them pork and rice with all the fat in it, and these guys were emaciated. And he is buried in a common grave with all the young men that died of dysentery.

So, that was one brother. The other brother survived, and he died just about nine years ago, here.

CE: Here? And did he live in Florida?

LS: Yeah. He came here when he retired in New York, so he came here because we had here the apartment.

CE: Now, when you were in the camp, how did you cope with the loss of your mother? How did you put that together?

LS: Well, it was very interesting. I loved my mother, but when I saw my friend’s mother to climb up, I said, “I am glad she isn’t here.” I don’t know whether she would have survived, you know. It was so bad. And as a young girl you survive everything, but you know, my mother had five kids and she was a little bit on the heftier—I have here a picture of her. You know, she was not huge, but well endowed.

CE: And how about the loss of your father?

LS: Well, I was also—I thank God. You know, even today I say if somebody is so sick—Arthur says no matter what that you have to help to the last minute. And I say if somebody's suffering, and to prolong it and prolong it another week, another two months—like I know my niece's husband. You know, so the doctor ordered—they called in Hospice to him, and when they started giving him morphine because he was in pain, she said, "You are killing him. I want to have this," and she's a nurse. They said, "Either you are with him or we are." When you call in Hospice they want to take over and they just help you to—the transition. And so she kept him alive for six or seven more weeks. It wasn't life. Every second they taking to the hospital because he was dehydrated, he was painful, because he was in a nursing home. It's not life.

And that's why I say when the boys told me that, "You were lucky you didn't see your father," you know because when he came back they called him *Muselmann*, you know; those were the emaciated people that were like you see, the pictures.

CE: So now, talk about—

LS: And—

CE: Go ahead.

LS: I always tell my girls, you know, when they brought back—when prisoners of war are brought back and they ask them, "So how did you survive it?" You survive because you want to live, you know. Everybody wants to live. So you count the days, you make marks on the bed or on the floor or something, and you are just looking forward and counting the minutes when you get the other piece of bread.

CE: Did you make marks or do anything like that? No?

LS: No, there was no place to make marks. We didn't have anything to make marks with.

CE: Did you always want to live?

LS: Yeah.

LS: I was told—it was interesting in Auschwitz. There was a woman; she was the only one that was there with two little children, a seven-year-old and ten-year-old girl. And so one day she takes my hand and my palm. I said, “You can read my palm?” Well, she said, “You know, as much as I can read,” but a Gypsy woman taught her how to. So she reads my palm and she says, “You will survive. And you will meet your mate when you come out, and you will be very happy.” And then all of a sudden she stops, you know, and I said, “What is it?” “I cannot read anymore,” and she puts my palm down. And I always say that she saw that my first husband passed away, ’cause I met him the second day in Prague. So they know something.

CE: Yeah.

LS: I don’t know. I believe—you know, did you ever read—there is ten or eleven books, the Lanny Budd books.³ It is by Upton Sinclair. That’s how I learned English, reading those books. And actually Julie has the whole series, too, because I had it and it is—if you want to learn history, world history, including most of Europe and America, you read that book. It’s an historical book. I mean, it is—

CE: But it’s a story, right?

LS: It is fictional.

CE: Fictional?

LS: Fictional history.

CE: That’s the way I like to learn history is by fiction.

LS: That’s right.

CE: Um, you know, we could talk another four hours easily—

³The Lanny Budd series is a series of eleven books written by Upton Sinclair from 1940 to 1953.

LS: I know.

CE: I'm thinking that maybe that we could talk about your leaving Auschwitz—

LS: Go to Zittau.

CE: —fairly quickly through that period, to save time for you and Arthur to talk together. Do you think Arthur would want to join us after that?

LS: Yeah.

CE: And talk a little bit about the two of you meeting and so on.

LS: Well, from Auschwitz, we went to heaven. We went to a working place that was Zittau, and it was on the border, as we learned later. I didn't know while we were there that we were five kilometers from the Czechoslovakian border on the German side. And when we arrived there, they took us in a building; it was like a hotel. We were coming in and the British soldiers were going out. Well, on my way, when they put us through the disinfection, they took away my toothbrush. So we meet these British guys who are moving out. I said, "What is happening?" "We are taking them to another military camp, a POW camp." And he says—and they were asking, "Do you need anything?" I said, "Do you have a toothbrush?" And they have toothbrushes because they were getting packages from the Red Cross.

CE: So why was the toothbrush so important to you?

LS: Because I always feel in the morning I have to brush my teeth. I don't know.

CE: Me, too. Me, too. Somehow it's—

LS: I cannot swallow water before I brush my teeth.

CE: Me, too.

LS: And my girls, well, I guess they inherited it too. (laughs). But there we had central heat. Each—we were in a room. There were four double bunks, but we had our own bunk: you know, on each bunk was one girl.

CE: Wow!

LS: And we had covers, and we had a—the head of the camp, the camp leader, was an elderly gentleman, and he says, “You know, I am not an SS man”—he was in an SS uniform. “I’m *Wehrmacht*, military, and I will try to get you everything I can, but you have to behave.” So he was like a father. He arranged that we had a bath every week, with big kettles, you know, with warm water, soap. And mainly we had—everybody had—it was in the cold winter. We had heat.

So when we arrived there, the next day they came and took the day—the day switched over and I got into the night, you know that was twelve and twelve hours. So when they took us over to the factory—we were on a hill, like, and the factory was down. And in the factory we were repairing old airplane motors because they couldn’t make new ones anymore. So they brought in—really from Russian—the retuning German Army people, and to each German guy, two Jewish girls were appointed to help him. And they asked who speak German, and I spoke fluent German at the time, so I put my hand up. And so they took me into the office and I was giving out the, you know, fine instruments that they needed. So the worker would come to me, give me his number—he had one of these round numbers—and I would hang it in the place where I took down the instrument, and then when he brought it back I would give him back the number.

So, I befriended quite a few of them. And so there was an elderly man—again, elderly; he was about fifty, you know, but when you are twenty-one it’s elderly. So I said—he says to me, “Tell me, did you have lice?” I said, “Why do you ask? No.” He said, “Well you all have these shaved heads.” Also, by that time we already had a little hair growing; this is like six months later.

CE: ’Cause they only cut your hair one time, when you came in?

LS: Just one time, yeah. So I told him—well, did I ever show you the picture that I have when we returned?

CE: Did you show it to me? Yes, you did.

LS: The last time? So anyway, so I said, “No, we were in Auschwitz.” He says, “What is Auschwitz?” I said, “You don’t know what Auschwitz? I thought everybody in Germany knows what Auschwitz is.” He had no idea, and I have to believe him

Here is my hubby, Arturo!

CE: Oh, good.

LS: We were wondering—

Arthur Salcman: How are you doing?

CE: Good.

LS: So—

AS: I gave you good (inaudible).

LS: He had no idea, had no idea, so I tried to explain to him. He wouldn’t believe me. He said, “That’s impossible.” Never heard of it.

So anyway, we had good food. But there was a German SS woman, and she told the higher up SS people that here is this *lager führer* that he is very protective of the Jewish girls, and he was transferred. So we got another one, and he said the same story. He said, “Look here, I am not an SS man, but I want you to behave and I will take care of you.”

But you know, after—he was there maybe two or three weeks. And there are always some bad apples, you know, in the group. So these girls, when they were bringing in the potatoes to cook, these—one of the girls or two, I don’t know, made a hole in the sack and potatoes started falling out and they grabbed them, put them everywhere. And he had called an *Appell*, and he says, “I told you that you have to behave. So Sunday, instead of the regular”—what we had was almost like a stew, you know, meat and potatoes—“you will have Spanish stew.” What is the Spanish stew? In a big kettle of water, they put in two pounds of potatoes.

CE: And that's it?

LS: It was nothing. And since then, it wasn't too good. But I got—in the office, I had a woman. There were two German women: one was a miserable character and the other one was a sweetheart; she's in the book, too. And so she says to me, "It's cold; why don't you wear stockings?"

I said, "Stockings? We don't have stockings."

"Do you have panties?"

"No, nothing." Next day, she brought me stockings, panties, and she brought me a pot of (phone rings) red cabbage.

Excuse me, can you stop it [the tape]?

CE: We'd rather not. Can I—well—

LS: You can answer.

CE: Chris can answer it for you.

Christopher Patti: And have them take a message?

LS: Yeah.

CP: Is there a phone in the kitchen?

LS: Yeah. Yeah. I think he will stop.

So this red cabbage and meatballs, I never ate anything as good as that. And then she would bring me always. And each of the men that worked with the Jewish girls would bring the girls sandwiches, or half their sandwich and give it to them. I mean, they were very decent people. That's why I say you cannot judge a nation by a few. And I just watched the other day the Nuremberg Trials, did you ever see?

CE: Yes, I have.

LS: Now it—I saw it at least twice before, but now it really hit me, you know, that what was happening, that a decent men like the judge succumbs to Hitler's rules, because he says, "Well, if that's what it takes for Germany to be strong and to come back." So it was in the beginning. So one Jew; what is one minority, what is the difference? But then he says, "Come more and more, and you are in the web and you cannot get out."

CE: So could you talk, if we could do it in about five minutes, which is—I'm sorry to even ask you to do this, but could you talk about life after you got out of this camp?

LS: Life after was great, life after we got out. We were marching; we were five kilometers from the border. So I caught a chicken and we were going to make a chicken paprikash, but all of a sudden my friend tells me—the boy from Huszt, he says, "You know, we are going to Prague. The border is five kilometers from"—because the Germans disappeared. That was on the seventh of May. "We'll go to the border and then we will go to Prague." So I said, "Sure." Left the chicken, left everything there because the Germans disappeared. So everybody ran into the kitchen and to see what's there to eat, and we started out.

So by night we got to the border, and there we went to a German house and we told the woman—there was a woman by herself—that we are from this camp and we want to go on, whether she will let us sleep over. She said, "You can use the living room," so we all slept on the floor. But she gave us a radio, and at midnight, we heard that the war is ended, May 8. So everybody was elated. So next morning, first of all, we continued, and we got to an empty house because the Germans—this was the Sudeten, you know. The Germans took over the Czech and Jewish homes, and now they left. I mean, there were Germans living there, too, but these were the new Germans that came in. And now they left and everything was there. And so I found these pants and a white shirt, and I felt like a million dollars.

CE: What had you been wearing before that?

LS: The striped—

CE: You still had the striped even in the work camp?

LS: Yeah, yeah.

CE: Okay.

LS: Even there.

CE: Even though you finally got some underpants.

LS: Underwear, at least, but the outerwear was still the striped dress. And the one dress, you know, we wore that dress for six months. I don't even know how on earth could we do it. I don't remember ever washing it; we didn't have the facility. It's interesting.

CE: Do you remember smells?

LS: No.

CE: You don't remember smells?

LS: You know what? I lost my smell in Auschwitz.

CE: Did you?

LS: Even now I cannot smell—it has to be very strong smell that I should smell it.

CE: Isn't that interesting. I wonder if that's common.

LS: No.

CE: With other people?

LS: No, I'm just lucky.

CE: So you don't remember? So you don't remember smells?

LS: No, no. We washed every day, you know. I mean, we had that again, the, you know, washrooms. But you learn that your underarm is mainly in—that you wash there, the sweat.

CE: That's right. Yeah.

LS: No.

CE: So, I'm wondering if maybe we should stop and let you and Arthur be together and talk about your first relationships. Your first relationship—

LS: With him?

CE: Well, maybe we can start for just a few minutes with your first relationship.

LS: You mean in Prague?

CE: With your first husband, and Arthur's relationship with his first wife.

LS: That is very short, because when we started out the next day, the train from where we were—so we started out and the Russian Army caught up with us. And another girl and the young man—boy—and I got bicycles. The two of us got bicycles, and there was—coming down the road, we saw there was an old German sitting on his front porch, and there was a bicycle. And so we went up and we asked him whether we can get that bicycle and he says no. So, we went back to the road and there comes a Russian, a Russian officer. So he comes and he says, "Where were you?"—with the short hair, you know.

So I said, “We come from the concentration camp.”

And he says, “Why were you there?”

I said, “Because we are Jewish.”

He says, “You know, I am Jewish, too, but my soldiers don’t know it,” because the Russians were very anti-Semitic, you know. He said, “They wouldn’t listen to me if they knew.” So he says, “Where are you going?”

I said, “Well, we would like to go to Prague. And we have two bikes, but the other—the one girl would like to have a bike, but the German doesn’t want to give it to us.”

“Yeah?” So he says, “Come with me.” So he goes up and he says to the German, “I’m taking the bike,” and the German says no. So he takes out his revolver. He says, “We are taking the bike!” and he didn’t say anything. And he—

So, the three of us started out and we get—and talk to the general, who was in the car, and I told him. And at that time I spoke perfect Russian, because I had one and a half year in Russian—real Russian education. So I told him that these two girls don’t ride the bicycle; would he let them go with him and let me leave? So he takes out the map and he says, “Yeah, here is the next town that you may go to, and there is an inn and a bar, and so you wait there for your friends. We’ll drop them off there.”

I said, “Okay.” So we go there and we arrive, and we tell the Czechs, who are unbelievable, of the returning prisoners of war. Everywhere you had in Prague, and food just stands all over.

So we get there to this inn, and so we tell him what happened and he says okay. So he gives us a room and I said, “Do you know, is there a train to Prague?”

He says, well, he heard that the first train is leaving at midnight.

“So how far is the station?” So he tells us.

So we go down to the station. I ask the station manager. He says, “Yeah, the first train will be leaving. They are taking milk to Prague.”

I said, “Could we get on it?” and I tell him our story. He says sure. You know at that time you were traveling anywhere without money.

So we went back and told the innkeeper, “Look here, we will leave the bicycles here, and when our friends come you tell them that they should follow us to Prague. We are going to Prague by train and they should take the next train.”

So we come to Prague, and Julie asked me, “Mom, did you think how you will meet in Prague? Have you ever been to Prague?” I said no. I thought, well, we’ll meet somehow.

So we went to Prague, we come there, and we go on the Wenceslas Place [Wenceslas Square], which is the center of Prague, and all of a sudden I hear my name. This is a girl that went to *gymnázium*; **she was one class above me. She took me up to her apartment and gave me coffee and cake, and then I told her. So she says, “What are you going to do?”**

So she told me what they went through during the war there. And I said, “Well I’m going to see Mr. [Alois] Krofta.” Mr. Krofta was like the Hilton here, he had the biggest hotels, and he married my cousin. And my cousin, when Hitler was coming in, she left through Turkey. They had—you know, through the Turkish ambassador she got the visa; she went to Turkey and came out here. During the war she would be here. They had a daughter who was very blonde; my cousin was blonde, too, tall blonde girl. And then she will come back to them.

So I thought, well, I knew the hotel’s name, so I’ll go and ask about him. So we arrive to Prague, and I went over to the hotel and I said that I would like to see Mr. Krofta. Well, they say, “He’s not here, but he lives right across the Wenceslas Place, number fifty-five; you’ll find him home.”

So we went up there and I left my two buddies outside, the boy and the girl, and I knock on the door and the housekeeper comes, and I said, “I would like to see Mr. Krofta.”

So he says, “Who do I say wants to see him?”

I said, "Tell him his wife's cousin." So he right away came out and I told him, you know, who I am and where I came from. He right away ordered that she should bring some coffee and a babka, a whole babka. And so he was asking me what are my plans. I said, "Well, I would like to go home."

He said, "Don't go home, because that will never be free from the Russians. The Russians are in my hotel," in the Hotel Alcron. And he says, "You are telling me that you finished Russian *gymnázium*?"

I said, "Yeah."

"You know, they are looking for interpreters." So he says, "I'll talk to them and I'll make a date for you."

I said, "Okay."

So he says, "I cannot put you there, but I have a so-called *penzion*"; that is like a rooming house here, you would call it, but a fancier one. It is a little bit up on the other part of Prague, and the trouble is that the trolley cars are not going because the last day the Czechs had a little bit of a revolution and the electric wiring was cut. "So you are young, you walk." And we walked at least two kilometers up there, which is about one mile and something. And he gave me a note to the manager that whatever we need he should supply me and a room.

So then he comes out, and there on the staircase are sitting my two friends. He says, "That boy is with you?" I said yeah. He says, "Well, you give me back the thing. I have to make it two rooms; you cannot sleep in the same room." So he made two rooms, and in those two rooms anybody that came back lived there, because soon enough I got a job.

First of all, second day—right after we were going down to town and there is a big tent that was set up by the Catholic diocese: food, you know. They had the Red Cross—I mean everybody, everybody; whatever they could, they would do for the returning because they knew what was happening. So he says—so we went to town. We went to the police station, because you have to register when you come into town, and then we went down. And there was a place—again, very close to the big Hotel Alcron, because Mr. Krofta sent me a note that at two o'clock I have an appointment with the Russians for an interpreter.

So we had our lunch at the Red Cross station there, and then coming down in the tent we stopped for breakfast. And who do I see there? My two friends whom I left with the Russians. So we were very happy, so they came with us and we went downtown, into town, and there we went for lunch. And I said after lunch, “I have to go to at two o’clock, but the two of you go to the police department because you have to register, and then we’ll meet here.”

So I went to the Alcron, and there were the soldiers rushing back—the Russians—back and forth. I stop one, I am telling them I have an appointment; he doesn’t know anything. And another one—and then I stand there and I thought, “I am really crazy. I just came from hell. What do—I have food, I have where to live. I have time to go to work.” So I decided that I go back to that Red Cross place and find my two friends there. Well, they didn’t come back yet, so I took off and went up to our apartment.

They come there, and the other girl asked me, “So where are the other two girls?”

I said, “Well, they will come.”

And she said, “Did you tell them where we are?” No. So she says, “How will we find them?”

So I said, “Don’t worry, so we’ll find them tomorrow.”

Sure enough, next day I go to the Red Cross station; it is noon time. And first we go—yeah, we go there as soon as I came down. And I said, “You know the two girls that we were here yesterday with? Did you see them?”

She said, “Yeah, they slept here and they left to go around.” Everybody was looking for somebody, survivor, you know, that maybe they knew about a sister or brother. “But she said she will be here at noon—they will be here at noon.” Okay, so if they come back we’ll be here at noon, too.

So then we go on the streets and you meet people that were coming back, and at noon I go back there, and who is there sitting but my future husband, with another colleague of his; he was also in partisan clothes. And so I knew him from my hometown, because he was a doctor in my town. He had a wife and a three-year-old little girl, whom I knew

very well, and I knew what happened to them, you know. So he just jumped up and wouldn't let go. I had to—you know, what happened and how it happened and what happened to his wife.

CE: You mean he's telling—he's telling this about what happened with his wife?

LS: I was. He wanted to ask me, because he wasn't home. He really escaped death by just a hair, because he was a physician. And one night the Russian—the Ukrainian boys come to him and they said that a parachuter, a British parachuter, jumped and the parachuter got caught in the tree and he fell down and broke his leg, [and asked him] whether he would come and set it. So, without thinking twice, he went and set it.

But a few days later, the Ukrainians got good and drunk—they all liked to drink—and blabbered and were blabbering, and the Hungarians came and arrested him. And he was taken to prison to Košice, where Arthur then went to school before, and there they sentenced him to death. But before they could do anything the Russians were coming, so they sent him to Dachau; that was another concentration camp. But he went there as a political prisoner, and it's interesting that the prisoners there knew that he's coming and when he arrived they put him in the first aid station. And there are many people that thanked him when we came already here to America—and in Prague, too, when we lived there for two years—how much he helped them, you know, to save their lives.

CE: Did you want to say what happened to his wife and child?

LS: His wife and child went with the next transport, then, with the doctor at whose house we were, because they lived across the street. And like everybody, she was holding her little girl in her arms, and that was it. The kapos would tell the young women, if they could get to them, you know, "Give the baby to your mother, give the child to your mother, and you will see them; you will see them later," to save the young women because they knew what is happening. But whatever reason it was, she didn't; or maybe because her brother also had a smaller child, maybe the grandma took the other child. I don't know, but she was killed the day she arrived, with the baby.

CE: Okay. We have just two more minutes on this tape. Would you just give a summary of how long you were married to your first husband and when he died?

LS: Well, we were married for twenty—we would have celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary in August, and he died in July.

CE: Okay. What year was that?

LS: And that was in 1971.

CE: Nineteen seventy-one. Okay. All right, I think we can stop here.

Part 2 ends; part 3 begins

CE: This is tape five with Arthur and Lilly Salcman. And what we thought we would do in this tape is let the two of you talk a little bit about your relationship, storytelling, memory, how you cope with the memory of the Holocaust. And so, Chris and I have four or five questions that we would like to ask you and give both of you an opportunity to respond. And the first one—and you said that so eloquently—

CP: Sure.

CE: Why don't you say it again?

CP: Well, the first time when we talked, when we had our pre-interview, both afterwards—both Carolyn and I noticed what a magical relationship the two of you have, and also how open and lovingly you both talk about your ex-wife and ex-husband. And so we wanted to know, do you talk about your exes with each other, and how does that play into your relationship today?

LS: I would say that we feel that our relationship is so strong, you know, that I don't think he minds or I mind when we talk about our former wives, because it was—both of them went very young and quite suddenly and it was a great loss—for him even more than for me, I would say, because he was completely lost. He's a very good guy, but he leaves everything to his other half to do. (all laugh) So when the other half is gone, he was completely lost. And in our relationship, Alex was busy with his practice and I was doing everything in the house, and I also did the office work for him. So I think my luck to survive it better was that we were very lucky to get in a young doctor, who actually had to go to the Navy, but in between he agreed to come and help out so that we could go for a vacation. Well, the vacation never came because the young man started and Alex died.

As a matter of fact, when he was dying, I mean, everything went just like that, in five minutes. We knew that he's very sick: he had lung cancer. He lived in the open on the farm and he wasn't a smoker, but I think it was in the genes because he had cousins who died of lung cancer, and his two brothers died of—one cancer of the colon and the other one cancer of the bone. None of them had lung cancer, but I guess if you follow it that everybody has these cells in the body, the question only is whether they become cancer cells or whether they are immunized by your body.

So we really, I think, found each other by the niece, his niece was married to my best friend's little brother. They got us together because they knew us both and they thought that we would be good for each other. And I think we were.

CE: Arthur—

LS: Thirty-four years, more than with the first halves. And we are both strong people, each in our own way. So I accept the way he is and he has to accept the way I am.
(laughs)

CE: Arthur, do you want to say something about your relationship with Lilly and the acceptance of, or how you talk about your first wife and how that's accepted as part of your history?

AS: Well, I think that we got used to it. Other people got—made us used to it, that both have their great points, pluses, and they have their minuses. And as long as you realize that from the beginning and you get used to it, so those minuses become lost and everything is just a plus.

My friends in the factory where I worked with, AMF, if they needed an answer on spelling, the first thing [is that] Edith—Edith was her name—called up. If they needed an answer on the teaching the children what the library means to a person, because they never been before taught, ever. Edith was—they brought her the report card to Edith first, then they brought it to their mother, and she wouldn't accept it; she would take them and explained to them. "You see, your mom is entitled to see it first. I appreciate very much, but then I want to see it." And that's how she was, you know, and they accepted it.

Now, Michael at one occasion, I remember there were so many people standing around him. And we were in—lived in Brooklyn next to—

LS: The Verrazano Bridge.

AS: What?

LS: The Verrazano Bridge.

AS: No, no, not the Verrazano Bridge. In Brooklyn there is a street that's—anyhow, in the building there are many people are waiting for the elevator. And Michael was in those days about five, six years old, and like all the kids he wanted to be in the first one, so he go in. She didn't bother—it didn't bother her at all to bring him up the way she felt he should brought up. She called him out after he was there, he come out, she explained to him in front of everybody. "You see, these are elder people here. You got to have respect for them, you got to help them." We brought them up this way.

When I got a question at the Holocaust Museum and they said you can just give just three or four sentences and tell everything, because we don't have the time for, like, love letters about your family, about all you lived. I put up—as I mentioned to you, I put up, "I trained my son—I brought him up to help people, to live. Not to kill people, but to help people." And that's the way I think that we both feel, even if you don't say it. Sometimes we don't say the things to each other, but we feel that way.

You can't imagine from the story that I told you that when I was preparing to come to the United States and in Prague, I didn't have anybody except my brother or any—and he left ahead of me. So he gave me the instructions what to do, and he tried to find me a proper place. I don't know if my brother knew her in those days. He knew her later on here in America; we got together; but before that I don't know. And he found me the place. I stayed there when I come to the United States, and I meet a lady at my niece, and we are talking about our past life and our future life, and there are no children. She says that she lives there and there. I said, "You lived there? How did you live there? Why did you live there? That was my place and everyone will live there; why you?"

LS: (inaudible)

AS: I said, "If everybody live there, I live there too, I want you to know. But I don't—I never knew you. How did I get there?"

LS: So he had a good time there, so we had— (laughs)

AS: And I had a good time there and it was good for me to—

LS: But it was a beautiful apartment.

AS: —to do the things I wanted to do to get soon out from there, as soon as possible.

LS: Also, that was an apartment that the Germans had to leave, when they left. And when I started working for the state, I got right away an apartment. Actually I got—yeah.

AS: But each and every one was—they're living separately; we didn't know about each other. And yet, even the relationship—Michael was how old? About maybe a month or older than the girl of—

LS: Olga.

AS: Yeah, of her daughter.

LS: Of her daughter?

AS: Of her, my—

LS: That's right. Yeah, yeah, and that was—

AS: And she pushed always the little baby towards Michael, and you know, he didn't know what—he was a little boy—

LS: My friend had—

AS: Scratching and you know. Anyhow, anyhow, somehow it didn't work out the way she thought it will work out. They were two babies, you know, and she was always complaining about it—

LS: And besides she moved to—

AS: “Why is he doing it?” Why? Because he’s a baby, he doesn’t know what he’s doing, that’s why. (laughs) When he grows up, he will know.

CE: So let me ask you, do the two of you talk about your experiences in the Holocaust very often together?

LS: He talks more about it than I.

CE: He does? And why is that, do you think?

LS: Well, I guess as you get older you get—I don’t want to get older—(CP laughs)

CE: You don’t want to get older. I don’t blame you, I don’t either. So you think it’s as you get older, you talk about it more?

LS: Well, he misses a—well, it’s funny, you know. Before his brother passed away, we used to live across the bridge in South Pasadena, and his brother would come down every winter and live there for two months; he would get an apartment. And the two of them would go down and talk and talk and talk, and in the end—they never had such a close relationship as when they were together here.

AS: I found out—

LS: And they were reminiscing, you know.

CE: About the Holocaust or just in general?

LS: I don’t think so much about the Holocaust. About the family, yeah.

AS: And I agree—I have to tell you, I agreed—I never knew her husband, first husband, but I agree almost with everything that I heard about him. The people laughed with me in the town. I never heard so many praise about a person that I heard about her husband.

And they loved her, too. You know, the funny thing was he was the doctor, he was examining, and when he was through with the examination they went into the kitchen to ask her. The doctor gave her the writing he prescribed. She was the judge. (laughs)

LS: That was for my friends, you know, so they came into town with what's wrong with them. And they got this and this medicine. So he asked me—they asked—they trusted him. He was a great guy.

CE: So do you like to talk about the Holocaust, Arthur?

AS: If I like to talk about the—

LS: I don't like him to talk about the Holocaust, because he gets very emotional.

AS: I get very emotional. She was—it was a different story. My wife was the only one in the family. She didn't have brothers, she didn't have sisters. So you know, she was everything to me and I was everything to her.

CP: It's interesting to hear you talk about her husband as being the person in the community that everybody loved, and your wife was that person as well, right?

LS and AS: Yeah.

LS: I mean, whoever I heard from, just praise for her.

AS: When I was—even when Suzie was—

LS: She was very young.

AS: When Suzie was getting married—

LS: Forty-seven, forty-six.

AS: When Suzie was getting married—she met a gentleman, by the way, from—he was from where Michael is?

LS: Which one? Baltimore.

AS: Baltimore, a doctor.

LS: He was a psychiatrist.

AS: And she wanted—before she will make any decision, she wants me to talk to him and to see.

CE: Oh, good.

LS: Wanted his opinion.

AS: And she made—

LS: And the poor guy.

AS: And she made the motions whenever it was needed, then we met together with her in a restaurant to have the discussion. And we made the decision—both of us, I wasn't alone, but everybody agreed with me.

LS: Poor guy.

AS: We said, "Let's forget it." (laughs)

LS: We had agreed that we would come up to Boston and meet at the restaurant at six o'clock or six-thirty, six-thirty, seven. And then all of a sudden, there he comes, all disheveled, you know—he had the necktie on, the button opened, the necktie like this—and apologizing that he was held back with a patient. So Arthur saw him. (laughs) That was it. He didn't like his appearance, and I don't care for psychiatrists. Because you

know, when we lived in Seaman, Alex used to send in them and we'd go to Cincinnati; we would meet the psychiatrists for dinner, and they all were a little crazy, you know.

AS: There was a little difference. I have to—

LS: They all have to be a little crazy to—

CE: Probably.

AS: I have to agree, there was some little difference because that was my birth, you know. But as I said, she didn't have brothers, she didn't have sisters, so I was supposed to be not only a husband but I was supposed to be a brother and a sister and everything.

LS: And father.

AS: Here this was a grown up woman. (inaudible). But both in their own way, they are top-notch girls.

CE: So how do you think the Holocaust has influenced your relationship now, who you are with each other?

LS: I don't think it has, any.

CE: No? No? Do you think that brought you together?

LS: I start yelling at him, "Enough!"

CE: You stopped yelling at him?

LS: I start yelling when he starts out, you know, like this.

CP: Talking too much?

LS: Said, “Enough, no more!” We are very lucky that we are here, that we arrived to this season, you know. Our children, our grandchildren are wonderful. We are so close with them.

AS: One family.

LS: Our granddaughter—

AS: There are very few families who keep together like we do.

LS: We are going next week to Washington because Suzie’s daughter is graduating from—we go to every graduation, and they—the kids see to it; they have tickets that we can go. And not long ago we went to her high school graduation, and all of a sudden here it is. Time just flies too fast. So then from there, because you were asking about driving from Washington, Suzie and her husband are—even Alex are driving, and they will drop us off in Old Saybrook and then they go on.

CP: I’m interested—you mentioned something that I’ve heard from a number of survivors, which is a lot of people—a lot of survivors seem like they’re driven to tell their stories so that we can get the historical record and stop repeating the same mistakes, like you said earlier. But you also mentioned not wanting to be defined just by the Holocaust, saying—you know, you personally want to let it go some, and you say he’ll talk about it and he’ll become emotional. So what motivates you now to tell the story, like for the Florida Holocaust Museum?

LS: I am very glad that the story will be taught at the university, because I don’t know whether you heard that supposedly in the United Kingdom they were—they are teaching the Holocaust and all of a sudden the Muslims were up against it, that it insults them, the Holocaust didn’t exist. What kind of history is that? Everybody knows that it was there. It was the most horrible thing when a whole nation was to be exterminated. I mean, there are very similar things happening in Bangladesh, in Somalia, in Sudan now. I mean, it’s horrible, what is happening. And in Iraq—I told you in this book that I am reading that Saddam Hussein had 15,000 people killed because they were his opposition. I mean, this is something that—

And the Bible says that there will be a time when everybody will put down their arms, change them into plows, and it will be heaven on earth. I don’t believe in it, because we are not all the same, even though President Lincoln said we are. But everybody has a

different attitude. And what is happening in Iran, for instance, now. He [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad] is a madman; he's almost like déjà vu of Hitler, you know. The way—he is in today's paper; it says that he's telling the United States that they should reduce the nuclear armament that they have, but he doesn't promise that he is not developing it. And I remember what Einstein said when the first bomb, before the first bomb, was that this is the most horrific instrument that will destroy the humanity.

CE: So Arthur, does it make you feel better to talk about your—what happened in the past, or does it make you feel worse?

AS: I don't think so. I don't (inaudible). I like to, at least, and I like to express my opinion, and I think none of us knows the answer and none of us will ever know the answer, the right answer to it. None of us, I don't think so, but it's good to discuss it. I feel much better now that my son is open and you can talk to him, and he puts it in his poetry.

LS: And Michael never wanted to talk about it, because he says, "I know it all, I know it all."

AS: But finally he knows it now, and—

LS: So finally in one of his poems, "1944"—that was the nephew who was with him; he was here last week. It was his eightieth birthday and so his sister was giving a party, so we all went there. So Michael came and Arthur—we came in from Connecticut and he came from Baltimore. We met at the Grand Central Station and then we went together to Westchester County. And I let Michael sit with Arthur and I sat with Michael's wife Ilene in the back. And I see they're just talking and talking, I hear him talking. And then when we came there he was sitting next to his cousin, who survived with Arthur, and the cousin was telling him and he was listening intently, and then he wrote a beautiful poem about 1944. And since then, he's obsessed with the Holocaust; it's unbelievable. Now, too, he wrote—he sent a poem. Was interesting when they were here.

So Arthur has a cousin in Newport, south of Sarasota, and it is a new settlement, more or less. The cousin, he is eighty-eight and Arthur is ninety-eight. They never knew each other until two years ago. And two years—the cousin had a Baptist wife, the children were raised Baptist, and he had two boys and a daughter. And the daughter, when she went to school, she fell in love with a Jewish lawyer. So she converted to Judaism, because her mother was Baptist but the father was of Jewish origin, and she felt very open to conversion. So she converted and then she married the guy; the guy turned out to be a nogoodnik, so they divorced. But she married now a very nice—not now, fifteen

years ago—a very nice Catholic lawyer, but when she married him told him that she wants to raise—she wants a child and if she have it, that she wants to raise it Jewish, and he agreed. Which is very rare because the Catholic Church does not agree to it, you know, when they—so anyway, they have a daughter, who had her bat mitzvah last year.

But the cousin who lives now in Newport, he became very friendly with two Jewish couples, and so he was talking to the common cousin that they have in Pittsfield, Massachusetts; he really grew up with him because they both lived in Cleveland. And the cousin tells him, “You know, your cousin is down in St. Petersburg, and you never met him, but he’s a very nice guy. Maybe you should get together.” So he called (phone rings) up, he came over, and—

Would you get the phone? Because I cannot move.

CE: Ready for the last—

CP: Yup, yup.

CE: We have one last question for the two of you. And that is: You know, you’ve been through lots of loss and trauma in your life, really unspeakable loss and trauma, and we’d like to know just—I mean, how do you cope with the memory of everything that happened? And what can you tell us that might help us cope with our own losses and trauma?

LS: Be a positive person, because that’s the most important. Look forward, never back, never back. You cannot help what happened, but you can maybe help shape your future. And if you have a good family and you have a good relationship, that’s what counts—with people. Have good friends, that’s very important. You know my girls still go back to Seaman, Ohio. They have their friends there, they love to go back. And Julie tells her daughter, “Look, there is no place a sky that has so many stars.”

CE: That’s great. Arthur, what about you?

AS: Well I think so.

CE: How do you deal with loss and trauma?

AS: You have to think about it, you have to. They deserve—you should think about them, but in a nice way. Thank them always for what they did for you. And—

LS: Think of them with love.

AS: With love, with love. Now, I forgave all my enemies, if I had any, because I came—I made the right decision. I came to this country and I left the guys behind that didn't do it because they want to do it, because they were forced to do it, because I started to tell you that—when I noticed that I am not the same parent anymore when my best friend who slept with me went and turned his back to me, because he didn't want to insult me. He didn't want to tell me, "Hey, Arthur, how are you? I miss you," what he used to tell me always, so he'd rather show me his back. He was hurting as much as I was, only he didn't tell me.

LS: Also, about the Holocaust, you know, people say it cannot happen again. And we say it can, because the mob hysteria, if it takes hold of people—you know, we can't understand that here are some Americans who are planning terrorism, like that woman from Arizona who went over—I mean, it is really crazy but it happens. It happens, and it is enough if a few start, because Hitler started with nothing. You know, he was jailed in Germany, and that where he wrote his *Mein Kampf*. And then he had a few hoodlums—those were hoodlums who joined him, and they are the ones that started it, and people were afraid of them.

AS: I want to tell you one thing more, and that should be—I think so, just make a nice little story. It was—God was good to us. We came to this great country and it helped us to live it with—

LS: Okay.

AS: When I was retiring, I hired a man—I hired many. I hired seven engineers, who worked for me, and they all graduated here in the United States and didn't mind to work without—not 100 percent English knowing, but I knew what I had to know. And—

LS: This was a young man that he hired—

AS: It was a young man by name Tom Landry, who was coming here to visit us every year.

LS: Okay, go back to Tom Landry.

AS: And he came to visit us every year here and I used to train him, and he had two years of college and his wife was a teacher in a Catholic school. And I asked, "Do you want to come and take a job? I'm looking for a draftsman, not an engineer." And he says, "Well, I will take anything, because I want to finish engineering. I want to get my diploma. I don't feel good about it, that I don't have my diploma. My wife has it; I should have it, too." So I saw here such an openness, you know—

CE: To you, you mean?

AS: I have to do for him something. So—

CE: So have you felt accepted in this country? Is that what I hear from you?

AS: Say what?

CE: Have you felt accepted for who you are?

LS: Oh, yeah, wherever we are.

AS: Oh, I was accepted 100 percent here, 100 percent.

LS: Wherever we go.

AS: Look, my wife has mentioned every year they send us from the library these books that have (inaudible) her memory, and it's everything about Judaism. She believed in everything because she was brought up like this. And oh, I—the mere fact that fellows—

LS: We go out on the golf course, everybody—we don't know their names, but everybody knows us.

AS: You know, we come back and they yell from the distance, “Hi, Arthur!” They know me. I wish I will know them as they know me. (laughs)

CE: Anything else you want to add?

CP: I think that—

AS: And you know—

CP: Wraps it up nicely.

AS: I was with Tom Landry there. I’ll tell you; I will finish. So there is my—

LS: That’s his retirement party.

AS: Retirement. That is my retirement—

LS: He’s seventy-six.

AS: My retirement, and he was there because—

LS: He got up.

AS: I hired him and I trained him, and he finished night school he was taking, and the company paid for him, but he got engineering degree. And if I needed someone that I went for vacation, I put him in charge because—not because—I thought of him more because he was better than any of them, that’s why I put him in charge. And—

CE: Okay.

LS: When you were retiring, when you were retiring.

AS: And he telled it because when I retired, there is—there am I, sitting—

LS: He was taller than Tom.

AS: And— (laughs)

LS: And Tom is a shorty.

AS: And he comes, and he comes and he says, “Gentlemen and ladies, I will be very short,” you know, because everybody was talking, everyone is so great. “I’m an engineer,” he says. “To me, every word means something. I cannot talk like this one,” he says. “I”—he tells the story. “I had two years of college. He accepted me, he treated me nicely. I got now—after four extra years, I had to go to night school and I got my degree. And we are very close friends, and whatever I know, I want you to know that I learned from this guy.” And he gave me a big and a kiss in front of everybody: the people from Canada, from Germany, from everywhere.

CE: That’s wonderful.

AS: And he hugged me and kissed me.

CE: That’s wonderful. Well, I’m ready for my hugs and kisses. I think we probably should stop. (CP laughs)

AS: Yeah, that’s exactly what it was. And he comes to visit us and he takes me out. He comes here in his new car and (inaudible) let’s go visit him, let’s have a good time.

CE: Wonderful.

AS: And at home—at home he’s not far from us. He works for—

LS: Old Saybrook.

AS: What is the company?

LS: Pfizer.

AS: Pfizer, thank—

LS: He was the chief engineer.

AS: See, my other half. (all laugh)

CE: Thanks to both of you for spending the whole day with us.

AS: It was a pleasure, great.

LS: We really are very happy that you are doing it, because this should not be forgotten.

CE: We agree with you very much.

LS: Because even so, we talk about it freely and not crying on your shoulders. But it was a horrible time, and I would—I would hope that it will never happen again.

CE: We do, too. And whatever small way we can, we would like to keep making sure that these stories get passed on to future generations.

AS: I still have a check—

LS: I feel that you will.

AS: —from Bob Graham, a friend of mine who was (all laugh) an industrial engineer. And I gave him a spot there in my office because he didn't have enough and I didn't cash, because out of respect to him, I knew he cannot afford it.

CE: Oh, that's wonderful. Okay, thank you again. We're going to stop.

CP: Yes, thank you.

LS: Thank you for coming. Thank you.

End of interview