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***Tape 1 Begins***

**Mark Greenberg:** This is Mark Greenberg, and I am the director of the Special and Digital Collections Department, and acting director of the Holocaust and Genocide Studies Center. And today is Monday—

**Alicia Appleman-Jurman:** January—

MG: —January 25, 2010; and I am with Alicia Appleman-Jurman at her home in San Jose, California. See, now everyone knows—

AA: Welcome. Welcome, Mr. Greenberg, to my humble abode.

MG: Thank you.

AA: I am very delighted to have this privilege of being interviewed by you.

MG: Thank you. And it's a great pleasure; it's an honor to, to be with you. You have had an amazing life, a life that is extraordinary in so many ways. And it is a life that, thank God, has been documented. But there are parts of your life that have not received as much attention. And so one of the things we want to do, while we're together with you for the next few days, is to try and document some of the stories about your life that have

not been told. And I want to start by focusing today on your life in America, and to ask you some questions about what you were doing, and the things that, that led to your book, and many of your other activities.

So, I want to start with the first question, which is: can you tell me, please, when you were living in Israel, when did the first conversations begin that you might leave Israel and move to the United States? How did this occur? And what did you think when you thought, or heard, that you might leave Israel?

AA: We received a letter—Gabe, my husband, was born in Brooklyn, New York, and we received a letter from his parents that his father had a brain tumor operation, and he is needed at home. Uh, of course, I was very surprised, because I had the chance to go to the United States in 1945 with the children and be adopted, and I chose to join my future with my people in Palestine at that time. And so we left most of our things in Israel, hoping that we can come back to the States, and for a few years help out the parents, and then return home. The operation that my husband's father had was benign, but he never went back to work, so he had a problem there. And then I wanted to have a baby, and I went to—for checkups, and the doctor told me that I have to go through some serious operations. And so I stayed here, and, uh, and I had my baby in 1958, which was written up in the *Parade* magazine because it was a miracle baby—thanks to a medical miracle. Now, what I did when I came here—first of all, I went to school (laughs).

MG: Where—where was here? Did you move to Brooklyn?

AA: I came here in 1950—October 1952.

MG: To—to Brooklyn?

AA: To—?

MG: Did you—did you move to Brooklyn, New York?

AA: Yes, we moved in with my in-laws to live on Hendrickson Street in Brooklyn. And I went to school—to medicine school of business—so that I can go to work. And my husband returned to school; he needed some more schooling. And then of course I was working, and I was going to school at night; and my husband was working and going to school at night. And we were lived with his parents for a little while and helped out. But

since I committed myself to [bear] witness, I got contact with people and I got contact with schools, and I started telling my story.

You know, for adults, it was very difficult to hear, to listen to my story. It wasn't easy for me to tell it, but they always said to me, "Well, listen, now you are here. You have a new life"—they didn't really say I should forget about it, but—"It's a new life for you, you—you are starting something new." And I told them, very honestly, "I am a witness to what happened; I swore to my mother, and on my brother's grave, that if I lived, I will bear witness." And so I decided that I am going to take my story to the children in the schools, and they wanted to hear me.

MG: Uh, Alicia, I wanna come back—we're gonna take each piece at a time. So, you mentioned—where did you enroll? Which school in New—in Brooklyn or in New York did you enroll in?

AA: When I went to school?

MG: Yes. Which school?

AA: I went to medicine school of—of, uh, business; and then I went to Brooklyn College at night.

MG: Yeah. And what career did you—were you taking classes to—to be—?

AA: Yeah, I—I was taking classes to be able to work in an office.

MG: Ah.

AA: And I worked in Israel, uh, for a time, for export and import, so I know the documentation. And so, I got a very nice job with M. H. Greenbaum, who exported and imported from Holland, exported to Curacao and Aruba; and for—and I did the documents there. And then, I got a job with Swan Art Gallery, which I loved very much; and so for rare books, and rare prints, and pictures. And then, I had to take a part-time job, because I started going to a fertility doctor.

MG: In—in the early 1950s when you moved to the United States, you mentioned that you want to bear witness, but the adults are uncomfortable, and they try to steer you to think about the present, and not to think about the past.

AA: Exactly.

MG: Did you have a sense that, in America, America knew about the Holocaust or that the Jewish community knew about the Holocaust? Or was there a great deal of ignorance about what happened to the Jews of Europe?

AA: You know, from what I have learned in Israel, that they knew what was happening, but apparently they couldn't do more than they did at that time. I will tell you something, Mr. Greenberg, my attitude towards the relationship of the American Jewry—towards us, those who survived or who did not survive, is such that I don't judge. I don't know what I would have done in their place. I only record as a witness of what happened to me. Not one time, in all the years that I have been a speaker, have I gone up to somebody and say, "What did your parents do when we were dying?" Never. Because I am just a witness, and I don't judge. And I don't judge America. I am bewildered—I was very bewildered to find out how we were abandoned and everything, but this is not what I am all about. I don't do that.

MG: You were going to school to be—it's sounds like, um, to work in a medical office.

AA: Well, I—in any kind of office.

MG: Yeah.

AA: At this point, I already found out that I cannot study medicine, and I found it out in Israel, because this is what I wanted to do. You see, I lost so many friends that I had a tremendous anger at death; I could not accept death. And what physician can—can work on—they—you could destroy yourself, if you have this kind of—of—of friction in the—in medicine. So, I knew whatever I will do, it will probably be that I will dedicate my life to just telling my story, going from school to school. And since I don't judge, I am very available to everybody who wants to hear me.

MG: Yeah. So, tell me about the early years of telling your story. You decided to—to tell your story to children. And this is in the 1950s—

AA: Yes.

MG: —in—in Brooklyn and—and greater New York?

AA: And then I lived in Queens. And two organizations like Hadassah and Sisterhood. And—what happened during the years—the fifties and the sixties and the seventies; when I finished telling my story, the children turned to me and asked me, “Mrs. Appleman, could you write the story down? Our parents would love to know it.” And so I told them, I say, “If I ever find the conditions, that I could detach myself from my life and go back into the past and relive all that happened to me, that’s the only way I can write the story down. But otherwise, I cannot just write it down.” I, however, when I went to school I wrote stories, short stories of what happened; but I never wrote the whole book.

And can I tell you what happened, how I finally started? And then, in 1982, my husband’s company, Fluor Corporation, moved us to Holland, to—for my husband to build a refinery there. And from 1982 to 1985, I sat for three solid years and I wrote my book. After a while, I became this little girl, Alicia, again. I went back into the past, and I just sat there; and it’s was like I laid down pictures—because I was an artist so, uh, what I saw, I saw everything picture on top of a picture—and as I was writing I was peeling these pictures off. And I cried my heart out. And it took three solid years to finish the chapters that I was working on.

And then when I finished them, we were just about returning home. It took me a whole year to get back from the past into the future, into the present time, because I was like I—my daughter came to visit in Holland, and she says, “Mommy, where are you?” I was totally—I didn’t cook, I didn’t shop, I didn’t do very much, but just relived everything. A matter of fact, when I was writing about harvest, summer, in—during the war, it was snowing in Holland, so I had to close the curtains; and so, I wasn’t synchronized with the times, with the weather and with nature. But I finished it.

And, you know, my son at that time was—this is a cute story. My son at that time was serving in—as a tanker in the United States Army—my younger son, Zachary. And as I was writing, I send the chapters to my son in Germany and to my daughter and son in the United States. Because, honestly, I didn’t know if my heart will be able to see me through the end, so I wanted them to have at least what I had.

MG: Alicia, how did you write? Did you write it chronologically?

AA: I have—I—Yes, very much chronologically. I wrote down, and—I wrote through the night; with the nightmares, I relived it; and then, I just typed it. I was sitting with three lamps on my typewriter—a Selectric III typewriter—and I typed it out, and then I put the dialogue in. And then I gave my husband to correct my grammar and punctuation; because he couldn't edit my writing, because it was written by a young girl who finished five grades, and not in the United States. So—and that was my style; it was like I was painting with words. And I was like holding the hand of a student or two and I said, "Come with me. Walk with me. And feel what I feel." And this is what they tell me when they read this book: they feel like I was holding their hand, and I was walking through the past with them. And I cried my heart out. Each time—my neighbor Margaret, you know, we were connected through a wall—somehow, she heard me sobbing and she came in and she was so scared. But I finished it.

And so, when I came home, I realized that I have eight hundred pages (laughs) of a story that was written also for children as young as ten year olds, and a Holocaust book with eight hundred pages is not going to be something that the children will be very encouraged to read. So, I didn't take out the events of the Holocaust; I took out some of the stories my mother told me, which were beautiful stories, just to encourage me, you know, for the future; and then childhood memories; and then the chapter in Cyprus, which you will—you'll be able to see on my website. And then, we ended up with four hundred and twenty-six pages; I didn't even do a glossary, because I didn't want the pages to go so—And now, of course, when the students finish reading it and they ask me—say, "Why did you leave me in the middle?" (laughs) They want to know what happened.

MG: Alicia, the book is just mesmerizing on so many different levels; but one of the things you do in the book, which is superb, is you're always placing your story in the context of the wider history of the times.

AA: Yeah, I—a little bit of a background.

MG: It's very nicely done. Did you need to do any research? So, much of it comes from, of course, your memory, but did you prepare notes, uh—either—did you need to go back to the history books to remember what was happening during the Second World War? Or, as you're telling your story, did you have notes or other things that helped you tell the story? Or did it just come and pour from your mind?

AA: This is a wonderful question. What I had is just points, what I want to talk about. You see, the things that the background—the political background, the war of the background—I mention only of the things I heard and the things I saw; but I did not go into, as you know, why Hitler was killing the Jewish people and why the war started. I

didn't go into it because, as a witness, I could only tell the things that I saw then. And I was very, very careful of two things: not to express my feelings that I feel now after having learned what really happened; and not to use American idioms in writing. And only what I felt then. I was very, very careful; only what I felt then.

A matter of fact, one of the newspapers in Texas says, "Alicia, why didn't you open your heart more to us?" So, I say to him, "If I opened my heart more to it, my heart would have died from anguish." I had to go ahead and tell you the story the way I did then; with still being able to survive this pain, because the pain would have overwhelmed me totally. So, I asked him, "Forgive me; I opened the heart that I could open without destroying my heart."

MG: Yeah. Alicia, the—the book is written over three years.

AA: Three solid years.

MG: How—Tell me how you did that. The book is approximately—well, it was eight hundred pages, and then became shorter. Did you write every day? Did you write in the morning? How did you—?

AA: Yeah.

MG: How did you do this?

AA: I—I—

MG: Such an emotional story.

AA: I got up at five in the morning, and I still stayed in my nightgown, and went to my lamps; I had a cup of coffee with a slice of bread and I typed. Sometimes I had lunch, sometimes not. I typed eleven, twelve hours every single day, six days a week, except on Saturday. And—because—no—nothing could have stopped me. I had a medical problem that was very—would have been very serious, but God watched over stupid women like me, and so, I—the medical problem wasn't as serious as it would have been. I couldn't stop.

Once I started, then nothing—‘cause people visited; I don’t remember what they visited. The children—my daughter insisted that I go to Paris with them; I don’t remember any Paris. I don’t remember anything, because I was that little girl, Alicia, living through the Holocaust again. To write this down, I had to live through it and to feel the anguish. But once I opened, I remembered everything. You know, I could even tell you what flowers I brought to the Madonna, into our classroom when I was a child; but flowers my friend picked in her garden. I remembered everything, as though I just opened, like, the whole world and walked into it again.

MG: Alicia, you mentioned a medical problem just a moment ago. Are you able to—? I don’t want to be too—

AA: Well, the medical problem was a growth on my chest.

MG: Ah.

AA: And I finished the book. And then I say—and that was thing was growing, and I say, “I am little Alicia again, I have nothing to do with this body,” and so I went to Dr. Hape. You know, in Holland, you have the doctors that belong in your neighborhood? And he asked me, “Mrs. Appleman, how long did you have this growth?” I say, “Since chapter seventeen.” And he says, “What?” he says. “Well, I was writing my story.” He say, “Oh, you crazy American. Get out of my office!” He didn’t even want to hear me. And then he—he changed his mind to come back. “And in the morning you go into surgery at six o’clock.”

I didn’t tell my husband. My daughter, when she found out, didn’t speak with me for a long time. And when I walked through the door into surgery, I say, “Good Lord,” I say, “Thank you for what you helped me now that I could finish the story, and I am in your hands. If—if you think I deserve to live, that’s up to you; but I had to keep my promise to the students and tell what happened.” And it was benign, believe it or not.

MG: So, you—for three years you wrote. It sounds like you wrote mostly chronologically.

AA: Yes.

MG: And after three years, you finished. How did you know were done? How did you know you had said everything you wanted to say?

AA: How did I know? Because, you see, I have said it already a lot in my speaking. And I—there are a few things I didn't, didn't say. First of all, I didn't tell my readers what really happened at the graves, the cruelty that happened. And the fact is it wasn't just SS and Gestapo killing, 'cause they were the *Wehrmacht*—regular soldiers, and the *Luftwaffe*. And how did I know it was the *Luftwaffe*? Because I ironed their uniforms when they held me for slave labor. I wanted the people to die with their dignity, and they died with their dignity.

And there was one thing that I couldn't talk about, because it was just—I was afraid my heart will break, and that is about the little girl that I mentioned at Rick's College, the—how she had her face shot away. And how I decided—'cause I could have run, maybe, I—I, you know, I was a runner, actually; I was an athlete runner, so I knew how to run—but I couldn't drop this child and people step on it; I just wanted her to be buried with her mother and her little brother. So I chose, actually, to die with her. I don't know why I made this choice, but I just couldn't do it. And I didn't write about it, because again I was afraid that my heart will break when I have to write this story.

But otherwise—but, mostly what happened, what I took out was a lot of stories that my mother told me; and of course these two chapters account for a lot. But what I lived through—and it's interesting. You know what's interesting? I received many letters from people who survived; I mean, many letters; there are very few surviv—from that whole region, where the, [inaudible] group and killed us, right? And they thanked me. They say, "Thank you so much, Alicia, for telling our story as well," because they had similar experiences.

And I'll give you an experience—an example: I received a letter from a professor from the Technion from Haifa. Do you remember when they came for my mother; I went in her place? And when we came to the gate, this woman fell down and the SS man took that ski pole and started hitting me, broke it absolutely. When, when this beating went on, he was coming out of this prison, from the gate nearby; he actually saw them beat me. I was so shocked by it, you know? That he—because somehow his father was able to save him out of the prison; he was just a young boy. So, this is, you know—this—this just shook me up. And he wanted to correspond with me, and I couldn't. I couldn't correspond with him.

MG: Alicia, as you were writing the manuscript, *Alicia: My Story*, did—was there a publisher that had expressed a desire to publish it? Did—What were you thinking about to make the book available to the public? Did you have a plan?

AA: Well, the—actually I didn't have any plan. I wrote the book not for my family; I wrote it because the students wanted me to write it for their family; and so, I made this effort to keep my promise. And I made sixty copies of my manuscript and gave it out to my friends to read. So I say to myself, "Some of the copies will end up in schools as well." But I manage to get—through a friend, the manuscript was sent to New York, and it was published by Bantam. And, and—which was very, very unusual.

But before that, I received a telephone call (laughs)—I remember this statement—the telephone call from a woman, an agent called Sarah, and she said, "Oh, Alicia. I cried all over your manuscript." So I asked her, "Are you going to be my agent?" She says, "Oh, no, I won't be your agent." So I asked her, "Are you going to—are you afraid to stake your reputation?" She says, "Something like that." And then, I said, "You know, my story is a little bit told by a girl, like Anne Frank, maybe a little bit younger." She says, "Well, Anne Frank is dead." So, I told her, "I'm sorry I can't oblige you; I can't drop dead, at this point."

But—(laughs) but Bantam chose it; and there was another company that begged me, too; also they wanted to publish it. But I gave it to Bantam and I thought that—that they will do a good—they did a wonderful job on it. The book is twenty-one years old, and it's—and what is so interesting, there are new readers all the time. But it is also—the fact is that I traveled for fifteen solid years all over the country and Canada. And, as I've said, I was available as a gift. So this also helped, but now the book is on its own.

And you know why it is still flourishing in a way? I'll tell you why. It is the love and the dedication of the teachers and my students. They put me on their websites. And so when people call me from all over the world and write to me, "Where did you find—?" I say, "On the website." Because people put me on—they love the book so much that they wanted other people to read it. And that's loyalty. That's—and, and this is a wonderful relationship I have with my readers.

MG: Alicia, I wanna come back now—back to the 1950s; back to you being in New York; and to talk about some of the things going on in your life and your husband's life. Tell me again: he worked for a company. You mentioned the company's name; it sounded like floor—?

AA: Fluor Corporation.

MG: Can you spell—?

AA: An engineering firm. F-l-u-o-r Corporation. It's an engineering firm.

MG: Like flour, that you make—you bake a cake from flour? How did you—how do you spell flour?

AA: No. F-l-u-o-r.

MG: U-o-r.

AA: Yeah.

MG: Okay. And an engineering firm. What did your husband—his training was in—?

AA: He is a chemical engineer project manager, and he was there, working there. And he was so kind because he cooked and he shopped because he saw that I was out of this world, like they say sometimes [inaudible]. I tried to do what I could but it was difficult for me to switch from that little girl, Alicia, to my adult duties.

MG: In the 1950s, you were going to school. Did you complete your degree?

AA: I beg your pardon?

MG: Did you complete your, your studies?

AA: I am—you know what—I have several Associate degrees because I went to school for about thirty-five years with all kind of other thing. But do you remember the film *Yentl*? With Barbra Streisand? I am a Yentl; I just love to go to school. You know, when I walk into school, the teachers love me because I'm like a sponge, sitting there.

And I'll tell you one cute story about Professor Smith. He taught literature, of course, that was one of the things—And I took a, a summer class. And we were studying *The Comedians* by Greene, about Haiti and Papa Duvalier. And we were going to get a test—and this was all hand-written; there aren't computers to look up anything. So—and they were summer students, the whole summer—they were taking extra credit. And I felt, well, since I have more time to read, I gave them a little bit—stood up there and gave them an idea, “Now this could be possibly, you will be writing about, or this possibly

writing.” And I threw out a few little things. And then, suddenly, at door—a voice from the door says, “Well, Mrs. Appleman, if you’ve finished teaching the class,” say, “may I come in?” (laughs) It was our teacher, our professor. And do you know what he wrote on my paper? I got an A-plus. He says, “It was very good for the students to have you in their classroom.” (laughs)

MG: Okay. What was—so this is Professor Smith.

AA: Yes.

MG: Do you remember his first name?

AA: Yes, from Fullerton College. And he was the one who, who got Hemingway, and he was so unhappy that I couldn’t go to this class. I just sat with him there, you know, and studied with them. And then when I came back, when I finished my book; this is also a cute story. I—when I finished my book, I figure I’m going to go to a creative writing class and see what mischief did I do on my manuscript. Or what—I could have profited from a creative writing class if I had gone there before I wrote my book, let’s put it this way.

And Mr. James Blaylock, who is a science fiction writer, beautiful writer, and a wonderful teacher; and he brought forth, uh, a lot of, a lot of authors. So, I say to him, “Well, what did they write?” And then he gave me the name of the book. I say, “Oh, yeah. I read him.” And then one evening we were standing outside, and he says to me, “I—you puzzle me, Alicia. You know the book but you don’t know the author?” So, I say, “Mr. Blaylock, I was too much of in a hurry to read, I couldn’t pay attention to the authors.” (laughter)

And then, I—eventually I told him, “You know I wrote my story.” And he says, “What’s it about?” Eh, he say, I told him, “It’s my—it’s a memoir; it’s my life in the Holocaust.” And I say, “Mr. Blaylock, I don’t want you to correct it, just—I have it in two volumes. I’ll bring one. Just glance through it and just let me know what you think.” So a few weeks later, he says, “May I have the second volume?” (laughs) And then I published two stories in the *Portico* magazine, in the school. One was “A Cry in the Night”, and one was “Childhood Memories”. And he gave me Moby Dick’s books; and they gave me seventy-five dollars, and I took my class out to pizza. And then he said, “When Alicia gave me her manuscript, the first part, I was hesitant to read it, but when I finished the second volume, I realized that humanity still has some hope.”

MG: Hm. That’s beautiful.

AA: And he believed in me so much, every time I wrote. He let me come to class even when I wasn't a registered student, just write.

MG: Um-hm. So, Alicia, this is Fullerton College, here in California?

AA: Yes.

MG: But I'm trying to move us through, in your early part of your life, in the 1950s, your schooling in the 1950s. And also I wanna talk about, about your family, and—

AA: Well, I was going to night school a lot, which was also like college. And then when I came in the sixties—beginning sixties, when I came to California, we had classes with professors from the University of Judaism—until I discovered Fullerton College—they gave us classes in our synagogue, and we went to the facility that was in Los Angeles; now they have a beautiful campus. And I am what you would call a “readaholic”. I love to read on every subject, especially history. So I was working at the same time, I was studying about other civilizations; I was continuing with my Jewish education, the history of the people, and the Jewish people. And of course, I was in contact with Israel, what was happening in Israel.

MG: In the 1950s, you had mentioned that you are—you had had some difficulty getting pregnant and needed to have some medical attention. Did you have a child in New York?

AA: Yes, I had three children in New York. I had Danny in 1958, I had Ronit in 1952 [1962], and then I had Zachary in 1953 [1963]. It was interesting because we wanted to adopt a child. And then the vice—agency that were given children for adoption needed three thousand dollars in the bank, and we didn't have three thousand dollars. So when Danny was born through the insurance and through my work, uh, we paid medical bills close to ten thousand dollars for the operation and for all this care. And so, I said to my doctor, you know, Dr. Wiseman, I say, “You know, this is for ethical [inaudible]. For ten thousand dollars, I should get three babies, three thousand dollars a baby.” (laughter)

MG: Uh, so you started a family in—?

AA: Yes, and I loved every moment of it. Every moment of it.

MG: And this is through the 1950s, and you mentioned living in Queens.

AA: Nineteen-sixties—1962, we moved to Florida for a year and a half.

MG: Uh, what took you to Florida?

AA: Yes, we moved to Florida because Gabriel was building a fac—a plant there, for American Chemicals. And I lived there for a year and a half, and I took classes there at the synagogue. They had teachers and they had the college there, and I was on the campus once in a while. But I had three small babies.

MG: Where in Florida?

AA: In Lakeland, Florida. Right. And that is when I—since you are from there—that is when I met the Estroff—Elsie Estroff, I met, and Mel Estroff; and then Zalik Estroff—which later on brought me back to Florida, and B'nai B'rith gave out hundreds of books to the schools. I was very happy there, but when the project finished, we had to go to a different location. And so I say, “Gabriel, why don't we try for California?” The children had allergies and things, and California was a very happy place for me.

MG: Great. And so, in—the children, they were—there were no, please God, no problems other than allergies. They were healthy and happy babies?

AA: Yeah, they were fine. They were healthy; they just had allergies. And they were very sweet children. And I'll tell you something: the happiest time of my life was raising these children. You know, everybody used to bring their children to our house, because in our house you can use Play-Doh; in our house you can make mud puddles; in our house you can bake cakes and cookies; and the whole place could go on wheels upside down. And I just sat there, listening to this beautiful music of children's laughter. You know, people could never understand why I was just happy. I say, “A home is where the children should play.” And so people actually called on the calendar; that I had to schedule, I couldn't babysit for too many child—

But they had such a wonderful time, and, of course, we didn't use television. I told the children, “Anything you want to learn, you will learn in books; or [inaudible] listening, you listen to music.” Because when I came to the states in 1952, my in-laws had a little television. And after dinner, everybody sat down; I could never get to know them, never

got to talk them. And I say, “This is one thing that I will not introduce to the children, because I want them—and they are wonderful readers and r—Of course, now they’re very much involved with television, but it was my, my obligation to them to use their imagination. And I was afraid of this. I was actually afraid for them being just starers and being—and their imagination wouldn’t—would die. This way, we were painting and we would do artwork; we didn’t have much money because we had to share it with my in-laws. But we did all of our gifts and everything. And the children are great writers and wonderful readers. But now, they are—they still continue. But people couldn’t understand why I didn’t have television.

MG: Alicia, do you—As you were raising your children, did you think consciously of your own childhood? And to think about the childhood you had versus the childhood you wanted for your children?

AA: This is a wonderful question, Mark; this is such a great question. You know, if—when the children were small, the difficulty was at the holidays. My daughter asked me, “Mommy, why don’t you have a mommy and a daddy? Why don’t you—why don’t I have cousins? Why don’t I have—?” And so I started telling them at a young age what happened.

And especially when my daughter became a teenager, the beginning of the teens. And she belonged to the B’not [B’nai] B’rith, a very lovely organization, and somebody wanted to date her. And what—Ronit was about fifteen, and the boy was maybe fifteen, too. And I told her, I say, “Ronitka, you have to wait a little bit. You can, you can go out with a group; but as single, you know, you just have to wait a little bit.” Because a lot of friends called her and they complained that he said, she said, he said, she said. I say, “I—I won’t be able to guide you, because I was never your age.”

And so, what happened—I’ll tell you this cute story. A sunflower was growing in our backyard, and it—you know how sunflowers are beautiful. And Ronit asked me [inaudible], “When is this sunflower going to be ready?” I say, “When the seeds—when the seeds get ripe, the flowers will fall off. And then you can have the sunflower seeds.” She was watering, and it was growing and growing and growing, and then one day I came out, the whole thing was broken up. And I say to her, “Oh,” I say, “Ronit, the seeds are ready?” She says, “No, mommy. I was just impatient.” And I say, “Darling, this is the same thing with a young girl. You have to mature, darling, before you go out.” And she got the idea. She got the idea.

MG: I know there is so much now that’s discussed about the children of Holocaust survivors, and often the difficulties that those children have because the parents have had such traumatic experiences. You mentioned talking to the family about your experiences,

and I wanted to ask—You know, you’re speaking in schools, you’re telling school children about your experiences, and then you have your three children yourself. How did you explain to them what had happened to you? And how did they respond? And then, do you think—or how do you think it affected them?

AA: This is an excellent question. You are really brilliant, I must say. (laughs) Thank you, Mark. Well, you see, there are two kinds of survivors. Survivors that had already families, and their children were killed and their husbands or wives were killed, and they had second families. And it was very difficult for them, because they were so worried about these children, and they were like very, very protective of them. And I cannot blame them. But, of course, children need to have a certain amount of freedom.

I, on the other hand, was caught like in a twilight zone. I was old enough to see what’s happening, but too young to accept, you know, what is going to happen. So, besides, you see, you must understand, that I am not an ordinary survivor; I am a survivor who was able to show the world or show to myself the Jews are not cowards, and they didn’t go like sheep to slay—slaughter; that we fought during the war, and we fought later on for our lives. And so I didn’t have an inferiority complex, and I wasn’t afraid that something is going to happen to my children. I told the good Lord, I say, “You have everything I love; give me something that I love too.”

I let them, [inaudible]; I gave them a freedom. You want to ride a bike, ride the bike; you want to swim, you go swim; you want run, you go and run. I’m sure you—if you want to be an A student, you will be an A student; if you want to be a B student, if you think you want to be B student. And this is what you can be; I will honor what you can be. I say, “Try the best you can.” I didn’t push them; I didn’t manipulate—and they will admit it now, you see; I was just trusting them.

And then one day, my son says, “Mother, I would like to learn how to fly.” I say, “By all means.” Zachary wanted to go and serve in the army because his father served, I served, his grandfather served; and so it’s a natural thing because I told them to love this country you have to be—serve this country. You can’t just take and take; you have to give as well.

So, for me, I asked the children; I say—I did not impose my pain on them. When I cried at times, I cried by myself. But, you see, and the children didn’t feel that, eh, that they have to take my pain because I told them what happened, I didn’t cry, I didn’t fall apart. And I say, “We—and remember, children, I am bearing witness, I am still part of them.” They always knew I was part of the six million people. But the pain I kept to myself.

And so maybe some other children of survivors felt that they have to alleviate the pain of their parents, and that is why their lives were so difficult. But, you know, in the long run, you cannot blame your parents all the time, because you have not lived up to your expectations or to their expectations.

For example, I was invited to Connecticut by the second generation, by children of survivors, to speak in the colleges—I was a gift to schools and everything. And I stayed with a lovely couple, and there was lovely women there and the house was on the water and everything. And when I left, I say to her, “You know, sweetheart, your parents must have done something good. You’re all educated. You have nice families. Think about the good your parents did to you. And if you have any failure in your life, don’t blame it on your parents.” And then I did a bit of research; the children from wealthy homes and everything, born in America, and their parents born in America, they still did not live up to things. So, you cannot blame it—but these are facts.

This is, but—in my case, the children have never felt that they have to live up, you know, to something that I was—did not accomplish. When I wanted to go to school, I—I have a pretty good education, if you wanna—I keep the low profile. But I know about what’s going on in the world now; I know about world literature and things like that. But I got it by myself.

MG: Alicia, as you were writing the story in the 1980s, did the stories that appear in *Alicia: My Story*, had your children already heard all those stories—

AA: They—

MG: —or was it new to them?

AA: No, it wasn’t new to them, because when they were eleven years old and they were—the youth group, they heard me speak, that make that long story. And then later on, they invited me to their schools and the grandchildren invited me to their schools; they knew the story, but they knew that also in little stories, you know? I always, when—Friday night, when we made Friday night, it was a blessing. And I raised them as good Americans, because for them to be good Americans they have to be good Jews first. This is how I raised them; with a Jewish identity, with some Israeli identity, and so they became very fine Americans, and this is what they are. And the grandchildren also identify themselves as Jews; but, but an American Jew is an American—is an American, that’s what he is. (laughs)

MG: Alicia, did your—did Gabriel's father, did he pass away before you left New York? How—was there something that allowed you to leave New York to go to Florida?

AA: Yeah. When—In the meantime, he went to live with the other son. But in 19—let me see, eighty—papa died in 1980, so he came in seventy—papa came to live with us in 1976 from New York. And he had the Parkinson's disease. And I bought him new clothing, and I gave him good food, and he started walking again. He lived with us; I took care of him, for four and a half years. And my son, Daniel, gave up his room for him. And he had a good, happy life; he was the head of the family, the children respected him; and that's when the children finally—we bought him a television, so they went to watch *The Lone Ranger* with him. But he was also telling them stories, what I wanted them to tell stories. Papa was also an artist. And he died the same day that—he wasn't feeling well; I made—uh, it was Pesach, I made *latkes* for him. But that night he died. He lived with dignity with us. And he—

MG: Here in California?

AA: No, it wasn't here; it was in southern California. And he always say, "Well, why do you do all this for me?" I say, "*Papaleh*—I couldn't do anything for my father, so you are my father, so I try to do what I can for you."

MG: In—I wanna come back then to Lakeland. And the—you—The project finished, Gabriel's project finished, and you chose California because of the children's allergies. Where in California did you settle?

AA: Yeah. We lived in La Habra. In La Habra, California. We lived there almost thirty years; but from '69 to '75, Gabriel went to build a fertilizer plant in Be'er Sheva, so we had five and a half years in Israel in the meantime. So I lived in Israel a total of eleven years, and so did Gabriel.

MG: Also with the children?

AA: Yeah.

MG: Because the children were still small?

AA: From '69 to '75 the children were there; they went to school there.

MG: So, talk—talk to me—we have ten minutes left, so, and then we'll have lunch. You're a wonderful storyteller.

AA: It's okay. I can go on.

MG: I—This is wonderful. Alicia, tell me about Israel during this period. Of course, the Yom Kippur War will occur in late '73. What was Israel like? And how did it compare—you had been gone from 1952 to 1969, being here in the United States. How—What was Israel like when you returned?

AA: And I—

MG: And what was it like for the six years you were there?

AA: Yeah. When we returned there, it was in 1969, and we went to Be'er Sheva, to the desert, and Gabriel worked for Makhteshim, was a chemical firm. And then we moved to Herzliya, and we moved them—we lived in Makh—in Be'er Sheva for three years, and we lived in Herzliya for two and a half years. And then the company my husband worked there—he had changed to a different company; and they went bankrupt, so we returned to the states.

MG: Makhteshim went bankrupt?

AA: In '75.

MG: Ah. Okay.

AA: Not Makhteshim.

MG: Oh.

AA: The other company, he worked for—

MG: That he worked for afterwards.

AA: —was a private company, an American company.

MG: Did you travel while in Israel? You saw the—did you take the children to the places you lived?

AA: Yeah. We went—we took the children. But in Israel—what I realized in Israel, is that, you know, the Israelis are wonderful people; of course they have changed since then, since the Six Day War. They didn't have this service attitude. (laughs) When a guest comes to the hotel, they don't know how to cater to the guest or how to—you know, they did best they knew but they were not professionals in that. And since I was bilingual, I decided, "Ah! When I came to Herzliya, this is going to be what I am going to do. I am going to welcome visitors from all the world and Israel." So, I went to a school and I studied there for two years for front office. And after I finished there—eh, so I, I worked in a hotel.

MG: So, you, you studied hospitality?

AA: No. I studied front office.

MG: What do you mean by "front office"?

AA: I—when the guests came, they registered.

MG: Yeah.

AA: I took reservations, and then I located the room for them; and I made sure that they are happy there. And you know what was so cute? (laughs) We had soldiers coming from the Negev and they stopped over in Ramat Aviv, in our hotel; and then, they continued to the north. And, sometimes they came and, you know, they had very little money. So, they wanted a room, and sometimes they had a girlfriend joining them. So I told them, I say, "Look. Why don't you wait until eleven o'clock? And then I'll give you a nice room." (laughs) And, Mr. Talmond, who was the director of this hotel—after a while, they came and they say, "Where is the American?" They were asking for me because, with me, they can get a room; for the price of a single room, they can get a double room. And Mr.

Talmond called me and he say, “Mrs. Appleman, since when—since when do single—payment for a single room entitles the guest for a double room?” (laughs) So, I say, “Mr. Talmond, since the time our boys are coming from the Negev and had very little money, and they registered at eleven o’clock, I—don’t you think that it’s nice when they have a nice room, and it—they have to have a guest, that they should have a guest?” And of course they got some fruit that I paid with my money in the morning. This is kind of relationship I was trying to have with them.

***Part 1 Ends; Part 2 Begins***

**Elizabeth Tucker:** Okay?

**Mark Greenberg:** Okay. Alicia, I want—you had mentioned a—we were talking as the tape ended about your experiences in Israel. But I wanna come back because, during the break, you talked—we talked about important questions and asking deep questions, that the Holocaust is such a complicated subject. And you, who bear witness, needs to be able to, to explain. So, you mentioned a twelve-year-old boy asked you a question.

**Alicia Appleman-Jurman:** Well, when I explain, when I answer the questions, I answer it only from the point of view what I felt then, when that young girl, Alicia. I don’t answer them from the point of view now. Unless, specifically, you know, that they want to know how I feel about things now. But I will tell you, eh, two things that happened, about—one is that a boy asked me, “Alicia”—after he read the book—and say, “Alicia, how come you didn’t go crazy?” And I thought for a moment. I say, “You know what, son? I didn’t have the time.” Because if I were to go crazy, I would have to focus on myself; and I was so busy trying to help others that I just didn’t focus on myself.

And then, there is another question that stays very much in my mind, because people ask me, “Well, what do you think of those who deny the Holocaust?” So, I tell them truthfully, “Look. I don’t debate it with adults. What, am I going to convince adults that I had parents and four brothers and grandparents? But I had this student, a twelve-year-old student in one of the classrooms, and he raised his hand and he said, “Alicia, my uncle told me that the Holocaust never happened.” So, I ask him, “Son, do you have a mother and a father?” He says, “Yes.” “Do you have brothers and sisters?” Says, “Yeah.” Says, “You have grandparents?” He say, “Sure.” And I looked him straight in the face, and I say, “You know what, son? You don’t have them and you never had them.” And [inaudible] looks down; he say, “But that’s crazy!” I say, “You are right. It is crazy. When your uncle says that the Holocaust never happened, he is denying me what I am denying you.” And there was a hush in the classroom, and this brave little boy says, “You know what, Alicia? I better have another talk with my uncle.”

You see, the only way I could explain it to him, when I went with a straight face and denied him his family. And he realized the terrible tragedy of—in the craziness of it, if somebody comes up—and especially in front of a survivor—and denies the Holocaust. But this is, this is how I explain it, but I don't go into this conversation. Because all of these denials, you know, they be—people who write books about it, they get paid a lot and they prostitute themselves in doing it, and, now the—I call him the “Iranian Hitler”, you know; what does he do? And he will have the same end Hitler had. Because nobody, nobody has a good end when they try to destroy a people who—that's so vital. The Israelis that are so vital to the welfare of the world, you know.

So—and, they ask, they ask very wonderful questions. And—what gave me the strength? And I say simply, “I swore on my brother Zachary's grave that if I lived I will bear witness. I promised my mother who asked me to live to bear witness. I was already—had made two commitments that as long as I live and I can, I will bear witness. And this was very important to me, to keep my promise; as it was important for me to put myself through the Holocaust again, to keep my promise to you children, to write this book for your parents.”

MG: Alicia, a life of bearing witness: what are the—what have been the, the benefits to you, the positive elements of bearing witness? How has that been something that has been very positive in your life? And has been a life of bearing witness, has it had not-so-positive elements?

AA: Well, you know, it is very interesting, which is so amazing, that this book, the story of these brave children, has had—has united families who had problem communicate, the children with their parents and parents with their children; realizing how lucky they have each other, had stopped children and I know of maybe ten, for—through the years that wanted to take their lives but after reading *Alicia: My Story*, they decided that their lives are too precious; even to me, you know, to me, as—they—their lives are precious. And, and that—and most of all, what—it gives them hope. Because I told them in the book, and I'm telling them everything, “I want you to know that you, too, possess strength within yourself to use in time of need. That you can be brave, as these children were; that you can use it.” And learning—you know, I am a fanatic about learning. I have spoken to continuation schools; I've sent the children to college. I say, “Go once a week, but go to school; you will be able to open that window and walk through that window and do what you want to do. This way you are closed in.” And then of course, the fact that, that they read about my climbing into a tree and wanting to learn, and I could have broken every bone in my body. (laughs)

But, so I emphasize—when my granddaughter started college, I say, “Maya, we opened a little account for you, not much money, but—and you put it in the bank; you are the one who is going to do the banking. The most important banking that you will do is your

knowledge. Because you can lose your bank account; but knowledge, nobody can take it away from you.” This is a gift. And then, of course, I am very grateful to my parents that they send me both to a regular school and to Hebrew school which gave me a chance to start, you know, on the language. And I say—and, so, I emphasize learning. I say, “You learn; it’s yours.” And, you know, in, in one of the schools in northern California, the students, when I came there—I went there for many years, a continuation school—they came back and say, “You know, Alicia, you send me to college, and I am in college. Send me to college, I finish college.” You know? So, and it’s—this is what’s so amazing, that even though it’s a Holocaust book, it brings the best out in them.

They—and then I will tell you a cute story about the teacher who was going to teach summer school. And so I said—I looked at her, I say, “You are not very happy about teaching summer school?” She says, “Not very happy.” So, I gave her an idea, I say, “You know what, darling? Why don’t you teach summer school, and I’ll give you books and let the children read this book?” Well, they finished, and she called me up; she says, “You have no idea what I discovered. I have poets in my classroom. I have writers in my classroom. I have people with wonderful imagination in my classroom. And the only complaint they had, that the class, that the session finished too early.”

So, you know, like a little girl coming all the way from Boston to have her Bat Mitzvah with me, you know? The picture and the whole theme was—So it’s not just I; it’s the children in my book that are heroes, and children need to have heroes, like I had the people in my family, like my father. And they need to know that there is such a thing as great heroism in children. And this is why this book is so much loved. Yes, they cry, and, yes, it’s a powerful book; but when they finish, uh, they have the joy of life, an appreciation of life.

And then—I will tell you a cute story that happened in Pennsylvania, in Starlight Camp. I was speaking there to the youth group, and they were getting the book from the camp. And when I finished answering the questions I left, and a boy holding the book came running after me, says, “Alicia, wait a minute.” And he says to me, “You know, I have a ten-year-old sister, and I wasn’t always nice to her, but now I will be very nice to her,” (laughs) “the way Zachary was to you.” And we hugged each other, you know?

So, it’s not just the tragic story of the Holocaust; it’s the beauty of children, of their dignity, and of their behavior, of their caring in the worst of times. And this is what appeals to these children. Because many times, say, “I lost somebody I loved, but if—without your book I don’t know how I could have handled it.” You know, so—I hoped, when I was writing it, that I can present these wonderful, brave children the way they were—where they were brave and wonderful—living in a very, very tragic time, in the worst of times. And so that the children of today will realize that had they have

responsibility to their country, to their parents, to their siblings, not to have a Holocaust, not to have other children go through what we went through. This is what it is about.

MG: Alicia, is there any time in your adult life where bearing witness has been a burden, something that you wish that you—that you wish that you could do something else instead of that?

AA: Well, I'll be very honest with you: it was not a burden to me, but my little—my heart could not take it. And my heart got arrhythmia, and it, it got sick; it got into failure. Uh, my immune system, especially when I was trying to keep my husband alive and working hard and not sleeping, said, "You are on overload with pain. And you simply cannot do it." But I continue; I get better and I continue doing it. But I don't go to schools now; what I do is I have these wonderful conferences on the telephone. The teacher sends me the pictures of the students, and they watch my video, and they read my book, and we just talk to each other. And it is absolutely lovely. But, yes, my heart is the one—not my mind but my heart—was on the constant pain. Because, you know, I don't have a menu that I will stand up and just trot-trot out each time I have to open my wound and I have to pour my heart out; and this the only way I can reach people. It isn't that I can read from a paper or anything like that; it doesn't work like that. And each time, when I speak, I see it, I relive it, with each, each presentation.

MG: Alicia, let me come back to your time in Israel, in the late 1960s, and into the—1975, living in Be'er Sheva. Tell me about where you were and the events leading up to the Yom Kippur War. You're there with your family?

AA: When, when I came to Israel?

MG: Yeah.

AA: Ah. When I came from Cyprus to Israel?

MG: No, no. In 1969.

AA: Oh.

MG: For the, for the Yom Kippur War.

AA: Yeah. When I came in 1969, we rented a place, and then we were supposed to—We had the—a house, a very nice house, and we were paying mortgage on it; the American style. And they're same thing in Herzliya, so we never really had owned anything.

MG: And was there fear? I mean, the Israeli government, the military knew that the Arabs were amassing troops. Uh, there was activity leading up to the Yom Kippur War.

AA: I don't—I—

MG: Do you remember—?

AA: —was not aware of it. To be very honest with you, there was a synagogue near our building in Sa'ad, and I looked down—my back was hurt me at that time, so I was resting. And people kept, young people kept leaving the synagogue a middle of the prayers. And, and then we put on the radio, and usually you don't get the radio in Shabbat. And, and then we—but we watched, we at that time, we had a television which, you know, was for the news only, and we watched the war actually on television.

MG: Did it touch you personally? You were up in Herzliya, so—

AA: I went of course to the, to the Magen David Adom with my—I had at that time finished a nursing class, in '67—two years, and so I had some nursing experience. And I made myself available in the hospital there, in the Magen David Adom. But the people, the American consul advised the Americans to leave, and I brought it up for the children, and I told them, I say, “It was—I know what you feel, but I could never leave my people. Never leave my people.” And they said, “We aren't going anywhere, mommy. We are all staying here.” Because I would not want my children to suffer or anything because of my beliefs, but it was not a question.

MG: Yeah. In—How did the war unfold for your family? Did you spend time in a bomb shelter? Did—?

AA: Yes. We had a bomb shelter. And since most of the young men in our building—we had an apartment—left, my—uh, we went shopping, and we brought them milk and we paid for the oil to heat up and things like that. We helped out the families with food and things because nobody knew that the war was going to start; the men just disappeared. There were women with small children in our building. We did what we could. And I

finally, when it quiet down, I went to Jerusalem; we drove down to Jerusalem to get eggs from a friend of mine. And I baked cookies and I put them in American coffee jars and send them out to the to the desert, to the Sinai. And I, with my—with our address, and I say, “Dear soldier,” I say, “If you are going north, stop over in Herzliya and visit us.” And they did their laundry and they took a bath and, and so on, you know. We helped whatever we could.

But I saw the planes, the American white planes, bringing us ammunition because we ran out of ammunition. It was—I don’t know what it was; maybe it meant to be. But when Kissinger started traveling and trying to peace, I realized one important thing, and I’m not a political person: that whatever it is, the world is never going to let the Israelis win anything except maybe their lives, which is good enough. And that has been going on now, the minute the Israelis—they were not far from Cairo—the minute the Israelis win, they stopped the war. (laughs) But when Israelis are in danger nobody stops anything.

MG: Was there—Were you fearful living through the Yom Kippur War?

AA: No, I wasn’t—

MG: What was the mood like in Israel?

AA: Well, I wasn’t fearful because I knew the training the army got, and I knew the training the air force got. It was just a surprise. But it led up also, later on, to make war with the Egyptians, you know, because they gained their pride back, what you would call. And they proved themselves that they can fight when necessary. And Sadat was a very wise leader, and he made peace. But he didn’t make peace because the Egyptians were brave or the Israelis, you know, had the problem. They—he made pray because the Israelis developed the oil in the Sinai. And so that, they were negotiating; and they returned the oil to the Egyptians, so that was worth making peace for. But the poor man paid with his life, you see.

MG: Um, in 1975, you left Israel again. Had Gabriel’s job fini—You mentioned the company went bankrupt.

AA: Yeah. Gabriel came back to his old company, to Fluor Corporation, and we settled in again.

MG: And, that was—

AA: But I realized at that time—interesting, what I realized at that time, that there is something in my destiny that says, “Alicia, you cannot live in Israel; you have to live here.” And my destiny, truly what I believe, was to write this book and to continue bearing witness. That was my destiny. Whichever way I turned, that was my destiny. And so I accepted it, because five years—seven years later, I wrote my book.

MG: Alicia, if you had written the book in 1952, or if you had written the book in 1962, or 1972, would the book have been different? And if so, how?

AA: Well, I needed the three years of straight time. The book is alive. It’s alive because I lived through the whole Holocaust. No matter how many stories I wrote, I could not have done it unless I secluded myself and I wrote it like that.

MG: A—but the book is published more than forty years after the Holocaust.

AA: Yes.

MG: Did you need that forty years to be able to write the book? I know you’ve said your students wanted you to write; your students always asked you to write.

AA: I needed the time. I needed that three years. But, you know, I always wrote about the Holocaust. A matter of fact, the story “I Love Israel”—isn’t that a cute story? The students at Mr. Blaylock’s class, one of them got up and said, “Can you write us something happy? You always write about the Holocaust, sad stories. Write me a happy story.” So, I wrote “I Love Israel”, which is a funny story. And then I went back to writing about the Holocaust. Whichever was—even if not directly like writing, I always moved in and made people aware, that a writer has a responsibility to write the truth and not hatred, see? So, I felt if I—with the speaking, and even writing in school, and educating my classmates, and I was also on a—contributing stories to Hadassah and to our synagogue paper—so I was constantly writing about the Holocaust and my time in Israel, but not in a sequel; and for the sequel, I needed the complete three years.

MG: And you came from Israel in 1975. And you settled in California?

AA: Yes, we came back to La Habra, to our home—hometown.

MG: Had you kept the home the—at the time? Or you sold the home when you moved to Israel?

AA: We have— Yeah, we sold the home. And then, we bought something else. It was very cute. The people who live in our home now, they are family with four daughters, and the man is a policeman; and we are still in touch with them. Because before I left, I made sure that the whole house is painting inside, give them a clean house, a happy house. And we are still in con— in touch, because people came—come looking for me: “What happened to Alicia? Where is she now?” So, when we came here, and—for three solid years, I kept traveling back to southern California to speak in the colleges and all the places. But then, when my husband got sick and I had to stay home, I could not travel. And so, I moved over to speaking locally in schools. And then I moved over to the telephone.

MG: When did you move to San Jose?

AA: I—we moved to San Jose in ninety—let’s see, maybe ’96, ’97; something like that.

MG: And Gabriel?

AA: I don’t own this house. I rent it. It was impossible to sell something in southern California, buy something here.

MG: Uh-huh. Did—had—did—Was Gabriel working? Did he take a job here in San Jose?

AA: No. He was already retired by then.

MG: Ah. He was.

AA: And he was having problems. He had two hip operations, a foot operation, a carotid artery operation. And he died of heart failure five and a half years ago.

MG: And you mentioned, in his last years he was not well. And you, you looked after him.

AA: Yeah, he was—For two years I nursed him with sheer power to keep him alive. And I kept him alive with—And he died here; he had his bed here, in our arms. But I did not sleep, and I didn't take care of myself, so my immune system challenged me. For the last five and a half years, on top of, you know. But, um, I'm doing fine now.

MG: Good. I wanna talk about your children, 'cause, of course, through all of this, they're getting older. Where did—You mentioned a little bit earlier, it's Zachary who is in the military.

AA: Yes.

MG: You told a little bit about Ronit, and when she was fifteen years old. And your eldest is David? David or Daniel; your oldest boy?

AA: Eh, Daniel.

MG: Daniel, excuse me.

AA: And I have a daughter Roan, who has two daughters.

MG: Ah. There's f—?

AA: By the way, I will a cute—two.

MG: There's four children?

AA: Two—uh, three children.

MG: Three children.

AA: Yeah. But I'll tell you a cute story. When I was writing the book in Holland, I was sending chapters to Zachary in Frankfurt. And then Zachary called, and he says, "Mother,

hurry up! The captain is going on vacation; he wants to know what happened.” (laughs)  
They were all reading it.

MG: Yeah. And where were they, during this time? Where did they go to school? And tell me about their careers.

AA: Yeah, they went—Yeah, they went to school in—Ronit finished Santa Cruz, and, and Danny finished engineering and computer science in Irvine. And Zachary is working, and—it—he’s doing fine.

MG: Good.

AA: But they are very good children. They have been very, very kind to me. Ronit took off three weeks, when I came back with my broken ankle, and took care of me. And Daniel is an advocate for a boy, a twelve-year-old boy, and he just helping him so much. They are giving children. And Roan helps children. And they’re just giving; they’re good people with—But what I love about them, they have excellent work ethics.

MG: Um-hm. And tell me about your grandchildren. Which of your children are married? And tell me about—

AA: Maya is going to college; she may be an artist or a teacher. And Kendra fell in love with Stanford. And she went for a—she is a beautiful writer. And she went there for a writing session, and she fell in love with it, and she started. And then we had a bit of a hitch last year because she had to pay an eleven thousand dollars, and nobody had eleven thousand dollars in this family, so—But, the school gave her—helped her with a scholarship, and she is doing fine now.

MG: And whose children are Maya and Kendra?

AA: Maya?

MG: Yeah. Which—who is their mother?

AA: Maya, um—

MG: Or father?

AA: —she just moved to a new school that I don't remember the name. I'm so sorry.

MG: Which—but which of your—

AA: In Santa—eh, in between Santa Cruz and San Jose. She finished already two years, and Kendra's finishing her second year this year.

MG: Who is their mother or father? Which of your children?

AA: Their mother is.

MG: This is—these are Ronit's?

AA: Yes. Roan's, yeah.

MG: Now, you say—

AA: She calls herself Roan. R-o-a-n. They're her daughters, and they are such wonderful girls.

MG: Ah. So, Roan is Ronit.

AA: Yes.

MG: Ah, okay.

AA: Roan is—She changed her name, you know. She wanted to be—she's divorced from her husband. She wanted to be a Roan—Roan Bear; a mother bear. (laughter)

AA: They're very individual, very wonderful kids. I will show you their pictures. They're just good people. And this is—All I could hope that they will be good people, uh, who will be contributing to the welfare of society, because you cannot live—You know, since they were children, I always send children's clothing to Israel. And when they didn't like something, they sneaked it in, in that box. And I sent it to my friend who lived in Jerusalem. And she worked in a daycare for both Arab children and Jewish children. And when I send the little dress—my friends gave me things—and I put the ribbon with the dress, or I put some little cars in the jeans for a boy. One little girl, an Arab little girl, went over to my friend and she says, "Who send me this lovely dress?" And she says, "A daughter. An aunt from America." And she said, "Well, how does my aunt in America know that I like pink?" She says, "Oh, the aunt in America knows everything." (laughs) Can you imagine: the little dress that went here from children from America landed up in the little—in the joy and pride of a little Arab, little girl? See.

This is what I mean by sharing, you see; the goodness of it. This is what I can do. And they have—they're hard working. But, you know, Ronit is a very brilliant girl, but she put her foot down and say, "You guys work hard, because you will have to make a living." See. And my children worked always very hard.

*(pause in recording)*

MG: Alicia, thank you for a wonderful lunch. It was delicious.

AA: You're more than welcome.

MG: You have such—such wonderful hospitality.

AA: Yeah, we didn't let you enjoy it, because I rushed and then Danny came and you talked.

MG: It's—no, it was wonderful.

AA: But tomorrow, we—tomorrow, we have meatballs.

MG: Ah, okay.

AA: And pasta.

MG: Okay.

AA: And some more of the soup, and some more of the salad.

MG: Alicia, in *Alicia: My Story*, the—the book, the published book ends with the very traumatic experience as you are seeking to enter Palestine, uh, on the *Theodor Hertzl*. I'm wondering—I'd like to start by picking up that story, and then transitioning from that story to how it is that you come to be on the island of Cyprus. So, talk to me about the *Theodor Hertzl*, and what was occurring on that boat.

AA: Well, we sang the *Hatikvah* [Israeli National Anthem], and everybody was very emotional. And when we disembarked and there was a table, eh, standing there in the middle of the area with two British soldiers: one was sitting and one was standing; and I think the standing had the rank of a sergeant, if I'm—And we had to register, give our names and the country where we came from. And my friend, a school friend, was standing in front of me, and they s—they, the Englishman who was sitting saw her parker(??), her pen anchored in her, in her, in her pocket. And he reached out and pulled it out from her. And she started complaining—she didn't know English—that she needs that pen, that she wants that pen back. And, uh, he wouldn't give her back. So I say, "You have to give her back the pen." And then, he called me a Jewish B, you know, and I told her, I called him a child killer. And you know my temper—I don't have a temper, but when I get mad, I fist; and I was just getting my fist to fist him in the face when the sergeant caught my arm. And he said to the soldier, "Give her back the pen." So, the girl got back the pen, but we never got to register. (laughs) 'Cause I was already angry.

And then, when we were nearing, we were going to go on the British ship, and there were—suddenly I heard, "You limey B! You let me through to my children!" And there was this woman, you know, a big, nice woman with two huge baskets with rolls. And she was giving it out to us, and I got one roll. And as I was eating it, you know, I cried, and I could taste the salt from my tears in this roll.

And then we were gotten on the ship and, and I wanted—believe it or not (laughs), that's what I call a real *chutzpah* [audacity]—I wanted to see if I can find that soldier that I fisted. And I was looking, and I found him! He had a blue shiner, a real blue shiner. After all, my father trained me; or I watched my father train my brother. And I asked him, "You"—I spoke English already—I asked him, "What happened to you?" And he—again, they always use this word B to—for us. And I say, "Tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk," I say, "Sorry, sorry." And then he looked at me closer and I took off; I never went on, on deck again because he could still me—shove me into the, into the ocean.

And then we came to—from Augusta and we were trucked to this camp and that was the isolation, the way I was writing in my story. Uh, barbed wire all over, with towers with machine guns, what does that remind me for? And I was never in a camp, but that's exactly what the camp looked like. And I say, "Two years"—this was the spring of 1947, after the war ended—"Two years, and Jewish children are going to go in the camp, and the barbed wire with machine guns?" I was so indignant! If it wasn't for Munik, you know—my, uh, a, boy who survived, my brother's friend—I think I would have ran someplace; I don't know where I would have ran, but I would have ran. And he say, "Shui, shui(??)," start throwing me oranges; I was busy catching the oranges. But for me, it was the end of the dignity, you know, that they who had the power to put me in a camp like that after two years.

And as you know from the story, it—We were hungry and we were thirsty, and there was only water half an hour, from six in the morning to six-thirty. But we were studying; that was safe. Studying always saved me. We were studying and we were on watch. And then we started training, and we were training for the very elite group, the *Palmach*; but of course, not normally with weapons. They—the revolver training was a different thing with sticks. And I was tall and nobody wanted to train with me, so Uri(??) trained with me, 'cause he was a tall man. And I constantly wanted to get out of there.

And then I—Remember when they took us swimming? (laughs) Oh, my god! I was swimming away, and the people were like little points already; and the shoot—and then they started shooting off guns and I didn't want anybody to get in trouble. But when I finally got there, got to the sand, they yanked me up and I twisted my ankle. And then, of course, I wouldn't ride in a jeep with them.

I'll tell you something: if, if I had grown to be a regular teenager, I think I would have been a—to some degree, a challenge to my parents as well, because I had my idea what it is all about, right? But that's why my parents kept me studying all the time, so that I don't get—or in athletic activities and things like that—so I don't get into any ideas. Not bad ideas, but independent ideas.

And I was in this camp for eight months. And then when they shot—when they hung the two Israelis, we fasted for three days. And that's when the major came in, and I gave him a—gave him a low-down. I was angry at him; how he can do something as a Scotsman?

MG: Why did they hang the two Israelis?

AA: Hm?

MG: Why did they hang the two Israelis?

AA: Why did they hate us?

MG: No, hang. You said they, the two—the Israelis? Why did you fast?

AA: Oh. In solidarity.

MG: What—?

AA: They were—that was our mourning for these young boys who were hung.

MG: Why did that—?

AA: Why they hang them? They belonged to the Eztel. I don't know exactly what they did; but they did—as an example, they hung them.

MG: And this was in Palestine?

AA: Yes. It was in Palestine.

MG: Alicia, I wanna come back and work with you to take some of the story and flesh it out a little bit. When you were—you were trying in Ali—in Aliah Bet; you were trying to land in Israel when the boat was attacked by the British.

AA: Yes.

MG: Tell that story. And then the story of the rolls, that was in Palestine, correct?

AA: Of the what?

MG: When you said the bread—that you were eating the bread; and doing the registration with the fountain pen.

AA: Ah, yes. That was already in Palestine.

MG: So, let's—so, tell me.

AA: Yeah. Okay.

MG: How—yeah. 'Cause you landed, then you were in Palestine for a short time before you had to leave.

AA: Yes, I was in Palestine only a few hours, and then they took us to Cyprus. Well, the point is that I have decided to—instead of going to America with the children's transport, that my destiny will be that of my people. If they live, I live; if they don't live, I don't live. And I am old enough—I was sixteen years old; I was seventeen in Cyprus—that I can—that I can fight. It was a very important thing. Whichever way, I was going to be with my people.

And so I went on this cruise—you know, I call it a cruise of twenty-one days? Well, I'll tell you something: nobody could in the world incite me to take another cruise. Even on a Disneyland ship because that was so traumatically—you know, we were sailing and bailing for twenty-one days. We were hugging the coast. And when we—it was miracle that we didn't sink. But we had—we had a very good captain, Mordechai Limon, which we called "Mocha", and he saw us through to it.

But when we were finally caught, the British went on that—and you will see the ship has coffins, taken off children that the British killed. And they have never denied it, because my book was published in England, and they did a good research on it, and that was history—was in the truth how it happened. But I didn't expect to land up in Cyprus, but whichever way I landed up, it was still a little bit easier than being in Europe; because, for me, Europe was a, a cemetery. That was all Europe was for me.

MG: What did—as you were—as you were sailing to Palestine, what did you understand—did you—or, you know, did you understand the role of the British in Palestine?

AA: Oh, yes! The mandate. I went to Hebrew academy; I studied the history of the Jewish people, I knew all, uh, the political—everything, as much as I could at the age of even eleven; because when the Russians occupied us, I went to a secret Hebrew academy; we hid our school. And—but we had nowhere to go. You must—there was some people who relatives in America, and that was limited; but the—as all of us, we had nowhere to go. And we realized something very important: unless we come back to the land of our forefathers, unless we come back where we—we will never, if we don't have our home again, we will never, ever have any kind of freedom! Because no matter what happens in the world, the Jews are always blamed and they are always scapegoats and—So, it was very important for us to do this thing, and thus we honored all of the victims.

MG: And the—so as you were approaching Palestine, the British attacked the ship?

AA: Well, what happened—First of all, a ship—a plane flew over us and they spotted us. And then they wanted us to—they wanted to get on our ship, and we wouldn't let them, you see. And so, we catapulted into their ship, garbage. And that's when they got mad and they put the tear gas on us. And they came with those sticks, and they clobbered us over the head, and this is how they killed those children. And some of them, they threw into the ocean; like the soldier picked—who picked me up, he was going to try to put me—throw me into the ocean. This is why I had to hit him and free myself. And off—my hat—I was wearing a hat—fell off, and then my long hair came out; and that second, maybe he hesitated, and I was able to free myself. At that point, he was already holding his hand to his face, because I really gave him one smack.

MG: What—And, so they took the ship to Haifa? Where did—where were you—?

AA: Yeah. The—they took this ship to Haifa, yes. At this—in Haifa, that they caught us three frigates and we had—we were surrounded and we had to sail into Haifa. And of course the crew that was crewing, they had made special, secret compartment; the crew was not caught. Now, neither did our captain; our captain was not caught. And so we knew that we will have to be there for eight months. And they were actually productive months, because I studied there all the time, and I trained. And they trained us because they needed—the thousand children that Golda Meir got out of Cyprus were trained soldiers, the sixteen and seventeen-year-olds.

MG: Yeah. And you were one of those children?

AA: Yes, I was one of the thousand.

MG: Who—who was training you? I know—you tell the story.

AA: They—they had—they had messengers, uh, from teachers from Israel come, and they trained us. And they—the English had this light, you know, going back and we had to very often just put ourselves into the sand. And with the sticks, you know, was very dangerous because some of the kids got clobbered. I didn't mind the stick training, but climbing under the barbed wire for one camp to another, we got torn and bleeding; and there wasn't any water, there wasn't any antiseptic, so I was walking around constantly oozing from someplace or another.

MG: Well, and you had a rash.

AA: And I had that rash.

MG: Tell me about that.

AA: Well, the anger. I was so angry that I blossomed into this rash, and I don't even know where it came—it was all over me, but not on my face. So I went to the nurse and she said that Doctor Rappaport, an American—eh, Israeli doctor is going to come and give me something. Nothing helped, because it was emotional. But once I got on the Greek ship going to Israel, overnight this thing disappeared. Only the scratches, you know, from this remained. It was a mental state that I had, the anger in me.

MG: What caused the anger?

AA: It was because I was put in a camp. This was, to me, a very, very bad thing; it was very demeaning, and it was an—So, these—these—the British supposed to be our friends, the Allies, you know? And, and they did this kind of thing to us. You know, during the war, they sunk a ship with four hundred people coming out of Romania; torpedoed them. And it's all because of the Arab oil. After all, Jewish blood is not important.

MG: In—you were learning in Cyprus. Israeli doctors and Israeli teachers came.

AA: Yeah.

MG: What were you—besides learning your studies, were you learning more about life in Palestine; and what were you understanding about world affairs; and what were you understanding about opportunities? Did you think you would ever get off Cyprus? And if so, how would you get off Cyprus?

AA: Well, the thing is that we were hoping that eventually, that the state of Israel will be declared—and it was; we were still in Cyprus—that I'm going to continue with my studies; I wanted—still wanted to be a physician. At that time, if it wasn't for my friends dying in the war for independence, I could have still been a physician. I—my whole fight and anger and unhappiness with death was when my friends were dying; it's a whole wall in my school, Mikveh Israel, of these children who were killed.

And so I was planning on continuing to school; and I did continue because I was accepted to the university, and I was an out-student, because when they had the cease-fire, they announced on—oh! This was also how I got myself to this exam; I want to tell you, this is cute. We had—I—the Israeli, army—we didn't have an army then but they honored my, officer's rank as—from the partisans; they offered it and they believed in it. But there was David, who was a little bit higher than I, and he was a young man and he was responsible for us, sort of to say. So, when I came to—Dr. Ox came to recruit students and so, I said, "I want to study in the university." And he says that they will let us know when the exams are going to be for entrance examination for the university, and to listen to the radio.

So, I listened to the radio, and they final told me such and such day; that they—to go to the, to the school Tor Piot, and there I can do the exams for the entrance. And when I went to David, and David says, "No way! You are not going anywhere." So I say, "What do you mean, I am not going anywhere? I am scheduled to go for an exam; I want to go to the university studies." Says, "You and your studies." he says. "There's a war going on." So, I say, "Well, I'm going to think about something."

So, the—on the morning before the exams, I went out to Hulon, to the gate, and I say to them, "Let's see what vehicle will come." And what came is an ambulance. And I immediately, you know, bend over, and I started moaning that my stomach is hurting me, that I'm having some problems, and I was moaning a little bit loudly, and the ambulance stopped it. He says—and he—and I was wearing the blouse of our school—and says, "What's the matter?" I say, "I have to get to the doctor in Tel Aviv. I have terrible—maybe the appendix, maybe something is very, very bad." So they were two guys, and they—I could see they were smiling to each other, he says, "Okay. Hop up." And then I realize if I hop up, I'm not hurting; I say, "You have to help me." So they put me up there, covered me with a blanket, and we went through the gate, and we were out—the minute

we hit Tel Aviv, he says, “Okay, where do you want to go?” I say, “I want to go to the school Tor Piot and take an exam there.” He says, “Sure, here you go.”

***Part 2 ends; Part 3 begins.***

MG: Alicia, coming back to your time on Cyprus, as the—you were training, uh, with Israeli—well, Pales—Jewish soldiers—

AA: Yeah, we were.

MG: And you were receiving your schooling. At that time, were the Jewish soldiers and teachers, were they telling you, “Soon you will be leaving Cyprus?” Did they know what the future would hold for you? And what did—?

AA: No, I didn’t—I never asked them. They didn’t know. But later on when, when the UN voted for a homeland for the Jewish people, then we knew what the future held. They didn’t do too much because, you see—for us, chance for us to survive were very small chances.

MG: Why do you say that?

AA: Why I say it? Because six hundred and fifty thousand Jews were facing five million Arabs; the chance was very small. And this is why—do you know that ten percent of the population, of the Jewish population, was killed during the war for independence, and another ten or more were wounded? So if it was in America, that would mean twenty million people killed. There wasn’t a home that wasn’t touched. But the one thing was lucky that a lot of the survivors were killed, so—and they didn’t have, you know, family to cry after them.

MG: Alicia, when did you hear about the creation, about the partition?

AA: Yeah, we heard it on the—in Cyprus. Yes, of the partition of—but the Arabs didn’t accept it, and then we knew that they are going to fight us.

MG: When you heard about the partition, what was the reaction?

AA: We were very happy. We were very happy about it; but being that I was already like a seventeen-year-old soldier, I knew that this is not going to come like this; that—and I knew all about the problems that the people—the Jewish people had in Palestine with the Arabs, and they knew it's going to be a blood shed. But I was willing, you know, willing to whatever it is. We didn't give it a thought; we knew we were ready to do what we have to do.

MG: Tell me about clothing, where your clothing came from on Cyprus. Your clothing in Cyprus. Your blue clothing.

AA: (laughs) Well, when I left Belgium, the orphanage, I had an awful nice clothing but we had to leave it in France; we could only take a knapsack. And so I took my kilt, and I took a blouse, and I took a jacket, and I took a change, and this is—and I took books—some books; and so when—but we came to Cyprus, it was very hot. I was wearing this wool skirt and things, so—

In the meantime, I got the rash already, so they isolated me in a half a tent; and I felt sorry for myself because I shouldn't be isolated, and I shouldn't be have a rash. But I was looking up, I remember laying on the cot, and I say, and I say, "The outside is gray, the inside is kind of a beige. What is that blue doing there?" The blue. And—when I went and gave it a little bit tear, that was the lining; and it was wonderful, like a linen thing. I say "A-ha!" And I gave it a little bit more tear. Before you know it, within a couple weeks, we were all blossomed in blue shorts and in blue shirts. (laughs) And we sewed the tents back very carefully, believe me, up the side. But they were much lighter than they were before because what could we do? I think this was brilliant; only a mind like mine would think of something. We had to; we had to survive. I don't know if the British probably realized later on because the sewing was not so professional, but it was sewed up. They figured, good riddance; let them go.

MG: How did you leave Cyprus? Tell me about learning that you were going to leave.

AA: Yeah, how we left Cyprus? Golda Meir apparently came—I didn't see her, I was on duty then—and she asked for a thousand teenagers, and all of us were trained. 'Cause they needed this kind of backup; they just needed soldiers. We could—I wish we could have taken weapons with us, but we didn't have any weapons. And I remember leaving at—I left the hundred dollars that my uncle gave me in Belgium, and I didn't even ask for it to return; but it was very emotional, going on a ship again, because all of us were frightened of ships. We were traumatized.

And my friend, Sarah, says to me, “Well, since you proved yourself a good sailor, you take the upper bunk.” And it was nice; it was—there was a blanket; there were sheets. And boy, was I sick! I was throwing up all night (laughs), and she says, “My God, shame yourself.” I say, “Sarah, if you ever tell anybody what happened I have a name of a good sailor.” And she say, “I keep my word; I won’t tell anybody.”

MG: Uh, when did you leave Cyprus?

AA: I left Cyprus in December, 1947, and I came there, I think, in March; so I was there eighteen—eight months.

MG: Where did you go from Cyprus? You were—

AA: From Cyprus, I went directly to the school Mikveh Israel, it’s a Youth Aliyah school supported by Hadassah; and I came into *maso hav oliv(??)*, which is twenty-one. And, um, and I went to study there because I was—I did a lot of good studying in the orphanage in Belgium, and in Cyprus; I was very fluent in Hebrew, I knew—was fluent in Hebrew from a very young age; but it just all came back.

And it was interesting, because I have a friend who was with me in school, and she remembers this as the most beautiful time in her life, even though the Arabs were killing us and shooting at us and all this kind of thing. And I think it was a very sweet time, that you could work in the fields; and you can—you can work on your land and have the Sabbath because we were conservative, uh, a youth—a youth group conservative. And then there was the youth, the children; the survivors, and the other children were children of people who had farms. So they were sector clalit and sector dati.

The regular, the secular, and the religious children—we belonged to the religious children—went to the synagogue on Saturday morning. But what have—was happening around ten o’clock, Egyptian planes started coming over our school and throw bombs into our school. And, and you can put your clock up; they came at ten o’clock, so we waited until they threw their bombs, and then we can go to the services. Until finally—it took a couple of months—until, uh, a plane came up that chased them away, so we finally knew we had a plane. (laughs) The American boys brought us all these parts and put together a plane.

MG: [inaudible]. Cyprus. [inaudible] Alicia, I—I’d like you—the story about—

ET: [inaudible]

MG: Or the shorts. The blue?

ET: No, the shorts that she ripped [inaudible] on the boat.

MG: The, the shorts that you ripped for the calendar.

AA: The shorts that I cut off on the on the boat? (laughs)

ET: I love that story [inaudible] charming.

AA: Yes, it is—you know, I had—they were asking, “When are we getting there? When are we getting there?” You know, some children felt quite sick. And so I said, “Okay, I’m going to make myself a calendar.” So every day, I cut off a piece; but we were supposed to sail only eight days, not twenty-one days! So my shorts were getting short-short, and the guys were touching; I say, “No [inaudible], the calendar is closed.” (laughs) I tried to, because it was very fun, and this is when the Captain called me in his office and say, “Who is this girl who is—who has this kind of incentive,” you know, “to quiet down the younger children?” We had some young children: thirteen, fourteen-year-old as well on this ship. You know, it’s—

And when I saw that captain, I nearly died because I was expecting a captain from the stories of Jack London, with a beard and with epaulettes; and then this boy stood up there with his shorts and his—this gorgeous thing. And I—even I, who never had difficulty saying something—I just opened my mouth and that was it—not said a word.

And then—later on, you know, when we met, when he was the head of the Israeli Navy, I took a ride with him in his car to go to my office in downtown. And I said to him, say, “What happened to you? Where did you disappear to?” He says, “Shh. I know who you are. I’ll give you a gift,” and gave me all these pictures. Isn’t that nice? And then he was getting married to a lovely girl and the welfare office got an apartment for him. Small world; small world.

But, of course, what would he think of a sixteen-year-old girl when he had this gorgeous Sabra waiting for him at—in Kfar Saba? But it wasn’t that I fell in love with him, it was just that I never met a captain looking like that. (laughs) You know, with my books I

always thought it was an older man, all stiff and dandy. And I say, “God”—and tall—I say, “My god, do you think I want to dance with you? Do you think there are more like of you?” ‘Cause I’m a tall girl, and I had great difficulties being a tall girl with the children who survived the Holocaust. And so I say then I must find somebody who is tall. ‘Cause the boys were embarrassed and, you know—remember I went to the dance in Badgastein and was hitting me right there (hits chest) and he was a short guy, and was embarrassing for both of us; I never went to dance again.

MG: Alicia, how did you meet your husband? Where were you?

AA: Well, I was, uh—okay, so I was studying; while I was in the Israeli Navy, I had teachers who were teaching me and I needed books, and I met this woman, Yehudit, and she was a teacher. And so, when I started this—I was accepted, I passed their exams, was accepted to university; so we came for three days to Jerusalem, in the cease-fire, and the mayor of Jerusalem gave us hotel rooms and coupons for food. But I needed books, and I heard the—for—she told me she has some books on sociology, but it’s all in English.

So I went to get some of the books and I walked into the room where she was teaching, and there was a whole group of men there; and one was standing near the window, and he was wearing a navy blue coat and his complexion was sort of yellow. And the first thing that crossed my mind, I say, “God, with this complexion, he should never wear navy blue.” (laughs) It didn’t work out right, you know? Anyway, I was introduced—and I was a matchmaker from—what they say, from *bethenme eledat(??)*, from birth; and I said, “Oh, my God.” When they stood up to greet me, they were tall, they were Czechoslovakia, they were from New Zealand, these volunteer boys who came, and Gabriel was among these volunteers, [inaudible].

And then Fivie started talking, and I thought it would be nice if we could show them around, so I talked to Gabriel because he was the one who needed more coddling, because with his complexion—He had yellow jaundice, later on I found out. So I say, “Look”, I say, “if you come to the Israeli Navy on a Saturday, we can go to Nazareth.” So, we went on our first date to Nazareth; so Sarah, my friend, went, and Gabriel, and he brought a friend. And we went to eat, in a—in an Arab place, in Nazareth.

And he asked me to eat onions, and I say, “I don’t want to eat raw onions.” Say, “But it’s good for you; it’s healthy for you.” And I didn’t know for a long time that he wanted me to eat onions because—in America, you don’t have to wait months to kiss a girl; if you’re on a date you can kiss her maybe after the second or third date, (laughs). And it took, and it took him three months because I was so, you know, distant. But I wouldn’t eat the onions, and then finally I say, “Why did you want me to eat the onions?” He said, “Well, I was hoping I can give you a kiss.” (laughs)

MG: When did, uh—over—three months before your relationship blossomed—.

AA: Well, before I gave him the first kiss but we were dating about a year and we were married in June the thirtieth, 1949.

MG: And—so tell me, then—it sounds like the relationship progressed slowly?

AA: Very slowly, because I will tell you why. You see, in Israel, you have a *chavurah* [fellowship], your friends are like your family; and it was funny, because Gabriel was at that time already discharged from the army; was working engineer, but he had very little money. So on Saturday when we went to eat dinner, he could only treat us once a month—you know, we were about six, seven people—and he didn't want anybody to treat them. So we walked a lot. So one of the boys—a young man—got angry. Says, "If you have to find already an American or somebody out of the country, at least find somebody who can afford a dinner." (laughs) I say, "It's not important; we walk and we talk." But he didn't know much Hebrew, and my English was—it was good, but it was academic English; but we communicated. It was very respectful; it was very nice, very—and he grew on me, you know, and I grew on him. But I had, altogether, about six marriage proposals. Everybody wanted to marry me.

MG: So, why—?

AA: But the point is, why didn't I marry them? Well, remember the, the tragic death of Milek? And then, I—by that time already, I knew that Uri(??) was killed in the Old City, and my heart just froze. At the age of seventeen, and here I am mourning two people I loved, and—Not that I was jinxed or anything; I was just going to study; I was not going to get married or anything like that. And I wasn't going to fall in love. And I broke a few hearts.

I'll tell you one cute story, and I won't name who that man was, but he was an officer in the navy, and he was perfect in English, and all these books that had to be translated from English to Hebrew; we sat in the library day after day, and we were—and I was—he was translating them for me. And then, after six months, he says, "You know," he said, "I'm spending all my, my life—my evenings—I'm supposed to date; I'm giving it to you. Why don't we do something else except study? Why don't you marry me?" (laughs) So I say, "I can't marry,"—can't name names—"I can't marry you. I'm going to school; I'm going to the university." "But," say, "but it's okay, I'll let you go to university"—I was supported to the university—and I says, "No, I can't." So, I went around my block with

Miriam; I said, “Miriam, Josef wants to marry me. What am I going to say?” I say, “I can’t marry him because my heart is still aching after the boy that got killed in Jerusalem.”

But time passed, and I went to Tel Aviv with my friend Miriam because her sister, who had survived—she was from Hungary—was going to make me a civilian dress. And when we were going, we were—we were going to—on the bus, and who do you think was coming down the bus? This man who wanted to marry me. And he says to me, “Oh,” he say—because at that time they called me Adalee—“Oh, Adalee, listen: I’m getting married in two weeks, but if you say ‘yes’ to me I’ll marry you.” So, I say, “Are you crazy?” I say. He says, “No.” I say, “You know I have always loved you.” So here he is going down and I’m going up and we were stranded and the bus has to move so the people say, “No—decide already, what you are going to do.” So, I say, “I can’t marry him, he is already marry—going to marry somebody else.”

Well, he went down and I sat down and then the conversations started in the bus: “She should have married him”; “She shouldn’t have married him”; “She broke his heart”; “He shouldn’t marry it.” And they started judging me and they gave me the roughest of times. I say, “Miriam,” I say, “We have to get off that bus.” (laughs) You know, the people in this are so sweet. Here I am, young—strange girls, you know, wearing Navy uniforms; why are they so involved with us? Because we are their daughters; they love us because they care about us; so some said I should have married—uh, “He looks like a nice man,” and “He will give her a good life,” and “He loved her already all this time.” I’m telling you, it was—I felt so badly. (laughs) So, I was just hoping maybe Josef was joking, but he wasn’t; he was very serious.

MG: So, Alicia, why did you marry Gabriel? How was he different?

AA: Well, uh, somehow—I don’t know. It wasn’t so physical, because I didn’t know much about what a young girl should feel. Truly, you know, I was maybe fifteen years, in that area; I was a—I wasn’t even kissed, not really; except Alexander, you know, on the train. But he appealed to my heart with his gentleness, you know, with his sacrifice; and, and I started loving him, in my own way, you know, because he was very honorable man. And I said, “Well, whatever it is, I can’t keep saying ‘no’ to everybody.” I was only twenty years old at the time, when I married him. And he was a good man. But I also realized, and he—the forward, read Gabriel’s forward—he was facing something: these friends, these young survivors, they were like—be like brothers and sisters; and for an American it could have been misunderstood, but he caught on, that this is all a love of needing each other instead of a family. And for this, I respected him greatly, you know; he knew that, you know, most of us are innocent girls.

And then, of course, the challenge coming to America was not easy. First of all, we were very poor; and secondly, I couldn't take the subways. I was throwing up, and I had amoeba dysentery; but I pulled myself up, I say—little Alicia says to me, “You get going; you have things to do; you have people that need your help,” and so on, and—and I went, I went, I went on the subway, off the subway, threw up, went back on the subway. But once it was very cold, and I was—had a very thin coat, and I was shivering. And there was a lady, an African-American, big lady, sitting in a fur coat, and she says to me, “Honey child, you are shivering, you are cold. Come, I'll warm you up.” And she took me into that big coat—imagine, it was such a big coat that it was place for the two of us—and warmed me up, as simply as that. But a nice mama.

MG: So, you got amoebic dysentery in Israel?

AA: Yes, I got it—Amoeba dysentery comes from a parasite that goes into your lining of your, of your intestines, and makes you—and eats it away. And then you can't digest your food; because there wasn't much food in Israel to digest. Now, the children—the soldiers in desert [inaudible], they got vegetables from the Arabs, and they fertilize it with human ray—waste. And amoeba travels through this into the vegetables, and this is—and I must have picked up something, you know, grown in this manner, and I got sick. And three times I was hospitalized and they finally found it in my blood screen, and they cured it with antibiotic; but I always remain sensitive on that thing.

So when I came to the United States, my father and mother-in-law took me shopping. And I went to the A&P, and I looked around, because I came from a famine. You see, Israel has six hundred and fifty thousand people, but seven hundred and twenty thousand came from the Arab lands, and there wasn't enough food—was—I never saw an egg, I never saw milk in my married life, and I never—meat at all. And so we had this frozen fish from [inaudible]. So I looked around and I, I was overwhelmed, and I just went out and I—Somehow, the tears started running, and my mother-in-law ran out and said, “What's the matter? Did somebody hurt your feelings?” I say, “No, mama,” I say, “How can one country have so much and another country nothing?” So little, you know? I couldn't understand this.

I could understand it, but I—that's when the guilt feeling built up, and I could never, ever shop unless I could share it with homeless or share—or send it to Israel. So my husband says, “I shop,” (laughs), “because my budget is not allowing this kind of thing.” He shopped with coupons and everything, so he became the shopper. And I always felt guilty. I still can feel guilty; when now I shop, I have to buy something to put it in the barrel for the homeless. It's just, you know, it's—if you wonder if you have hang-ups on something like that, here's one of that.

***End of Interview.***