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**Carolyn Ellis:** Today is October 31, 2011. I am here with George Salton and Ruth Salton. My name is Carolyn Ellis. We are in St. Petersburg, Florida in the U.S.A. The language we are using is English and the videographers' are Jane Duncan and Richard Schmidt.

Okay, welcome George and Ruth.

**George Salton:** We are glad to be here.

CE: We are just delighted to have you here.

GS: Thank you.

CE: To hear the talk you gave this morning and now to have this time to be with you. I'd like to begin by telling you just a little bit about myself and how I got interested in this project. I am professor at the University of South Florida in Tampa. I have been a professor there for thirty-one years. I have a Ph.D. in Sociology and am in a Communication Department. And for a lot of my career I have been interested in stories of loss and grief and have written several books about that topic and a number of articles. I'm particularly interested in people's stories and what we can learn from storytelling. I started studying the Holocaust about two and a half years ago. I was fortunate to be asked to do some interviews of survivors in the Tampa Bay area. So, my Ph.D. students and I since interviewed about forty-five survivors in situations like this. Most of those interviews, in fact of all those interviews, were fairly formal. We asked experiences

before the Holocaust, during the Holocaust, and after the Holocaust. But because you have given—both of you have had other interviews in the past and George has written a book, we thought that today we would do it a little more informally than before.<sup>1</sup> My research is involved in telling stories with Holocaust survivors and so, instead of separating out, you tell the stories and then I analyze as the academic and tell what they mean, I like to work together with survivors. So, you meet Jerry Rawicki today. He and I have been working together for two and a half years. We have written two articles where we meet, not just one time, but we've met more than a dozen times, written together, e-mailed back and forth, he edits, I edit, and we try to tell the best stories that we can given what he remembers. And then, he helps me with analyzing what the stories mean. So it really is a working with, as opposed to you telling the stories and my saying what they mean. So if this worked out and you were willing, I would love to meet with you another time to perhaps write together, publish together, or work together in any way that we can.

GS: Okay, let's see what happens.

CS: Okay, and then one more thing I wanted to tell you is, although I am not Jewish, I have had two Jewish husbands. My first husband, he passed away and then I married my second husband, who is also Jewish. And so I have been very involved in the Jewish community and the Jewish family and he and I traveled to Israel together. And next year, next summer we will be going to Poland together. His family is from Poland. So, I am quite familiar with the Jewish community and very involved in the Holocaust and it really extends a lot of the work that I have done in loss and grief. So, that's essentially who I am.

CS: Do you have any questions that you wanted to ask me?

GS: No, no.

**Ruth Salton:** We're delighted that you do it.

CE: Thank you.

RS: We really need people like you. Makes the Holocaust known—knowledgeable to lots of people.

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<sup>1</sup> George Salton wrote *The 23rd Psalm: A Holocaust Memoir* in 2004.

CE: Thank you very much.

RS: We cannot forget. Because when we forget it will not be just for the ones who were killed.

CE: Yes, and that's our purpose, is how to write stories together that will convey to people later on what the experience was about and so that these stories will not be forgotten. So people who might not listen to a four-hour interview might read the kinds of stories that we write together. Okay?

GS: Yep.

CE: So, George, I am going to start with you and ask you if can give us a thirty minute version of your experiences before—(audio distortion)—the war, during the Holocaust and just a little bit after the Holocaust. I might interrupt occasionally to ask you a question but mostly I am going to let you determine—

GS: Okay. Good. Great, let me start from the beginning. Obviously, I come from another yesterday, my background is different, history changed and affected my life. I lived as a young boy in Poland, in a small town in Southern Poland with—there were 3,000 people there, and about, I would guess, eighty maybe or ninety Jewish families. Lived a life of happiness and innocence, reading books about cowboys and Indians and learning how to ride a bike and how to ski, just wonderful life. I love my parents, I had a wonderful older brother, great wonderful life and then, when I was eleven, shortly after I finished fifth grade in the local elementary school, something happened to change my life forever. Germany attacked Poland on September 1, 1939. Our small town was occupied nine or ten days later, and while there were all kinds of restrictions imposed on all the people in our town, as I am sure they imposed on all the Polish towns, the Jewish people in our town were subjected to great and difficult, brutal occupation. Our synagogue, all the synagogue that we treasured and honored, was desecrated. Our holy books, our Torahs, were burned on the streets. Jewish men were beaten on the marketplace on the streets, as they were met, recognized, beaten by German soldiers and German policemen. Jewish women were compelled to clean the streets with toothbrushes and handkerchiefs. This was done only to humiliate us all.

And there were all kinds of restrictions imposed upon us and what was so important about it that violating any of these restrictions were maybe seen kinda superficial. The violation was very severe and some people who violated the restrictions never came back. For example, all Jewish people, Jewish young men and women, were obligated to wear

an armband on their right arm, where it was stipulated that it had to be so many centimeters height, it was a blue star of David on it. It was done simply identify us as being Jewish and therefore any German soldier, any German policemen could tell we were Jewish, clearly our neighbors knew us, and of course if somebody was for some reason was caught not wearing, someone was fifteen, or seventeen, or forty-two, not wearing the armband for whatever reason, he or she would be arrested, taken away, subjected to great punishments, and sometimes they didn't come back. Other restrictions were that we couldn't leave, they defined whether the boundaries of the little town. That was completely artificial and we were not allowed to leave this and this was significant because as they gentlemen imposed tremendous restrictions on how much food we could get and buy, if we had been allowed to leave town and go visit the farmer who knew we could trade a pair of shoes or trade a suit, or trade a ring for some bread or potatoes, that was not allowed. More and more restrictions, our houses and apartments were searched, things were confiscated, beating, oppression, assignment, all kinds of dirty miserable jobs, washing tanks, washing military tanks, or washing cars, or digging ditches. And that evolved over the time, evolved into something that was unexpected and frightening: that the Germans would select the woman, or man, or old lady and shoot them, and there was no consequence. Nobody was arrested for it; nobody was questioned, so shoot them (inaudible). I remember they came to our town, there was a young woman with her two daughters, was trying to make a living by selling something and the Germans shot her in the head and killed her and the little girls were running away.

It was a terrible time of oppression, of fear, of suffering, of hunger. Parents tried to make sacrifices to somehow do something for their children and children in turn tried to make sacrifices to do something for their parents. I remember meeting—I was sitting with my parents and my brother for dinner, and there was a potato and two slices of bread on the table, and there my parents would say to us, “Eat boys, eat.” My brother was six, six years older. “Because we are not hungry,” and we knew that wasn't true, so we would say, “no dad, mom, we are not hungry. You eat.” A terrible time of suffering and death, and the coming of the Germans to town to kill people and shoot people. And they knew they mentioned—were we worried when we heard the Germans were back in town, we went some place to hide, and we worried not so much about us, but worried about my mom and dad and of course, I understand, now that I am a father, how much they had to worry, and others had to worry, about the survival of their children. This was a terrible time and it didn't last for a few months. It lasted about two years. They came in 1939, sometimes in early 1942; this is more than two years of this growing oppression and misery and dying. The announcement came to us that everybody has to—all the Jewish people were to get in the market square with our valuables, we had none. And when we marched to be placed in a ghetto in the nearby town some eight miles away.

CE: What happened to your valuables? What had happened—

GS: Well, we had no valuables, (inaudible) would have confiscated any savings and they searched our apartments and houses. If someone had any kind of a silver candlesticks, (inaudible). And then in addition to it—clearly people and including my parents could save something, cause I remember a time when my mother was trading—my father was a lawyer so he had some nice suits. He had a one nice suit of father's was trading it for a sack of potatoes from a farmer that came in to do it, another time she had a ring, she was I remember trading it for couple loafs of bread. So, whatever little we had was spent and create some kind of survival, create survival, hunger, misery, they created no medical facilities. Jewish people who had stores, the stores were closed or transferred to other ownership and Jewish people that worked, like my father or some were teachers were no longer allowed to work. Terrible oppression in this little town, still it was in a town that was our town, we still—they took most away of our rooms and our apartments, it was still something we recognized. We are still with our families, and Christian neighbors who lived next-door, Christian neighbors that we knew for many years and there was still some degree, some reason to believe that we persevere, somehow we may survive.

But then when they took us to the ghetto, they marched us. And as I said, the decree was, everybody has to gather and we will be marched to the ghetto eight miles. Any Jewish person found in the town after the people were marched would be executed on site. And given that the Germans were shooting people all the time there was no reason to—to not to believe that they would do and that staying behind was a very dangerous thing.

Another fact that has to be recognized, at the time when they marched through the ghetto was in early 1942, when Germany was winning everywhere, they were deep in Russia, they occupied France. And there was no reason to believe that the terror would end in a few months. Because if we knew that it may end in a few months some of us would hide with a neighbor, hide—for all we knew it was going to take years, and there was no way to somehow hide for years, and we just had to get together and be taken to the ghetto. Ghetto was a terrible place, the Germans took a small piece of the town, they build a wall—small piece of the town before the war, 3,000 people live there, then they build the wall around it and a fence with barbed wire installed in a tube—guarded gates and then to that area, which they called the ghetto or the Jewish district, they compelled all the other Jews from that town as well the Jews from surrounding little towns and villages. They brought us inside and then the place before the war had 3,000 people, the place had now 23,000 people, tremendous crowding, no food, no medical facilities. Place of despair—desperation and fear. And again the Germans came in at night and they shot ten or twelve or fourteen people.

Much of it was done because the Germans decided that we were not human beings and if we are not human beings they could do this the way one can do it to rabbits, or to goats, or whatever. That's—all kinds of rumors and speculations and fears and people dying in the ghetto and there were no choices. There wasn't like there—something difficult to perceive today, that there was a place of terror, of difficulty and starvation, and there were

no choices. One couldn't say, "Well given this, I would do this or that." There were no choices at all. No, no passes of choices. And going through that misery for relatively short time, the announcement of the people in the ghetto would be because there's crowding because there is not enough food, not enough space, which was crazy, we all knew that. People in the ghetto will be transported to a empty factory farm, which—in Russia it was called Kohós, deep in the occupied Ukraine, occupied now by the Germans, and then people will be moved there, the trip would take, the train trip would take three to take food along for three days and the climate will be such and such to bring the right clothing and everybody will be transported there to work on that farm, except some 700 to 800 people whose papers were stamped few days before this announcement, and it just so happens, that when they stamped my brother's name, they are stamping the papers of people who were in the twenties and early thirties, when they stamped my brother's name, he arranged that they should also stamp my paper. I was only fourteen, and the Germans, I am sure, didn't realize when they stamped my paper that I was only fourteen, and the announcement was that everybody would be sent to work on the farm except those 700 and 800 people whose papers are stamped, and they are allowed not to go.

I wanted to go with my parents, my parents didn't have stamps with them, I wanted to go with them, I was fourteen, they were the framework of existence for me, I loved them and they loved me. My mother was a young woman about forty, you know still young people, and they said no. They said to me, "no, you will be safer here. Stay with your brother safer here in the ghetto. We know people outside the walls." At some point I thought I being rejected, but then I had to understand that they are doing it for reasons which they understood and I didn't. And mind you, there is a footnote here to this day, forever I wonder if they had some premonition of what lay ahead, that they would say to me "You are what (inaudible) sons, stay here." So, they were deported. This great brutality and beatings and shootings, they were all before deported, myself and some other people stayed, mostly men, some young women stayed.

We were assigned to different jobs, still worrying about what happened to our parents, hoping that on this farm that they are on now there is work, and food, and space and they existing, hoping to get some letters. We are not allowed to use telephones, of course, but hope to get some letters. I was assigned to, my brother was assigned to work for the German air force to fix something they were repairing, and I was assigned to work in a comp—in a factory owned by Daimler-Benz was a German company that still exists today. And I was marched to that—there was seventy of us, we marched to the front of the ghetto and the guard to the factory work over there digging ditches or cleaning streets or whatever and then marched back. And then after doing it a few weeks, one day we again assembled and we marched under guard back to the ghetto. We are told Daimler-Benz build a small concentration camp over there. They brought other Jewish people from other deportation places and we are not going back to the ghetto. We, the seventy of us, will stay here as part of prisoners of that camp, there was about 400 people there. And that was obviously, at that point, separated from my brother, prior to (inaudible) back to—from the ghetto—back to the ghetto from work. He came back from the ghetto work, I

was with him and he was six older. He was my brother, **Manach**, he was, he was, again my future and my past.

So I was separated from him and was this very oppressive place and while I was there a few months and one day they brought in some other prisoners from Eastern Poland, some maybe eighty of them from a town called Rava-Ruska and one of the things we asked of them, we—there were other people from the surrounding area, around Rzeszów, were again the people of their towns were deported to work on a farm and they were, some of them were selected at deportation time to the camp the (inaudible) said. So, we asked these people from the east, “Do you know about this farm that our families are on? What happened, we never heard from them, tell us!” and they said to us “don’t be foolish, those farms are all deception. The people from your town, from other towns were taken by train to a place called Bełżec which was an extermination camp. The men were separated from women, and first the men were gassed, being told that they were going to take a shower. Then the women were driven naked, with their babies, to the buildings and they were all killed. All the people were killed.” And it was a terrible, terrible time. For me, it was a terrible acceptance of the fact that my parents were dead, acceptance that they died in this terrible condition of naked, being driven naked, into gas chambers. I wanted, mind you I was still fourteen still, I wondered if my mother and my father called my name as they were dying. It was terrible time.

And then I was a prisoner in this camp. It was the first of ten different camps, I was in a period of about three years. Three of them were in Poland, two in France, and five in Germany, a time of slavery, of suffering, of brutality, of hunger, of beatings, of dying. We were in the hands of brutal men that had guns, and whips, and gas and to survive, first one needed a little luck. Not the luck to continue living, but the luck to open the door to the next space where you had to suffer to survive. The fact that my brother was able to get a stamp, to get a stamp on my papers, and I didn’t go with the rest of the people to the gas chambers, this was luck. This lucky thing allowed me to continue stay alive and suffer, to survive in the camps and there few others such incidents, that (inaudible) happen, that was made the difference with them being shot and being allowed to continue as a prisoner. And over the years, one had to try to survive one day at a time. And we didn’t know what was happening in the war, didn’t know when these things would change, whether if it will change or when it will change, but, for myself, and I am not suggesting I was unique, the commitment was to live one day at a time. Tomorrow may be, I maybe will, when I get in line to get my soup, I will get more than just water. Tomorrow when I put the job to do something maybe I will be not working in the cold weather in the wind, I will be around the corner. One day at a time. There was some people who were maybe smarter than me who said, “I am doing it already for years, suffering, freezing, starving, and this will take forever and I am not putting up with it,” and next time they were told to line up to go to work the refuse and they were shot. But I had that instinct, which all I know is an instinct of an animal, not to—I never said to myself “I will survive.” Since I didn’t know how the whole thing will end the notion of surviving wasn’t really a reasonable notion because to survive something, you have to

understand what it is and how it comes and the notion is, the fact is, the never said to myself “I will die.” I never—even when I was hungry and cold and couldn’t walk, I never said to myself “I am going to die.”

CE: Did you talk to other people about dying—

GS: Oh sure, there were—

CE: About dying, about dying or surviving—

GS: Yes, yes, I mean the people in the first camp, the one at Daimler-Benz, I made many friends and there was some of them from my town, about four or five of us, so yes, we were friends. In all this I say, in retrospect, in those brutal, brutal, terrible treatment that was inflicted upon us by the German guards and the German factory supervisors was countered by the fact that the prisoners still had humanity for each other. So, we are marching back from work and when a guy fell down, rather than leaving him there, we pick him up and help him. We pick him up and help him to his feet, and then if somebody found some paper that, in cold weather, you could stick in you—inside shirt to get warm, if you had enough, you shared it with somebody else. So yes, we talked about it. Yes, we talked about the fact we said to each other on some silly days, silly because there was no merit to it at that time, that we said, “I know when you survive,” we said to each other, “you have a responsibility to tell people what happened.” This is all when you alive, you have responsibility to tell people what happened. Made a promise to each other that one day people would want to know when you—so yes, we talked about it.

CE: Can I ask a little bit more about—it is interesting to me that the animalistic instinct that you talk about, which I have heard other people mention as well. But then that kind of had to work together with that sense of community and helping other people, and can you talk about that?

GS: In my case, in my case, in my case, clearly I had friends and I had some other people and the fact that, friends maybe the wrong term, but people I knew well and I saw them suffering too, and the fact that they were suffering as well as I was suffering, I didn’t feel that I am being singled out. I was kind of part of the suffering community and therefore acceptance of the suffering was easier then it would have been if they were treated well and I was starving. But in the final analysis, we had to make a judgment for ourselves. Yes, yes, clearly when I said to my friend, said, “I don’t know if I will make it,” they would say to me, “Don’t be stupid, of course you will make it.” And if he said to me, “I don’t know,” I said to him, “Don’t be a—” So there was that kind of reinforcement in the final analysis, and I am speaking from my perspective as young boy and not as some kind of psychologist who understands human behavior, that it was each man, each person had

to somehow make the decision to move on and not to give up, not to give up. (inaudible)  
I am cold, I can't no, I not, I am going to—when the bell rings tomorrow, the whistle  
blows to line up to go to work I will, I will go. That—

CE: So—

GS: Yeah, go ahead.

CE: So, the hope was, the hope in the moment, the hope that you wouldn't be cold or  
perhaps you would not have to work so hard—

GS: Whatever. The commitment to myself was—no, maybe commitment is the wrong  
term. The notion was to never accept the fact that I will not make it. Never accept the  
idea, never embrace the idea, that my days are limited, that in another three, four days,  
four months, I will be dead as the guys that's laying over there. I always said, "Oh, I'm  
sorry, this guy I know died and he is laying over there." But not me.

CE: So you had to keep yourself separate from that—

GS: Yeah, there was times when no choices, no guarantees, and where people died every  
day and every tomorrow seemed to be a lifetime away, it was a—given that my existence,  
my job and my food wasn't any different from all the others, one had to, I believe at least,  
I had at least, somehow embrace the notion not to say, "I'm giving up." Not to say, "I  
won't make it, too bad, no use struggling, I won't make it anyway." That—I never said to  
myself I will survive but I never accepted the notion that I wouldn't make it so I might as  
well give up. So, I struggled. Get a better job, then the Germans came though pretend that  
I am working, whatever, you know, there was some choices I would work inside the  
factory. I have to show that I know how to works because working in the factory we are  
not cold and if you are working on a big lathe, or drill press when you were digging a  
ditch, the Germans could come and kick you but if you were working on a lathe or drill  
press they are not going to kick you because if they kick you when you are working on  
the lathe you do interfering with. So you got to get well and know how to do the job and  
not worry about it. So, that was, that was that kind of mechanism to give each other  
somewhat artificial assurance to move on.

CE: So, you could, and you could figure out those little things, little ways to make it from  
one day to the next, it seems.

GS: It was, it was, it was more a commitment to do, to have the conviction not the give up rather than opportunity to do little things.

CE: Okay—

GS: Sometimes these opportunities show up, but it wasn't a question of making you do: sometimes it came up, sometimes I worked and there was an opportunity to find something, to do something that was a little bit less dangerous but it wasn't that there were things to take advantage of. They showed up, but it doesn't—in my mind, as I work and watch them digging up graves, my notions when I go in there and dig up graves I will work so the Germans think I am working hard. I won't say to myself, "Oh my God, there are these graves and dead women I mean picking out and not—but I worked—make sure I work so the Germans believe I am working hard so they won't beat me.

CE: Yes, okay.

GS: There was more and more conventional, more normal existence, one would say. Hell, they are making me dig up graves, I don't want to do it, no, that was suicide. Okay, so that's what I want to convey there was this countless—I do whatever—I believe it is important, and I will try to do whatever I can, but as not as that there was some choices that were like go to the left, no, whatever. And it was just like that clearly as time passed and the camps were worse and worse and finally I was in the last. It was sixty-six years ago I was in a camp, kind of a camp of death, I would call. There was almost no food, and almost—

CE: Which one was this?

GS: Wöbbelin, the last camp, in Germany. No food, there was no work. People were dying all the time, mind you, in this camp. As all camps in Germany, the Jewish prisoners were about 20 percent of the population, 15 percent others were people from France and from Poland and from Denmark and from other places of—

RS: (inaudible).

GS: Other places that went—yeah the Jews were killed except in each ghetto they separated some that they considered to be work-able and put the prisoners in the working camps. It doesn't mean they lifted our sentence, but as long as they needed us they used us. The point that I want to make is that in the camps while there was all the suffering and

cold and dying and this last camp, the dead people, that were no longer buried, most of them were Christians because most of the prisoners were Christians and really terrible time. I, for the first time, I felt that my end is coming: I couldn't walk, I couldn't—my hip hurt and the Germans were shooting and I, I felt that my day was coming and then, as I was laying over there in the ditch and the Germans were shooting into the camp, then the shooting stopped and I heard something strange. I saw this was this drums beating and I realized this was the sound of people running in wooden shoes and I looked and people were running and I decided they must of found food and I followed them and there, to our great wonderful surprise, American soldiers were there.

And we were liberated, the Germans ran away, we were liberated. We, people who are from France, prisoners were standing and were singing in Marseille. We were jumping and kissing the soldiers feet. The Russian prisoners they run to the, outside the camp where there were collection of food, got some food and then they kind of settled down. I was in a displace person camp. I look for American, Red Cross, not American, Red Cross list to find something about my brother because I was sure he survived and during the years in the camp. The belief that he was alive and we will find each other was an important dynamic to help me struggle. I looked, I searched, I found all the silence from no one. I managed to contact relatives in the United States and contacted them. My hope was that they would write back and tell me they heard from my brother, but they didn't. They sponsored my coming to the United States. I came here as an uneducated teenager and America is America. I made a new life for myself. One work as a delivery boy, work as a shipping clerk. Took classes to learn the trade, took classes to learn English. I was drafted during the Korean War. When I came out, first I got the job, second I got—no. First I got married, then I got the job, and then I faced this great opportunity and great challenge (inaudible) five years of elementary school because Jewish people were not allowed to go to school once the Germans came.

I had the G.I. Bill that paid for college tuition, that's beautiful opportunity and beautiful, beautiful and of course a challenge. I talked to people, they said you have to take high school equivalency exam. If you get 400 you get the high school equivalency grade. Most you can get is 800. If you get over 700, we will accept you. If you get less you have to compete. I took it, I got 740, they accepted me and then I who, never went to middle school, high school, got a bachelor's degree in physics *manga cum laude*, went to graduate school to learn a master's degree in electrical engineering. Had a wonderful career as an engineer, as a manager, as an executive. I have wonderful family, wonderful grandchildren, six of them, and I made a new life in America. But, even though I had success and happiness, there is this underlying, compelling obligation to tell people what happened. To tell people about what I have seen, what I have experienced; not because I need pity or pain, but because the Holocaust is a cautionary tale and people have to be told that there is this great country that had great technology and great classical music, and created an industrial program to kill millions of people. And that there ordinary men who loved their own children, and then during working hours killed other men's children. So we have to tell people what happened. We have to be witnesses because it is a caution

and also because I do believe that evil forgotten may repeat itself. So, that's really what my obligation is, that's what I do, and I welcome the opportunity. Plus, where I live to raise money for Holocaust education and, indeed, welcome the opportunity to answer your questions.

CE: Okay, wonderful, thank you. Thank you. Want to stop the tape. No?

***Part 1 ends; part 2 begins.***

CE: This is tape two. We are here with Mr. and Mrs. Salton and now Ruth is going to give us a summary of her experiences before, during, and directly after the war.

RS: I'm not going to talk about the origins of the Holocaust.

CE: Okay.

RS: I am going to tell you shortly where I was, what happened during so, these years.

CE: Okay, okay.

RS: Nineteen thirty-nine, my relatives from Warsaw came to the town in Poland. They took me on vacation, summer vacation to Warsaw. I was supposed to come back to go to school in September. September, the war started and there was no way for me to get back. When they started, I lived with my relatives for a short time, and then when they started building the ghetto, they bought me a ticket, put me on a train and said, "Go east right to get home."

CE: And where was home?

RS: Home was Tomaszow Lubelski, not far from Lublin.

CE: Okay.

RS: And I got on the train and there was some other Jewish people on the train and we where to a small hotel through the river the Volga? Not the Volga.

GS: The Vistula.

RS: To get the train. And on the train, maybe half an hour later, the German came. They said, "All the Jews out." The train didn't start get moving. A young gentleman who worked on the railroad took my hand and walked with me to the building where the railroad workers lived and took me to his apartment. In the kitchen there were already some other Jews getting help. At night, these people left but he kept for a few weeks. Eventually he said, "It's too dangerous for you to stay here." He gave me some money and he walked me out in the fields and say, "Walk that direction." I walked for a couple of weeks and stayed nights on a farm. I pretended to not to be Jewish. I got to my towns, there was nobody there, no Jews anymore. In the meantime, my parents, there was a border between the town where I lived and Russian occupied part, occupied parts. And, my mother found out that I came back. She came for me through the fields with some presents and got me there. The rest of the war—

GS: Got you out across the German-Russian border.

RS: Of course, the German-Russian border, we were on the Russian part of occupied Poland. I survived by hiding and things like that. My story—

CE: By yourself? Were you by yourself then?

RS: Yeah. My story is more important what happened after the war. That's because I am sure you have many, many people talking about the Holocaust and the horrors of it. Yeah, but there very few people who had experiences I had after the war.

CE: Okay.

RS: In 1945, very difficult times, people started coming out the camps. They couldn't go back to their homes because their homes were taken over by other people. They were not welcome into the cities because the people who took their homes did not want to face the owners and give back the property. So, there was some killings after the war by, not by Germans, but by Poles, Netherlands, Ukrainians. So, nobody really wanted to go back to their own town, they were afraid. But in the bigger cities, they organized little communities—Jewish communities centers where Jewish people could come and ask for help. In these community centers they had lists of people and I went and look through the list to see if I know somebody who survived. But in the meantime, there was an

organization in Israel called *Brikhah*. *Brikhah* means flight. Some of the survivors from the Vilna Ghetto and the Warsaw Ghetto uprising survivors decided to organize routes—ways, to get the survivors into Palestine. At that time, Israel was not yet independent. I was approached to join this organization. The organization was underground because there was not eager to get out anybody of the country without passports and papers and things like that. So, what our job was to find routes, to find ways, how to get survivors out of Europe, not only in Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Austria, France. Certain countries collaborated help, like France helped. The organization was supported by the Joint Solution Committee from the United States, they founded us. And my job was to get people together, find them a home, find them food, and find a way to get them out of there. I ended up in a city called Szczecin where the *Haganah*, at this point *Haganah*, the Israeli movement already took over the organization. They opened the safe house, and organization called *Dror Hashomer Hatsa'ir*, it like a *kibbutz*, but it was not a working *kibbutz*: it was a transient *kibbutz*. We gathered the people to that place whenever the time was for them to go to transfer to another country, like from Szczecin and we transferred people though the border, the Russian border, into Berlin. In Germany, other people from our organization took over took them to Italy and (inaudible).

GS: Talk about the children.

RS: The children later. Also my job was to find ways. So, if you try to go to find ways from Germany into Austria, from Austria into Italy, find routes. Go through the Alps. Go up the mountain, down on the other side of the mountains. Other people took over and this way we took some, mostly though Italian borders, got them on ships and from there on they went to the Mediterranean to Israel. When Israel became independent, they faced a very important program, a very important question. What happened to all of these of thousands of kids who were left behind by their mothers who, to save them, sometimes threw them out of the train. The mothers who left their child with their maids, the mothers who promised the farmers, “If you save my child, I’ll give you money. I’ll give you my house. I’ll give you this, just keep my child.” Then left them monasteries, they left the convents, took some of these kids. They were not very generous, they tried to—they were baptized and raised as non-Jewish children. Our job is to find these kids and help them get into Israel. It was a very important job because these parents, who were killed, hoped that these kids will live, but live a Jewish life. That’s not fine, they went into gas ovens. So, I work with the—this organization and we saved hundreds of children. Many of them we could not save. Many of the children just didn’t want to come with us because they were raised in a different faith. But we did our best, and we saved lots of children. And eventually, I ended up in Israel and I lived in Israel for a year. Then I came to visit the United States, meet George, and the rest is history.

GS: There is a footnote here, if I may, I think it’s great, great, great important story you tell. They found hundreds of children and its wonderful, wonderful but you have to remember that over a million children were killed in gas chambers, so therefore, if they

found half of the children that was saved and there were 300 or 3,000 it still was a very small number compared to all the little children that worked together with their mothers were shot in the ditch or gassed in gas chambers.

CE: Sounds like a risky kind of job. I mean talk a little about that.

RS: It was risky because we had to get out—you mean about the children?

CE: Yes.

RS: It was very risky but we had no choice. We had to use all kinds of ways to get these children out. They belong to us.

CE: Were you scared?

RS: I was too young to be scared.

CE: How old were you then? You were fifteen, eighteen—

RS: Seventeen or nineteen—

CE: Seventeen, eighteen. And did you take the trips with the children? Or to go to—

RS: No.

CE: No.

RS: No, no.

CE: You just planned the routes and—

RS: We planned the routes, took the trips. In one instance we had the truck with fifty-five children—

*Pause in recording*

RS: That's the way attack by the Poles. One night the Poles, I don't how many of them there were, started shooting at the place and you know big gates, you know. We were shooting out, they were shooting in. They didn't succeed. But then we took some on the truck and tried to cross the border between Chechnya and Berlin, and the Russians, you know, they are not very accommodating, and they starting interrogating the children, "Who's the leader?" You know, I would not much smoke because of the kids.

CE: Oh, okay.

RS: And nobody said a word. Eventually they turned us back, they send us back. Actually a couple of days later we was, you know, successful in bribing some soldiers to let us (inaudible).

GS: Let me have something here. Poland was on the border of Germany, but that part of Germany that was on the Polish border was the Russian Zone. So, the people, the police, the law enforcement entities that they met once they crossed the border from Poland were the Russians.

CE: So the Russians weren't very helpful, it sounds like.

RS: No.

GS: And the Poles they had the rule, they had the law nobody can leave Poland illegally, you need permission. And given what was happening, there was a commitment and I admire Ruth and all the people she work with, was a commitment to find a way by bribery or any other ways to get the young, to take the survivors that went back to Poland out of Poland. Now just to tell you, when the war was over, when we were liberated, I was committed to find my brother and I hoped I could find my brother by contacted my relatives in America. Other survivors hoped to find their brother, their sister, their cousin, where do you find your sister? Not in Germany, you find your sister by going back to your little town, someplace in eastern Poland or southern Poland, to a little town. And you hoped that when you get to the little town, your sister, if she survived, I am using sister—she will show up there. Well they went back only to discover that very few people survive. And second, that there was a great hostility on the part of the Poles that would

having, going back to Poland to find somebody and discovering that there was nobody to be found. They know she was to get out and they relied on this organizing to smuggle them out back into, out of Poland into Germany. From then to Austria or to Italy or whatever.

RS: Exodus was one of our ships.

CE: Oh, okay. Wonderful.

RS: Matter of fact, when the British sent the boat back to Hamburg, Germany, I was there to receive these kids.

CE: You were, wow.

RS: Together with some others.

GS: The point she is making—

RS: That was one of our ships.

GS: The point that she is making, in addition to putting Jewish refugees on ships in Italy, there was the other challenge that the British, in the meantime, didn't want ships to arrive in Palestine because they had some commitments and they intercepted the ships, they sent the people to prison in Cyprus or send the ships back to Europe. Sorry I didn't meant to—

RS: Exodus went back to Hamburg, Germany; they send them back to a camp, and a couple a couple days later we got them out again.

CE: Did you fear for your life when you were in Germany?

RS: No.

CE: No.

RS: It's a funny thing. Germany was much safer than Poland.

CE: Uh huh, that's what George said earlier.

RS: Yeah.

CE: Talk about that cause that's hard to comprehend.

RS: It's the safest place to be.

GS: Well, I was liberated in Germany, obviously, and when I was liberated I was wearing my concentration camp prison suit because I had nothing else, and I did lots of hitchhiking going from different towns, specifically driven to places where there were displaced person camps hoping to look at the list to look for my brother. And there was—Germany was safe. Nobody, there was no attack on American soldiers, on the French soldiers, on people, Polish people who survived forced labor or people who came out of concentration camps. There was completely safe, well behaved. There was nothing—

RS: It was the safest place in Europe.

GS: Safest place. There was no—and as I told you before, I saw somebody before when I talked to some Germans, senior, senior people and Siemens who were vice-presidents, I worked with I said to them, “Explain this to me, if I tried to run away from the camps five days before the war ended you would chase me and five days after the war this is the safest place. How come?” This my senior vice-president of Siemens. I was an American engineer and they said to me, “Oh, we have a principle in Germany: there is an order we follow it, when the order is canceled, we stop.” So, the order was canceled and no longer we (inaudible) persecuting Jews, it was safe.

CE: And how do you feel about that statement? I mean, they are really, they are blaming us, blaming you, we followed orders. Period.

GS: I think, I think that it's honest but it's also very, very, very said some terrible things about these people, I don't want to generalize that what they said was accepted by every German in Germany. But what they had to say was a very damning statement that they had no, that they didn't embrace any kind of an important principle but follow orders and

the orders said, “Go kill babies,” they killed babies. I mean that’s the way they said. In retrospect I think these people were just something to, find an excuse to explain something they were maybe embarrassed about that they were indeed following orders and that somehow when the Germany decided that the Jews were not human, they accepted that. You see, that the fact that the Germans decided the Jews were not human, not only the terrible things that won we are treated as not human. But the other terrible thing is that Germans accepted this principle. And when they saw me, or saw my brother they didn’t see us as people with eyes and faces and dreams, they say as somebody not human that people were willing to accept that. And that’s the warning, and the point is the Germans were not some crazy people in the jungle, they were normal people and if there is warning this is the important warning that ordinary people who are doctors, lawyers, factory workers could be somehow persuaded. I am not saying all lawyers, I’m not saying all doctors by some were persuaded, “Yeah, yeah, they are not human, you can do whatever you do to rabbits.”

**Jane Duncan:** I need to interrupt just a minute, Carolyn—

GS: I’m done, did I do some damage to it again.

JD: It’s just sometimes when you put your hand up to the—(inaudible).

GS: Okay, touched my ear.

JD: Yeah.

CE: Let’s see if we can get it lower—

GS: Sorry, didn’t mean to—

JD: It’s okay, it happens.

CE: It’s okay.

JD: As the people get comfortable.

CE: Is that better at all?

JD: Yeah, that's much better.

GS: I'll control my hand here. (CE laughs)

JD: Thank you, it's difficult sometimes.

GS: Okay.

JD: Okay.

CE: Did you find any of your relatives after?

RS: I found one child, she's now in Israel, she is now a grandmother, yeah.

CE: Okay, of all the people you saved.

RS: Yeah.

CE: Yeah. That must have been quite a reunion.

RS: Yes. And you know, when we, George and me, went to the first time to Israel, when was it, what year? About a whole bunch of kids who came to see us.

GS: Maybe mid-sixties.

RS: In the sixties. And George and me went to—(inaudible). It was the first to Israel is you know, lots of kids came but now you know, it's so many years ago you lose contact, people die, you know. So, but that young, that kid was about eight and she knew everything. So, when I sent her to Israel she kept in touch with me.

CE: Wow. Did you find any of your family after the war?

GS: This is a relative, the young person—

CE: That was a relative?

GS: Yeah.

CE: Oh, it was a relative! Okay I thought it was just one of the children that you saved.

GS: No, it was niece or cousin or something.

CE: Okay.

RS: The funny thing, we found my grandmother.

CE: Wow.

RS: Walking down the street in the city, on the ground next to the building, you know the European buildings, sat a woman with a shawl over their head and so automatically I opened my purse and tried to give her some money, poor woman, my grandmother.

CE: Oh my!

GS: This was in Israel?

RS: Yeah, that one—so, you know—

CE: This is when you went back to Israel lat—okay?

RS: No, that was in Germany.

CE: Okay.

RS: I picked her up and of course I put her on transport and sent her to Israel.

CE: I can't imagine what that must have been like to—

RS: It was, you know, unbelievable. Then when I came to Israel she had a daughter who lived over there so she was with her daughter. And I came to see the grandma. "Are you okay?" She said, "Yeah but you what, go to the liquor store and tell her to bring me every Friday a bottle of vodka." (CE laughs)

GS: This has nothing to do with the Holocaust. Wait—

CE: That's okay (laugh).

RS: (laughs) It does! She is a Holocaust survivor. What she did with the vodka, she didn't drink, she kept it under her pillow, because when she didn't feel good she often (inaudible).

GS: Okay.

RS: She lived to be a hundred and four.

CE: Oh wow.

GS: Okay, you going to talk to me know.

CE: Yes, I want you to talk a little bit about looking for your brother.

GS: Yeah, well, I mean the point I want to make particularly the point, the question has been raised when I talk to people, "How come he didn't look for you, he didn't find you." Well, of the ten camps, camp number seven, I believe name was Sachsenhausen, which a very large camp outside of Berlin, some four hundred of us prisoners were brought from

another camp and when we were there working and doing all kinds of miserable things, there was a listing that two hundred of us would be—there was a listing of numbers not of names, these two hundred would be sent to a camp near Northern Germany. The other two hundred, few days later would be sent to a camp in Southern Germany. This was—and there were two cousins whose name was Singer, and one—and I was to be go up north, and one of the cousins was going up north. The other cousin, the younger one, who was nineteen and I was sixteen at that time was going south. And I saw how the cousin that was going south was desperate to stay with his cousin. Mind you at the camps there so many terrible circumstances and to have a cousin or friend or brother, the selfish terrible time was very important. So when I saw how desperate he was there was no way to change the lists. I went to him and I said to him, he name was Joe Singer, I said to him, “If it’s so important lets change identities.” So, he took my uniform with the number on it and I took his. He traveled up north with his cousin under my name and I was, the last eight or nine months of the war I was known as Joseph Singer. When the war was over I was in United States. Some people asked me to apply to Germany for restitution. So I applied and then my name was Salzman, I applied in Europe and the name for restitution. The Germans, then I was stalled; the German rejected my application cause Salzman died in the northern camp. And the name Salzman was listed by the Germans among the people that perished and there is therefore the possibility that is—mind you I discovered it about three years after the war. But the Germans knew it right away—there is a possibility that my brother survived and looked for me. And so my name, as somebody who didn’t survive he went on. Possibility. Is it true? I don’t know. But it’s clearly possible so therefore the question is, “Why didn’t he look for you?” He would have no way of knowing that I changed my name to Salton. If you looked for me under my original name he would have found it on the list Salzman, Lucjan Salzman died in camp outside of Breman. So.

CE: Okay, I would like for the two of you to talk about meeting each other.

GS: You want honest answer?

CE: I want honest answers, yes.

GS: Well, I will talk about myself first. And then I would be most curious to hear what Ruth has to say.

CE: Okay.

GS: I was stationed in the, I was in the army and I was drafted and I was stationed in Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. And on weekends I would come to go to New York—not every

weekend—every so often a weekend I would come to New York, take a bus. And I had some friends, a couple; the husband was somebody was with me in the camps. I knew him well and when I was in New York, often I would go see them. One weekend in I would think was April of—I came to New York and went to see them and Emil was the name of the man, and he was a young man my age; a few years older. He said to me he and his wife are going to meet some friends in a park in the Bronx not far from Yankee Stadium, and if you are familiar with New York City, you want to come along. I said sure. So, I went with them and I think he was driving. We drove into the Bronx, went into the park near Yankee Stadium and over there they about meet three or four other people and Ruth was one of them. She was wearing a grey suit with a black collar and I saw that she was the greatest thing I have met. After talking to her much of the afternoon, I asked her if the next time I come to New York if I could call to go out to dinner and she said yes. And then in September 7<sup>th</sup> of that year I proposed and asked her if she would marry me. And she said maybe and I am still waiting for final answer. (all laugh)

CE: So you met her in July and you asked her—

GS: I meet her in April—

CE: April, okay—

GS: And I asked her for to marry me, I asked her in September and we got married in March. And in the March of the coming—next March will be fifty-nine years.

CE: Wow. So Ruth, I want to hear your version of the story.

GS: Yes.

RS: My version, you are not going to tape it?

CE: Oh, we have to tape this.

RS: I went to the Bronx Zoo. I opened one of the containers—(CE laughs)

CE: I want the real story.

RS: That's the real story, no no. We met, you know, I went to see a friend, Claro, and his wife was a good friend of mine. We were going to spend an afternoon at the park.

GS: And I was there.

CE: And tell me when you saw him. What happened?

GS: I was in uniform by the way.

RS: Eh, you know, a soldier, I wasn't very excited. You know, I was looking for somebody much more sophisticated than a soldier.

CE: Then a soldier, okay. So you were looking for a possible mate at that point? No?

RS: No, I was still; I was going back to Israel.

CE: You were going back to Israel, that was your plan. And didn't you have a boyfriend in Israel? Did I read that somewhere?

RS: Yes I did.

CE: I thought so, okay. So, when the two of you went out on your first date, did you talk about your experiences in the Holocaust?

RS: No.

CE: No, so did you even acknowledge that you had—

RS: We went and I told to—I not a drinker. But when—you know when we were that young you want to be sophisticated. You carry cigarette you don't know how to smoke, to inhale it, but you show off, you know. And I told him to take me and buy me a drink. What was it?

GS: No, whatever it was, she didn't like it, she make me drink it (CE laughs). There is something you asked that deserves a comment. You asked if we spoke about being survivors. Mind you, the initial number of years after liberation, the initial number of years since I came to the United States, we didn't know how to talk about our experience. The experience was too close, was too overwhelming, too personal, it was really difficult to talk about what happened during the Holocaust. We talk about stuff too difficult. Many people whom we met, and I am sure they meant well, said if I try to say something or we try—would say, "Don't talk about it, put it behind, look toward the future." When I was in the army one day, one weekend they showed a movie as they showed soldiers movies on weekends, kind of a training, movie taken in the different concentration camps that were liberated by American soldiers. And knowing that I am one of those people that was prisoner, asked me if I would speak. And I refused because I didn't know how to talk about it. It was too overwhelming and it took some time and took the demands of my children to really face up to the fact that not only I could talk about it but I should talk about it. So when Ruth and I met, we talked about other things rather than talking about camps, you know.

CE: And Ruth, how about you? Did you feel like you couldn't speak about it afterwards?

RS: No, no. We have different plans, he had different ambitions—he wanted to go forward.

GS: Yeah that's a point.

CE: Did you feel like people didn't want to hear the stories? Or—

RS: He didn't think about talking him—I didn't think. I was think about we are going to go here, there, and conquer and do. We didn't want to go—

GS: The challenge—

RS: I didn't want to look back.

GS: The challenge in those days was to make a new life. To make sure that what we experienced, without understanding it very precisely is not going to be a hindrance in what we are trying to do. It took some degree of maturity and self-confidence and some distance of time to be able to look back and say, "Oh my god, this is what happened? Oh

my god, six million life, we didn't know that," you know. And then came with it, not only to me but to many other survivors, a recognition, a cognizance that we understand that we are witnesses and as such we have—as witnesses to what was happening, we have an obligation to tell people what happened because as witnesses we have some degree of credibility, you know.

CE: So, at what point in your relationship did you speak about your experiences?

GS: We clearly, as husband and wife, we knew about—I knew what her background was and what she did after the war and she knew that I was in the camps. But we talked about when are we going to have enough money to buy a car. I mean, I am making a point here.

CE: I understand.

GS: But, there was no particular secret about her background or my background but that wasn't significant.

CE: It wasn't something you talked about often or in detail.

GS: No, I mean that—no, we loved each other and we have a child and I went to school. And by—the point that I am trying to make, the thing that survivors do now, and I am not the only one and the most of us, do now, I mean the last twenty years was not happening in the beginning. We were just not—we didn't have the perspective, we didn't have the self-confidence and all that. There was some exceptions to it, somebody after the war wrote a book in France *The Last of the Just*.<sup>2</sup> And somebody, of course, like Elie Wiesel, wrote something in French, but most of us and nobody at the same time demanded, nobody said to me and say, "George, you did this: we want to know what happened. Sit down here and tell me." Nobody asked and I didn't—

RS: (inaudible) We moved upstate New York to the little town of Rome. There was no Jewish community; there was a military base—

GS: Air Force base.

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<sup>2</sup>André Schwartz-Bart writes *The Last of the Just* in 1959.

RS: An Air Force base, and I came, you know, there was some military Jewish people. I was looking for people, friends, who are Jewish.

GS: I was there because my company sent me there to work.

RS: So, the first thing I did, I opened my house and said, “Friday night we have services in my apartment.” After a couple of months I started raising money. I made (inaudible) made money to build the synagogue.

GS: She started an art organization in Rome.

RS: Since I loved to paint and he loved paint, I started an organization, the Rome Art Association, I started.

GS: It still exists.

RS: A matter of fact it still—a couple of months ago I got a newspaper, “We are looking for the founder for the Rome Art Association. We know a name but we don’t know anything else for the newspaper.” I had a project, we built the synagogue, we start the Hebrew school. And suddenly there was a whole group of people. Then when we moved to Washington I had the same program. Where we lived first, when we tried to buy a house, the neighborhood did not accept too many Jewish people, Potomac, Maryland. Eventually, there was a builder who built a couple houses where he built our homes. We didn’t have a synagogue. The same thing again; we started raising money, we started a synagogue, now we have a big synagogues in Washington, in Potomac, Maryland. So I always was—

GS: I want to go back to something that we talked about there because these is an important point that we—when the war was over, they didn’t talk very much about the Holocaust and when we were married there were wonderful love and relationships and all that. That wasn’t the subject. But then when our children were born, and we have two sons and a daughter, one is a lawyer, one is a president of a software company—successful, good, wonderful, loving children. It was a kind of automatic decision by us, and by me in particular, that they would be growing up children in a normal, balanced family and I would not tell my children—wait a minute, you know what happened to me when I was eleven or when I was fourteen or—I suffered don’t you, don’t do any, don’t miss, don’t get a F because then I suffer again—I didn’t want to do that. I wanted them to grow up like normal children in normal family and I never talked about it. Well, they were named after, my daughter is named after my mother and my oldest son is named

after my father and our youngest son is name after—so there some point as they got to be young teenagers or maybe older they said, “Hey tell us more, tell us more,” they insisted. And then I of course agreed to tell them and we went together to Poland and with their support and with their acceptance I decided to write a book. But the point I wanted to stress that not only we didn’t talk to strangers about it, I wouldn’t dwell and I would conversation with each other, but when our children were growing up, they were little kids running around, they were young kids going to elementary school, I never had any inclination to somehow burden them with telling them you all with father when he—suffered. I wanted them to see the father, as the regular guy who did whatever regular fathers do. So I never talked to them until they, at some point of course, they must of understood this and they wanted to know and when they demanded I told them something. So, it wasn’t only—the point I am trying to make is not only we didn’t to talk to each other about it we didn’t talk to others about it. But we kept it from our children and I felt instinctively we felt—

RS: We was busy building a life.

GS: Yeah, and instinctively I didn’t want to somehow—I want my children to grow up in a normal home full of love and affection and didn’t want them to somehow feel that they are different or their parents are different or the obligations are different, no. They are wonderful kids and I think it is because we are wonderful parents. Now that—

CE: So looking back, so you think that was the right decision?

RS: Oh yes.

GS: I don’t really wouldn’t say looking back—it is the right decision but you know the fine line—

RS: For us, it was.

GS: Our, our oldest son is a lawyer and is the Deputy Attorney General of Connecticut, our youngest son is the president of a very large successful software company, our daughter’s husband makes a tremendous amount of money as a cardiologist and a businessman so she is not working.

RS: And she is—

GS: She is volunteer—

RS: She was voted volunteer of the year in Texas for USO.

GS: for USO. She told me—that's wonderful.

RS: She also build a synagogue over there. Her husband gave her the money.

GS: But they call us and we are wonderful. Now, they become wonderful because we didn't tell them no, they became wonderful because they had wonderful parents. Hey, I don't know. I know many families, I know a number of families, wonderful families, they have two children and one is great, the other one is in jail. Would be nice to claim those credits that the great influence of peers that always can do things. But our kids, we are lucky.

CE: And so did they come to you, they came to you and asked about your experience.

GS: They didn't come, we were still living together when they said, "Hey Dad," my daughter said, "I am named after my mother, after your grandmother, tell me more about it." And I would say no—imagine, I remember saying it one time; imagine I'm Adam and there was nobody before me he says, "Common, its crazy, tell us." So we told them.

CE: So, they didn't know at that point that you had been in the Holocaust?

GS: Well, they must have had some notion, they may have known from others but they—I never talked about it in great detail and she was going, shortly thereafter she went to American University and she asked me to come and first time I did to come to her class at American University and the professor asked me to talk about my experience and I did. And then they said at some point they said, at some point, our two sons and our daughter said that, "We want to go to Poland with you and mother." They left their families and children behind and went with us to Poland. And we went to the little towns and we went to the camps and when we came back there was complete acceptance, partnership in our past and it was that motivation for me to go, to go to my computer and start typing my story.

CE: When you were in Poland did that—did you storytell during the whole trip? I mean, did that generate the stories?

RS: Oh yeah we went from place to place, told them—

GS: Yeah, yeah we told stories. But there was of course, we had a guide who was, who was specializing in Jewish history and he spoke English. And when he discovered that I speak Polish, he would tell me his story in Polish and I had to repeat it to—a guide who drove the van. Yeah so we talked about it obviously. I mean, once, once that happened, there was no reason to conceal it. I didn't conceal because I was ashamed or they didn't deserve to know it I just felt they were eleven, or twelve, or thirteen I wanted them to be eleven, twelve, thirteen year old kids and not to feel that they are some way different because their parents went through hell.

CE: Talk a little bit about telling your story the first time to the class.

RS: That was a long time ago.

GS: I was nervous, I spoke—I forgot the name of the professor who wrote number book about the Holocaust, about the war. He, Lipschitz, something like that, it started with L and I just spoke. I never read, I just talked in front of the class and subsequently American—University of Maryland asked me to speak, and some synagogues and some churches asked me to speak. And when I went to visit our son in Connecticut he told some friends who I am and the local high school asked me to speak and I spoke many, many places. And the one talk I gave that was most rewarding, I have spoken in Germany and many places. In Reno, Nevada, I was invited to speak to a gathering of the veterans of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. And among them, there would be 200 of hundred of them, and among them there maybe fifty or sixty that were involved in the liberation of that camp. There were maybe more. It was a wonderful opportunity for me to say thank you to tell them they brought a new dawn into the life of a large number of people, not only me. There was a positive side to it and a negative side of it. It was University of Wisconsin when they found out about it, sent two hundred books for free to be given to the veterans of—it was wonderful. The negative side I had to sign 200 books. I didn't mind.

CE: I bet you didn't. Ruth, do you speak usually around, and can you talk and little bit about that decision?

RS: Listen, if you have one in the family who speaks so much, you sit back and you listen.

CE: And you—

RS: I don't.

CE: You're okay with that role.

RS: Yeah. Sometimes—

GS: She is very active. She is very active in very social things. She was for about ten years president of a chapter in our community that raised about a million dollars for schools and all that. So she is very active still today in so many things. But she talks about other things.

RS: You know, I spoke to a bunch of, a whole bunch of teachers, like fifty teachers, they wanted to know, not about the Holocaust, but what I did after the Holocaust. But normally I don't.

CE: And how did George change after he started speaking to groups? Was there any change that you noticed?

RS: Is a pain he was and he still is.

GS: She is asking you—

RS: I didn't want to say that—

GS: She is asking you to say something positive.

RS: No, no if he wouldn't be here, I could tell you a couple more stories but—

GS: No, she's kidding. No.

RS: You see, his head to be too big. So, let's leave it. No, he didn't change.

CE: He didn't change?

GS: No, no that's true. I changed when I retired from work. When I retired, I continued working as a consultant for about two, three years. Maybe three, four year only to discover the industry uses consultants only when there are problems and not when things are great, so I gave up. But, this was a change to change from work and responsibility to filling my life with something constructive and important and clearly finishing the book and speaking to schools and other places became one of the things that filled my life once I retired.

RS: No, he was always a gentleman, you know, and he didn't—he's okay. I'll keep him for another couple of years.

CE: I don't blame you. I would too. Are we close to the end?

GS: Let me move this now.

CE: Seven more minutes—

GS: Okay.

CE: I think let's stop and—

GS: It's up to you we are here once—

CE: Well, I am not finished but I want to give you just a minute to take a break.

***Part 2 ends, part 3 begins.***

CE: This is tape three—

GS: You are going to talk to me about the book, right?

CE: I am going to talk to you about the book. We are with George and Ruth Salton and George, I would like to just have you tell us about the decision to write the book and then I have some questions to ask you about that.

GS: Okay, as I—I started writing the book some years ago but I already spoke for a number of years. I spoke many different places. I have been invited to speak to Wisconsin and many different places and all that. And I recognize the obligation to tell the story and I, and of course, I having recognized it, I realized that speaking is important. I also realized that I could reach many more people if I wrote a book. So, I started writing it and being an engineer, prepared an outline and did some research to make sure that my dates and my names are correct. And I was writing it—I was—I had it done already sufficiently. I approached various publishing companies and they said to me, they read some excerpts, they said it's great, wonderful, but what we couldn't publish it because it not going to sell millions of copies. We have a special process to decide. So I had to go and go, people said to me, go to universities, publishes under basis of merit, but they don't pay anything. I wasn't interested in money, I was not interested. I went to Syracuse University and they said we are preoccupied but somebody from Syracuse University just went to Wisconsin to take over the Wisconsin University press, I forgot his name now. I contacted him and they, after much ado, decided to publish it and clearly I am happy that it is published. I have received many letters, many calls from many people who said to me that it was, it is important and is informative. I didn't make any money on it. They pay some cents per book, which is nothing. But I wrote it and I, because I felt an obligation to share it not to make money. And of course, there is obviously a possibility I could have been compelled to do self-publish. The problem with self-publishing is that when they do it they deliver 2,000 books in your house and you put it in your basement. In Florida, there are no basements.

CE: It doesn't work, does it?

GS: So, I am glad somebody published this they are responsible for advertising and all that. If I need books, as I do for whatever reason, I buy them. When they publish by book that was hardcopy originally they gave ten copies which I distribute to friends and I'll buy the books to give to friends as presents and all that.

RS: Now the book is many schools all over the country. And it was translated into Hebrew in Israel.

GS: And also in Holland and other places. But it is just part of my fulfillment to—many other—but most survivors share this; some survivors are not prepared to deal with this. Some survivors were touched so very severely and end up being judgmental that they can't really talk about it without crying. But I have—I am able to do it. It is still a challenging thing for me emotionally. So I am glad the book was published and [University of] Wisconsin was very helpful. One time where CNN had a story about me because there was interesting story, the publisher, the woman who was in charge of publishing that book the professor at Wisconsin, her father was a sergeant in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division and was at the camp that I was liberated in so that was his connection. But by the time I met them, he passed away. So I was able to tell them, and I had at the time discovered a book, an 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division history book, and his picture was in the book, so I gave her a copy.

CE: Wow. If I could pick up on something you just said and then I want to go back to the book, you said that a lot of survivors just can't tell the story because emotionally—

GS: I have to be careful when I say a lot. There are some survivors I know of, that just really for them it's too difficult. Some of them of course don't have the skills. I mean I went to college, I went to university—some of them do, of course. But I know some people, some survivors, who were so severely affected that they—this is subject for discussion, they talk about in great details. And if you are going to start telling the story about what happened you get involved into little details and people cry.

CE: Yeah, yeah.

GS: Is it many but I know some survivors that have that kind of a hindrance.

CE: Was it emotional for you to write the book?

GS: Yes, yes, and very often I would writing the book and the sit at my computer and would write, sometimes I would write one page in a day. Sometimes I would write ten pages and sometimes I would write a page and I was so torn I had to go away and draw some pictures just because, yes, especially, especially saying goodbye to my parents. Especially about finding out my parents were murdered. There were some very difficult things.

CE: You know I wrote, you know we can stop this conversation if you want, but I wrote down some of the times—I've watched your interview from 1997—and I wrote down the

times that seemed to be particularly difficult with you, for you. And they were, of course, when you said goodbye to your parents, sometimes when you talked about your brother. But there were other occasions when people treated you with dignity that seemed to be emotional for you.

GS: Well yeah, you know there are these certain things that affect us and I have one particular habit, which happened. When I see, or hear about something cruel and ugly I get angry. But I hear about something wonderful, about rescue and care, I cry. Okay, so yes, inevitably I am affected and by watching T.V. about somebody caught in their car and strangers run over to pick up—I cry because that’s the thing that touches me, but, so yeah. So I would be surprised there (inaudible), much of you have the advantage. You saw the 1967 and 1997 interview and I haven’t seen it so I don’t remember what’s in it. But yes, there are some things that are emotional in regular life I watched something on T.V. about somebody being rescued or helped or people, strangers running out of their way to help somebody who—some woman or man or person that needs assistance and people show generosity and love and kindness, I cry about that. Because at the contrast what I experienced.

CE: I spoke to two survivors at one point and we were, they got emotional as we were speaking. They were in my class speaking and they didn’t want to be emotional and they talked about how they really didn’t want to be emotional when they gave talks and my students all said, “But when you’re emotional you have even more impact on us, it’s even something we will remember even more intently because you shared your emotionality with us.” And one of the survivors—so I asked them, “Why are you so reluctant to share the emotionality?” And one of the survivors said, “Because there is a stereotype that Jews are weak and didn’t resist and we are pray that this (inaudible).

GS: And I speak in many places and I don’t want to be emotional, I want to deliver speech, I want to deliver lesson. I don’t want to stop and cry. But sometimes happens, especially if I have some sensitive things about my parents and my brother is another thing. And my voice breaks and I tell people, forgive me, but this is a difficult moment and I can’t control it. I am emotional when I think it’s effective but I am not doing deliberately. When I talk, I want to talk and tell people not to—but I do. And when it happens I just accept it that it happens and I admit to it, you know. Saying goodbye to my parents or finding out what happened to them or sometimes remember some of the little boys and girls who were my age—Jewish boys and girls my age in the little town I lived in and none of them survived. I was the only one because when I was fourteen somebody sent my papers so that’s a very emotional thing but I don’t, don’t use it, it happens, it happens.

CE: How do you feel after you give a speech? Do you feel relief do you feel sad?

GS: When I give a speech I feel, given that it comes across well I feel a sense of fulfillment. I do it because I feel that its—look it may be more fun to watch T.V. or play golf then to go someplace and talk to people about terrible hard things. But I talk about these terrible hard things because I feel an obligation; I feel that it's important to tell. So if I talk and its over and people applaud I feel fulfilled.

CE: Do you ever think that doing these talks just make you continue to relive the experience? Or not?

GS: Inevitably I do. I mean I don't want to say I re-live such a place that I am overwhelmed, but clearly I remember, I am being very honest and I talk about—if I was reading, if I had it all written I was reading but I speak from memory. Inevitably when I tell people how this or that happened its sad you know. It's sad but it just happens and I can't avoid it. And—

RS: You try with live with a guy fifty, eighty years like that.

GS: Why I am obedient.

CE: So what do you mean by that statement?

GS: She is just making it up.

CE: Her jokes often have meaning in them.

RS: No, he's okay. He gets over it and then he's fine.

CE: He does, he does it doesn't linger.

RS: It doesn't affect his life. He can be sitting around for half—for ten minutes but he's okay. He has no choice.

GS: In my different jobs I had physical responsible jobs, I appeared—when I was in the pentagon having oversight over programs involving hundreds of millions of dollars, I had

to appear as a witness before Senate and House and Armed Forces—and I had, and I was a PFC [private first class] even when I was in the army, I was not a citizen and I had navy lieutenant, navy commanders, and air force colonels who are on my staff. I never encountered any hostility. People were there, they did some air force colonel feel a little bit slighted that somebody who spoke was his boss but it—we were there we respected each other.

RS: But you know, the experience can make weak or stronger. It made him stronger.

CE: Did it make you stronger?

RS: It makes me stronger.

GS: One story, when I was stationed—when I was in Georgia and as a soldier when I went to town people would ask me, “Hey George what kind of accent do you have?” I would say to them it was Boston accent. (CE laughs) And they say, “Now we know what it is.” Have to make people smile a little bit, that why I am telling this story.

CE: Yeah, yeah, so back to writing your book. How many years did it take you to write your book?

GS: Four.

CE: Four years?

GS: I would think four or five. And then—and I had it on tape and I wrote—

CE: So you put on tape first?

GS: I taped and I put on—those days was not a disc but a tape okay. I put it in because I wanted to save and I then I wrote and then when I showed it to Wisconsin the first they ask me to make some things were too long, and to shorten it; and I did. At some point I ask Anna, who is a wonderful, our daughter, wonderful talented person, I asked—I sent her the tape, for her to edit it to make sure that I—to make sure that there is nothing inconsistent and there is nothing that it—I didn’t want to have anything was not from the perspective from the day. I didn’t want to say—I remember, no I didn’t—there was no

remembering you know. When I wrote the book my notion was that the reader would take my and we will walk with me and descended into the pit of horror. And when we came we would be forewarned and smarter. So I didn't want to in any way to, like some other books they want to—I mean American no, and as I ask Anna, our daughter to go through my book and make sure there is anything in there that is not from the perspective of the day. And I give her great credit for doing it and I felt also honored to show that she supported me. It's not in the sub—not in the title but in the inside is with her help. She is a wonderful daughter, the only daughter I have.

CE: How did your children respond to the book?

GS: Great, they were very helpful, very supportive. Many of them, many of them asked for it, many of them asked for extra copies to give to their friends and some of the grandchildren wanted me to give them a copy to give to their professors.

CE: Great.

GS: One of our grandson just asked me for it and I find it and I buy them I have these books so yeah our children, my children, I think our children feel fortunate they have a wonderful mother. And they feel okay in having me as a father.

CE: Did you do a lot of revision when you wrote it, re-writing?

GS: No, not revisions. I did go and look over it and I did some research to make sure that I had the right dates and names. And I couldn't be sure it was about the camp in Szczecin where I was. Changes from control by the factory police to control by the SS and I want to make sure I find that I date and I did research, discovered that it was in September and so—so yes, as kind of an engineer and physicist I wanted to make sure that I was correct. But, no I—as I looked at what I wrote, it's honest and fair and I am extremely pleased and proud when I hear from friends and strangers that have read the book and they saw it was important. That's it.

CE: I loved your book and I've read—

GS: Oh, I love you too, now you tell me.

CE: I've read I'm sure seventy-five to a hundred memoires written by survivors—

GS: Yeah, if you look at amazon.com, has—

RS: Comments.

GS: Comments that there are twenty-two most of them five stars and I get letters from professors and people and really that's why I wrote it. I wrote it not to make it into income, which I don't need, but wrote it into convey a story and apparently I succeeded.

CE: You have an interesting combination of talents. You're an engineer, a writer, and an artist.

GS: I have painted some nice paintings. But she is the sculpture and the painter too, many more paintings oils. I do some oils and watercolors.

CE: So both of you are artists.

GS: Yeah she paints.

CE: Do you want to talk about your artwork a little bit?

GS: I have to stretch a canvas, that's what happened; that another charm.

RS: Well, I started; I painted all my life since childhood. But you know, I was in Israel a few years ago when I visited somebody. And there is a painting over there it looks like forty years ago I gave somebody or somebody bought it, and I saw it on the wall. You know.

CE: Really?

RS: So I—it's something that I love to do and I am doing it, and—

GS: She is very good at it, she—

RS: I sell some, but I don't go out to sell. There was a gallery in Washington that showed some. But I'm really not interested in selling, making money. I paint when I feel like it.

GS: But, we'll leave them to our children, let them dispose of it.

RS: I have my son in Virginia—is a tremendous son. All the walls are covered with my paintings.

CE: Ah wonderful, wonderful.

RS: So that's where—

GS: And some of mine.

RS: Some of his. He has more talent, but he is not productive enough. I am, you know—

CE: Working on it all the time.

RS: I oversee you like in a—you know. Sometimes analyze I say, “Should I go play bridge or I start a painting?” And I am not playing bridge ever.

GS: If we are going to get back, we coming back on Wednesday, we have to play bridge. By the way, I hope the museum got my drawings.

CE: They did, they did. They got them.

GS: They should use them any way they wish you know.

CE: What do you paint, what are your subjects?

RS: Anything.

CE: Anything, do you ever paint about the Holocaust?

GS: No.

RS: No.

CE: No. So that's—

GS: Me, I don't do that either.

RS: You did once.

CE: Well, you did the drawings about the Holocaust.

GS: I mean did it, but no if you look at my—look at my, look at one of my watercolors there is a young woman walking through a room carrying a newspaper. There is another paintings I have a woman playing a guitar and so—but no, I paint things that are beautiful. The Holocaust is not beautiful.

CE: Okay.

GS: Important but no—and I, clearly it was different when I wrote the book and I felt an obligation to do it—but I don't stress the Holocaust in the subjects I want to paint. Neither does she.

CE: Okay, can we talk a little bit about memory? How you remember—

GS: Now I can say, "What? What?"

CE: You don't remember.

GS: I remember things in great detail and I have a kind of pictorial memory and that's why I was able to get great grades in math and physics because I remember the equations

and when I talk to—when I try to remember the time I came to St. Petersburg, Florida, I will remember the picture I can tell—I can see the picture. Why somebody says to me, “Remember your first day in class and the school in Poland,” and I see the picture. There is a teacher, a grayed haired lady over there and I am sitting back, I see it. And so, that’s why I could write the book and do other things in great detail or and in my career as an engineer and really an executive where you try to make money rather for the company, I could do well because I had that kind of pictorial memory.

CE: Is that an engineer’s way of remembering or not?

GS: I don’t know, no, I don’t know.

CE: I just, I just—

GS: I don’t know. I mean, I just have that—when I remember something I see the scene, I see the picture (inaudible), “Remember when you meet Ruth?” I see her walking in front in the grey—

CE: And you know what color she wore—

GS: Yeah, yeah. And if you say to me, “Remember when you spoke to the soldiers in Reno,” I can see myself front of the mic, who are sitting here and that and the books were on the table—I can see it, you know.

CE: Do you think you have a photographic memory?

GS: Maybe that’s it, I don’t know.

CE: The book very much, I mean you painted scenes, that’s what you did, you painted the scenes full of detail—

GS: Yeah, yeah, yeah, but I have very detailed memory but if you ask me—if I had to remember names I don’t remember names. If I read the book, I can tell you what I read about it; if you ask me who wrote it I don’t remember.

CE: Yeah, how is it different to write the book then to tell your story? Was it different to you?

GS: Yes of course.

CE: Can you talk about that?

GS: In the book, I felt obligated to touch every detail and to talk about all the emotional things and describe all the factors. When I speak, first of all I speak—I don't speak 200 pages, I speak half an hour and I don't dwell on the fact that I—how I felt and what did when I discovered that my parents, somebody told me that I was foolish when I thought that my parents and all the other people were on the farm and I discovered that they were really gassed. And in the book, I say that how I cried and how—what when my emotions when I imagined if my parents called out my name as they were dying in gas chambers. That was in the book; that was very touching, very—I don't say that in my talks. I talked about what happened to us and what I saw as a witness rather than talking about my own personal feelings. There is a difference, but the book, of course, is a much greater detail and was much more challenging to write it and I wanted to be honest, and again relying on my memory, I put all kinds of details in it, some of them silly. I mean, one time when I was injured and I couldn't walk and some guy was helping me to get to see the medic and then some years later I saw him and he was dying and I tried to give him some soup and he died. Well I don't talk about it when I talk to people but when I wrote the book it was challenging to remember that guy who was great and strong and helped me was dying and the Watenstedt camp.

CE: Were you surprised at the things you remembered or not? You know, cause you just really—

GS: No, no, no. And some people asked me, when I talk about luck, when I say that luck was important in no way am I suggesting that survival, the total challenge of survival was luck. There was struggle and—but there were times when luck was a key to open into another phase where I had to struggle. When my brother happened—we happened to be there at the right moment when they decided whose papers would be stamped, he—we happened to be there. This was lucky; we were not there, nothing evil, were we at that time someplace else I would have gone to the gas chambers with my parents. That was luck. Now that doesn't mean the fact that they—

RS: Tell them about the German with the (inaudible).

GS: I was in one camp, this in book of course, and I was young boy, fourteen. And I was walking and in front of me was man walking—it was a kind of laboratory coat and something fell out of his pocket. And I picked it up and run after him, I didn't know who it was, I say, "Mister, mister," and I may have spoken to him in Polish for all I know, "You dropped something." Well it turned out to be one of the, one of the Daimler-Benz executives and was his paycheck. And he went to the police to find me and gave me a sandwich and great. People said to me, "Fool, it's paycheck, you should have kept it." And then some months later, I was given a job to clean some windows in front of a building and I am standing on a ladder and a German came up and kicked the ladder from under me; I feel down, I cut my knees—there was grating over there where you clean. And because I couldn't work, the rules was if you couldn't work for any kind of disability they put you on the truck and send you back to the ghetto were the injured people were killed. I was one of them and the truck was going through the factory, he was walking, he recognized me on the truck and said—well I wasn't maybe the truck stopped over there, he said, "Wait a minute," he said to the Germans, "I want this Jew boy I want him, I need him." So the guard said, "You want him you can have him." Well, it didn't mean that I didn't have to struggle next—struggle next week or next month or next year but the point is if he didn't do it I wouldn't be there. So, that's the lucky point.

CE: Luck was a big part of survival.

GS: Yeah, it's kind of my—when people try—imagine that there are these rooms, and in each room you can struggle and the lock is the key that opens the door to this rooms; and now you can struggle and then when you—

CE: Now you get to struggle.

GS: Yeah. Now we get another key—but without it you don't make it, so yeah. Look, when the Germans came to our town, and they wanted everybody to work, my father jumped, when I was a little boy, to make sure they don't send me to some crazy stupid jobs—found a job for me—my father was at one time an officer in the Polish Army, somebody he knew from army days was a locksmith and I work for him, for this locksmith as a helper. When I was came to the ghetto, I had to register they said, "What's your profession?" they asked me. I said I am locksmith apprentice. So then, when Daimler-Benz was looking for people or people were looking for people who had medical, I'm sorry, who had—

RS: Mechanic.

GS: Metallic exp—I was one of them that was picked then. So it happened if I was sent someplace else they did (inaudible) I happened to be sent to Daimler-Benz because Daimler-Benz liked us. They wanted us in their factory in France, luck. My brother ran away when the Germans came and if he stayed on the side that was occupied by the Russians that part of Poland, they would have deported him to Siberia and he would have survived. For some reason he came back. If he didn't come back, he wouldn't be dead and somebody asking for his paper, for his I.D., and he gave them, the Germans, his I.D. and mine. It was luck and I can't—that was kind of fate. I can't deny it but I don't want to people to think that the survival was—I was lucky to survive, no, I was lucky to make it one time at a time. And then I had to struggle. But some of these things happened—my brother didn't come back, nobody would have taken by I.D. at fourteen, they didn't. And the Germans didn't say to the guard, "I want this Jew boy, I need him." And then he arranged for me to get a job cleaning toilets, which means I could do it with my limping, I wouldn't have made it. But, so that's what I mean by luck. I don't deny it.

CE: Ruth can you talk a little bit about the role of luck in your survival?

GS: Talk about me.

RS: No, I can't.

CE: You can't? It's not something about?

RS: No. Not at all.

CE: Okay, all right.

GS: You see I live a life where there were—my experience in the camps. There was this great terrible dangers, daily dangers, daily jeopardies and therefore there was opportunity for something to appear to make a difference. Otherwise, when I, when I look at my career in the United States I have done well I am—

CE: Was that luck?

GS: Luck is not as important as it was when the man said to the truck driver, "Give me the guy." Yes, it was luck that I had the GI Bill and yes, that I could—you know. But, that was just fortune rather than luck.

CE: What's the difference between fortune and luck?

GS: Fortune if you either make a million dollars you make half a million dollars. Luck in concentration be either death or life. Okay.

CE: Okay.

GS: Distinguish between the two.

CE: Okay. Could I ask you a little bit about some of what you said about religion? Is that okay to ask you about?

RS: Sure.

GS: Sure, okay to ask anything.

CE: Okay, so you said, and this has to do with luck, you say you survive because of luck "for which I don't deserve any credit." This is in your book I believe.

GS: Yeah, yeah okay.

CE: "Clearly I was helped here and there by some. I can't subscribe to any divide intervention or deal with why he didn't save others. But that I ask, 'Where was God,' means I am religious man, or I was a religious man. I don't know why I was saved or he didn't save others and I don't ask." And I wondered if you would talk a little bit about that.

GS: Well, let me give you a little experience; some years ago I was asked to speak in Utica, New York. Do you know where Utica, New York is? It is not far from Syracuse. And among the audience there were many nuns and when I was speaking there were comments and one of the nuns—wonderful, friendly woman—said to me, "George or Mr. Salton, you know you survive because God's finger was on your shoulder and he made sure that you survived." And I said to her, "Sister, I don't deny this. I don't deny it but I don't claim it because the minute I claim it I am obligated to say, 'Why only me?'" So, that's—I do believe that God has given us a moral framework for our life but there are—

clearly I have questions and I don't, in fact the questions no answer doesn't make disbelief it but I have questions. You know when I go the synagogue, and there is much discussion, much said about the wonderful miracle of God helping the Jews, saving the Jews by helping them to leave Egypt. People recognize it. I recognize it too. But I am, in addition to death, I am little different because I said to me, "My God, you saved us by letting helping us to get out of Egypt and parting the waters. Where were you in 1942?" I don't know the answers. I have, I have also in my book, I have mentioned that there were times when I prayed to our God and there were times were I saw the misery and brutality—so that the brutality around us was not sufficient to arouse God's mercy or God's fury. And when I realized that I felt that maybe prayers were not necessary. So, I still believe in prayers, but I have doubts. I have doubts. I don't have answers! So maybe I'll put it away. Well I don't feel that I am smart enough to insist to have answers, but I have answers.

CE: Do you want to add anything to it?

RS: Well, you know, truly, I don't question the religion so much but I'm convinced I am—my people and my tribe is important to me.

GS: Yeah, clearly, we feel brotherhood and sisterhood with our people. But you know—we still belong to a synagogue and I say my prayers but unlike, possibly, possibly unlike others, I am not sure. I have questions and no answers. And I accept the fact that I have questions no answers like, "Where were you God?" At one time at some showing of some people who survive they did all kinds of wonderful things, and when it was over somebody said to me, "This is a great, great story that we see this what our people were challenged, tested and they made it." And I said, "What if this was also the time when God was tested?" And I don't mean to be hostile, I want to be honest with you completely and I am being completely honest with myself. I don't know. And when I am—when my times comes I hope I go to heaven.

RS: Well, I have a very short little sentence by which I live. Don't do anything to others, which you don't want them to do to you. That's my belief.

CE: The golden rule.

GS: And mine too, obviously.

CE: So when I was in Israel I said to an Israeli who was showing us around I said, “You know I feel Jewish,” and he said to me, “being Jewish is not about feeling, it’s about ritual.”

GS: No that’s—

CE: Could you respond to that?

RS: No, I don’t believe it.

GS: I believe, I believe—

RS: It’s more—no that’s not correct.

GS: I believe things that are significant for human beings, and not ritual. Ritual is just a fact that somebody—

RS: Absolutely not.

GS: The fact that somebody wears a yarmulke or somebody crosses themselves when he comes into a church is not enough to make him or her, good, loving, wonderful person. There is feeling rather than ritual. That’s crossing yourself when you are coming into the church.

RS: Ritual is unimportant.

GS: It is not enough. Not that I am against it but that itself is not enough.

RS: I can’t believe that anybody would say something like that.

CE: I was not offended what so ever, I thought it was an interesting opinion.

RS: I am.

GS: Well I am not saying—I am telling you our view, you know. I don't feel empowered to be judgmental about other people but this is my view that clearly what we believe, how we behave, that's what's important. Ritual is, it's, it's important to some but not that significant.

RS: You know Judaism believes in the Torah, what the Torah says. And the Torah is strictly history and learned by example. It has nothing to do with ritual. They don't tell you to you have to do this or you have to do that; they just tell you a story and you adjust it to the way of life. And we believe, and that book, you know that's our religion—

GS: But on the other hand—I'm sorry.

RS: May I finish?

GS: Yeah.

RS: You don't have to always talk. Let me talk. And I believe there is a feeling but the feeling is between me and Him wherever I am, whatever it is. If there is a Him, I am close to Him anyplace and I can apply to Him directly, no rituals, no nothing. But I believe in the people, and the goodness of the people, and doing the good—good to the people. That's mine—my religion, not if I want to, I can make a dinner like everybody else on Passover, and I do it not because I believe it had something to do with our religion. It has to do with—

CE: With community.

RS: Exactly, community.

GS: You have other important questions?

CE: I have a couple more questions. Let's see where—three thirty so maybe another ten, or fifteen minutes, does that sound okay?

RS: Keep going. (inaudible)

CE: Okay, all right.

GS: When I was in NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] committees was international people debating, the British also said whenever we argued with them they said, “We are in your hands when we don’t agree, so we agree with you know, we are in your hands—”

CE: Okay, all right. Well I want to ask you about your mother telling you to always be a *mensch* and if you could talk a little bit about what that means to you.

GS: When I was parted from my parents, and we talk about a very difficult time, when they were leaving and I accepted the notion that they would leave and go with other people to work on the farm in the Ukraine, that’s what we were promised in our state. One of the things that we say to each and covered with tears and embraces, my mother said to me, something I didn’t understand actually at the time, which I understand now with great emotion. She said to me, “Son, if you have to grow up without us, grow up to be a good person. Grow up to be a *mensch*.” *Mensch* is the definition of someone who is informed, and kind, and willing, and respected. There is no—you can be a *mensch* and be tailor, you can be a *mensch* and be a professor. That’s what she basically said to me. And I said to her, “Don’t say it mother I am not going to grow up, grow up without you.” But she said to me, “Promise!” And I said, “Yes, I promise but it doesn’t matter I’m not going to”—and of course, when I came to the United States, I felt that promise and obligation to fulfill the promise. That was an important motivation to try to be a good person. To be a person with compassion and understanding and self-respect, self—that’s what I think what a *mensch* is and that what I became.

CE: Okay.

GS: Well, she—it was good advice, you know and, and okay.

CE: It’s an amazing statement really that she made. She had a moment probably to say something meaningful to you, something—

GS: This was maybe five minutes before she left. Five minutes after that I didn’t ever saw her again. But she said to me—maybe it was my father too who said it—I don’t mean to say. And, and it didn’t mean anything to mean until I came, until I realized that they had been murdered and I realized, after I came to America, that I was in charge of my life.

You understand? There come a time when you know you are in charge of your life and I realize (inaudible). Then I remember that and it was an important guidance, motivation.

CE: So you talk in the book about a moment in which you felt free. Do you remember that?

GS: Yeah, this was in the truck. Clearly, when the war was—when I was liberated I really didn't know exactly what freedom was and I didn't know that various fears that I worried about were beyond me. I mean there was still fears, I remember one time I was—after the liberation I was sitting over there outside in the sun and a young soldier—American soldier with a gun came by and I jumped up and took my hand up and stood at attention and he was embarrassed by the—gave me a piece of Herhsey chocolate that he had. But I didn't know this is—I didn't know when the people said to me, “You have to come with me and go over there, we take you someplace.” I just accepted these orders. I didn't know exactly what they meant. And then one day, as were being driven by the British towards—what to be the British zone, the truck stopped. A sergeant was a before with a gun and red hair was walking around talking to the driver of the truck behind us and I saw that I the driver in the truck behind us was pointing at us and when the truck we were in was opened there was a number of people, including—not all but some us Jewish spoke Yiddish to each other with a kind of a German dialect. And I saw this man walking towards us, this sergeant, we frightened, stopped. And he talked to us Jewish. And it was a wonderful awakening, wonderful to realize that I had—didn't have to be afraid; that somehow there were Jews who were in the army that defeated Hitler and somehow my image was—like I am in someplace next to a building with a steep roof and the roof is full of ice and snow and the sun shows up and the ice and snow fell off, my fears fell off. I was free. Okay.

CE: Wow, wow. That's lovely. You have a moment like that when you felt free after the war? Not a particular moment?

RS: Something happened to me, you know, this was just after liberation. They got about fifty young people and the gentlemen from Israel came with a white beard with white hair, you know. And I attend a seminar with him. What happened he was a philosopher, Israeli philosopher with the name of [Samuel] Belkin.

GS: Belkin.

RS: He changed my outlook of life: in the six weeks of training, I became another person.

GS: You've other priorities, right?

CE: You tough, you tough, tough? You are very tough.

RS: Very tough.

CE: Yeah I can sense that.

GS: Why do you think I am well behaved? (all laugh) But then—I know exactly what is in the book that Ruth saw. You know it was this wonderful thing and it was the recognition that stayed with me for the rest of my life. Not to have concerns but no fears.

CE: I don't quite know how to ask this question so I will just ask it and see what happens. What effect does your experience in the Holocaust have on aging and growing older?

GS: I will tell you what you told. I don't know how to answer this question.

CE: It's too ambiguous.

GS: Who know, who knows—I don't think—difficult to—I will give you my position. I know many—I know a number of people were survivors, at my age they have deteriorated. I know other people who are survivors and they are even older than me and functioning. I think the fact that between the ages of eleven and seventeen I was deprived of food and vitamins, the fact that for three years I didn't have any fresh fruit and therefore had all kinds of problems with my teeth and have gotten dentures, clearly affected me. What it has to do with my—how I feel at my age, I don't know.

CE: Okay, you don't know how you would have felt if you hadn't—

GS: No, no because I know other people, I know other people with similar backgrounds, same age who deteriorated and died.

RS: You mean how he feels now?

CE: Yeah.

GS: Physically, she's talking about—

CE: Physically or emotionally or—

GS: Health-wise.

RS: No, no. He doesn't feel his age. Neither do I.

CE: You don't either.

RS: Are you kidding? I'm sixty.

CE: I kinda knew that, yeah.

GS: No, no we—

CE: What's the secret to that? To being eighty-four and just—eighty-four, right?

GS: Yeah. I'll be eighty-four in January.

RS: He, not me. I'm sixty never. You know, it's mentally.

CE: It's mental?

GS: Well clearly—

RS: And of course, once you have mental—

GS: Some genetics you know, I don't know—

RS: You know, you feel off physically. You feel young, you do things that young people do. I have friends that are much, much younger, all my friends are much younger, but they can't keep up with me.

GS: We keep—

RS: Because I think differently.

GS: We go to the gym and we do this and that. And the fact that I am prepared—

RS: I the only thing I don't do—

GS: And willing to places, come to places like this to speak, you know, its quite invigorating.

CE: That does help keep you young, doesn't it?

GS: No.

RS: If I see a good-looking young man he has to be tall. Still like to play—

GS: If I knew the answer to it I would but I don't know. I think it just happens.

RS: No, no, we don't think about—we don't feel those things. We do things, but you know, we haven't yet done—came to a point to say, "I can't do it, it's too old or too tired or it's not for us anymore." We didn't come yet to that point.

CE: It seems to me that part of secret is this passion and involvement in something in your life.

RS: Absolutely.

CE: Yeah.

RS: We were always involved and we still are involved. You know I'm now—cause my organization very much involved and, you know, once you get involved in something you successful everybody's after your, you know.

CE: Oh yeah.

GS: My answer is more conditional. I really don't know if there is any particular influence on my being caught up in the Holocaust and on my, on my present health, I don't know. Maybe, I don't know. I have had people tell me if I had better food and better nourishment during those years, teenage years, I would have been taller but who knows.

RS: Who cares!

GS: Our four grandsons are over six feet tall. People ask after whom do they take, I say your grandmother. (all laugh) But that's not important.

RS: My children are tall, my grandkids are tall, but you know, we were deprived of the very physical things that make people grow. If you don't pour water over your plant, it won't grow!

GS: Okay?

CE: Okay, you had a message at the end of your book. You say that, "Gentile brothers and sisters must say, 'no more.'" You say that, "There are beasts in people and we have to be ever vigilant to be safe." And then you talk about the resilience of the human spirit and that you able to ignore the voice that says, "We are bringing up children to feed the beast." I wonder if you'd talk about those ideas now?

GS: Well, I mean, I don't remember the particular—

CE: It's at the end of your book.

GS: Quickly I just remembered.

CE: Yeah.

GS: I want to say something positive.

CE: Okay.

GS: Clearly there is something very important, very significant that the survivors have to tell our friends, our peers, that we who have gone through terrible cruelty have seen our families murdered, have seen—have lived among people who, wonderful people who died from starvation or shooting, were able to, when the opportunity came, had the resilience and the commitment to put it behind us. I don't mean to the point where we forgot or deny it, but put it behind us and build new lives. Okay. I was some years ago, I was the (inaudible) of the Holocaust Museum in Washington. We were invited. We went over there to a place, a meeting that was in the coliseum. There was 7,000 people there, 2,000 were former survivors looking to find friends and relatives and without any success. The other 5,000 were their children and therefore to me it was a mountain of strength, that these people like I, that we that have gone through this hell had the resilience, had their faith, had their hope to have families, to have children, to look to the future, something that can be glorious and wonderful. I think that something, and we are not unique, but I think that people who go through terrible times and terrible experience if they are able to put it behind them and build new positive constructive life, that's an important lesson for all of us. If somebody has some terrible experience and loses his wife or her from some terrible disease and it's behind us, look to the future; and that's what we did. And I think its, you know, there are all kind of stories about syndromes of—that effect people who had very bad experiences that they can criminally—no, we were just—all of us and I am one of them, that we have able to overcome that and build new positive constructive lives and have children and that worry about our children being—if we worried about it we wouldn't have children, we have hid someplace in a closet but we didn't. So. And if somebody, any person has had some difficult and troublesome and frightening experience and looks for some lessons of hope, look to us. Look to us.

CE: You, you said to me that you don't particularly like being called a survivor; is that right or wrong?

GS: No, no, no, no, no. I—that's not, that's not, I don't want to be—I don't like to be called just a survivor if—somebody—this is George Salton, a survivor. I am more than that. I am no doubt I am a survivor, I no doubt, but I have done more, I built a new life, I went to college, went to university, I married, loving husband, I have three wonderful

kids, I—as an engineer, I managed some important programs and it comes back to what I just told you, what I said to you. There we had, we survived and build a new life and I—when people see me and say George Salton, I want them to not to view me not just a survivor. Yes, I am survivor but much more then that! In spite of the fact that I am survivor and that community where I live, very beautiful, expensive community, I was on the board of directors for five years, so people know me not only as a survivor, it's the guy that did great things. That's what's important. I am not denying that I am survivor, obviously I am not, I talk and tour elsewhere but I am insisting that I am more than that. Okay.

CE: Do you want to say anything about that? Ruth?

RS: I have never felt as a survivor.

GS: Yeah.

CE: You have never felt—

RS: I am Ruth Salton!

CE: Okay, so you don't identify as a survivor?

RS: I already told you—

GS: I don't, you know, sometimes I see some guy, who is a survivor give me a business card that says on there, "Joe Blow: Holocaust Survivor." I say, "Wait a minute." You say, "Joe Blow: Husband of Ruth," that's a different story. Okay?

CE: Okay and I have one more question. Now this is a really important one for both of you. I want to know the secrets to your long-term relationship.

GS: Fear.

CE: (laughs) It has three letters. I love it. I so adore you.

GS: No, I am just, its luck. We happen to know each other. We are married for a long time, we are very much in love. We care about each other. I feel fortunate that I found somebody to marry me and be in love with and I think Ruth feels the same way about her relationship to me and that's great.

RS: I like him feeling fortunate.

CE: You do? I don't blame you. You seem to have a lovely sense of humor together—

GS: Oh yes, yes.

CE: A lightness—

RS: Life is good. I have never been so happy as I am now.

CE: Wonderful.

RS: Really, I am healthy, I have a husband who is eh, but I'll take him. My kids are marvelous—

GS: You say you'll keep him, don't say you take him. Keep him.

RS: My grandchildren are gorgeous, smart, intelligent, good looking; I'm happy.

GS: But, yes, the fact is, let me answer the question; clearly we fell in love, we are still in love, we appreciate—I am happy that she is my wife and I admire her and think that—I hope at least, the feeling is mutual and that's the secret behind a good, happy relationship. Even if I had doubts as I saw this.

CE: Is there anything else that the two of you would like to talk about?

GS: No, fine. Let me suggest, as you work on the photographs or whatever you do, if the time comes that you want to have some additional input, have some additional clarifications. Feel free to do it and let me give you my business card.

CE: Okay, would you have any interest in writing something with me in the way that I wrote with Jerry? I would do most of the work. You would—

GS: My answer is no, but lets see what happens.

CE: Okay, all right. Well, I will write something and send it to you and see if you want—

GS: I would be happy to help but you know—

CE: See if you want to participate.

RS: I tell you something. Whatever years we have left, just enjoy, that's it.

GS: But yeah, but clearly if you write something and you say—

RS: We want to enjoy our grandchildren, I can't wait until they grow up and get married so I can go to their wedding and buy a new dress.

GS: But if you write something and you feel that you need my input feel free, but I don't want to answer your question until I see what it is.

CE: Okay, that's fair enough.

GS: I am completely—I'm being friendly and candid, you know—

CE: That's fair enough. That's definitely fair enough. Well thank you both so very much.

GS: My pleasure, I have to find my jacket now.

CE: And we need to take this off of you before you put on—

GS: Oh I don't want to give it back.

CE: Okay.

*End of interview*