

**THE WILLIAM BREMAN JEWISH HERITAGE MUSEUM
ESTHER AND HERBERT TAYLOR
JEWISH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF ATLANTA
LEGACY PROJECT**

MEMOIRIST: ZHANNA ARSHANSKAYA
INTERVIEWER: JOHN KENT
RUTH EINSTEIN
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INTERVIEW BEGINS

<Disc 1 Begins>

John: It is June 1, 2009. We are in Atlanta, Georgia. I am John Kent.

Zhanna: How do you do?

John: Let's start with what your name was when you were born.

Zhanna: I was lucky to get it back. I still have the same name, but there was a long, long interruption by the war. My name is Zhanna.

John: Spell that.

Zhanna: It's spelled in English . . . Z-H-A-N-N-A. There is one letter for Z-H in Russian so you don't need two letters. It's 'Zhanna'. The name comes from Mark Twain's version of *Joan of Arc*.¹ The book came to Russia and was translated the year when my mother was pregnant with her first child. This is [I am] the child she had. She said she fell in love with *Joan of Arc*.

John: What was your last name at the time?

Zhanna: Arshanskaya. My father was Arshansky.

John: Spell that also.

Zhanna: A-R-S-H-N-S-K-A . . . No, better not to end up with "A." Then it would be Polish. Better go to "Y" . . . Arshansky. Every name in Russia is spelled differently in the ending,

¹ Mark Twain was the pen name of Samuel Langhorne Clemens, an American author and humorist. Twain's last completed novel, *The Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc by the Sieur Louis de Conte*, recounts the life of Joan of Arc and was published in 1896.

depending on what sex the person is, or whether it is a plural, a crowd of Arshanskys, or one person Arshansky. It has too many variations. I am giving you an average because we are trying to accommodate Americans so they don't have to suffer for nothing. It is too much.

John: What was your mom's name?

Zhanna: My mother was Sara Constantinov, because the father was Constantine. My middle name is Dmitrinov. My father was Dmitri.

John: Were there any brothers or sisters?

Zhanna: Yes, I do have a sister two years younger than myself. Her name is Frina. Frina is a Greek name. My mother was a reader. She was reading Mark Twain for me. She was reading Greek Mythology for the younger child. I have never met another Frina. I know a lot of Friedas. Frieda is maybe sort of a common name in Jewish families, but not Frina. It [my sister] is the only one.

John: What year were you born?

Zhanna: I was born on February 1, 1927.

John: Where exactly in Russia were you born?

Zhanna: Exactly in the same town that my mother was born and all of her family, her brothers and sisters, too. The name is Berdjansk [Ukraine].² It is spelled . . . B-E-R-D-J-A-N-S-K.

John: About where is it or what big city is it near so we can place it?

Zhanna: It is on the berg of the Sea of Azov.³ It is famous for its soil, weather, and food. [It is a] very famous place for wonderful produce and everything else that you eat . . . fish—unheard of . . . just unbelievable. [I am] very lucky that way. I fell in love with my town I think the first

² Berdjansk, also spelled *Berdyansk* [Russian] or Berdiansk [Ukraine], is a port city in southeast Ukraine. Berdjansk is located on the northern coast of the Sea of Azov, a shallow body of water that is connected to the Black Sea by the Kerch Strait. By the twentieth century, the town had become an important merchant trading port with well developed industry.

³ The Sea of Azov is an arm of the Black Sea, located in southeastern Europe, between the Crimean Peninsula, the east Ukrainian coast, and the north Caucasus. It is the shallowest sea on earth, with rich marine life, and sandbanks formed from the many rivers flowing into it. Traditionally much of the coastline has been a zone of health resorts. The climate on the Azov coast is unique: the summers are hot and dry, the winters are mild and warm.

day when I was born. At three years old, I was already climbing out of the fences and going into town by myself. I really knew my town. That is what I lived for.

John: Describe the town or the parts that you knew.

Zhanna: Where we lived, the streets were lined with cobblestones only. The trees were lined with rows of wonderful blooming acacia—rich, healthy trees. The smell and everything was wonderful to me as a child, except for one thing. I discovered that there were caterpillars. I am still scared of caterpillars. I simply scream like a baby. I can't stand the sight because they wiggle and they remind me sort of like a tiny snake. We [were] surrounded by those. [It was] clean . . . The land was flat, except when we went to the cemetery. There was sort of like a mound, but not a very high mound. That's the only place where I saw something like a mound. Otherwise, we had beaches—a beach for animals, a beach for women, a beach for men, and a beach for everybody. I visited all of them every day.

John: The beaches were segregated?

Zhanna: No, not segregated. You could've . . . as a kid, I was allowed into any. I was a little scared of cows, horses, and dogs so I would just be careful there, but I had to see what they do. Then I would go to visit other beaches. Nobody ever bothered me or told me not to. I didn't stay anywhere very long. I was investigating. I didn't come to swim. I was not allowed to swim by myself. That was a very big deal for me. Then at nighttime, [my father's friend,] the photographer, Nicoli, came. When the outside was still plenty of light, he would walk over to our house. My father would finish his candy-making job, which he did for livelihood. He would take his violin and stand with the violin peering down on a picture of Niccolò Paganini.⁴

<interview pauses, then resumes>

Zhanna: He would come something like seven o'clock at night maybe, or six o'clock. I would wait for him on the corner for him to come because I had to be there when they were playing.

My father and he played wonderful music—all the operatic scores transposed. I learned all of my operatic music that way. My father was a self-taught violinist. The pianist was something like self-taught, too. To me, it was the end of the world. It was just music. I was very happy. Nicoli

⁴ Niccolò [Italian: Niccolò] Paganini (1782-1840) was a celebrated Italian violinist, violist, guitarist, and composer.

would see me while I was waiting. I would run to him and he would throw me in the air. I was no more than . . . three. He would carry me in the house, sit down at the piano, put me in his lap, and start playing. My father would play and I would just very happy there. I would make some fuss, and bother them, and disturb [them], so they wanted me out of there. They couldn't do that. I absolutely ruined everything just to be there. I insisted. They had to move a bed into the living room so I would go to sleep.

One day, my father decided to invite a friend piano teacher to the house, to come during the dinnertime, and talk to us. He decided, the parents decided, that I had been walking streets long enough. The policemen were bringing me home. They knew me. I went to all the funerals. I cried with all the funerals. I went to all the churches where the service was. I used to go and run after the people who were [being] taken to the hospital. I would go there to see what was going on. That was my occupation. I never played with the kids there. I never had a friend. I didn't need one.

First, they put me in Kindergarten. When I got there, I was near five years old. The children were supposed to be something like my age, but I was like a giant there. They were tiny. They had dripping noses, G-d forbid! I never had a dripping nose. Their dripping noses were going right into the [\[unintelligible, 9:37, sounds like "crache" or perhaps "crèche," a nursery where babies and young children are cared for during the working day\]](#) I thought it was very disgusting! I just simply hated it. The teacher paid no attention to me at all. They were busy with the children. I would watch what they were doing, and I thought it was the most boring thing in the world. I already could count, and read, and add, and subtract, and everything. That was before I started piano.

John: Was that a public school or Jewish school?

Zhanna: No. It was just in the morning time. I would come to mother and father in bed and they would tell me things. I would remember and I knew those things. I also loved reading Krylov⁵ . . . the things for . . . that are fairy tales for children. What are they called?

John: Fables?

⁵ Ivan Andreyevich Krylov (1769-1844) was a Russian author, who was well known for his fables.

Zhanna: Fables! Thank you. I haven't said this word in years. Yes, *basnya* [Russian: fable] in Russian. It has no connection to fable, the word.

When the [piano] teacher came to visit us and sat down at the table, she said, "What am I here for?" My father said, "She . . . We have to take her off the streets. Please, please take her for a pupil." She looked at me and said, "She is small." She looked at my hand. She couldn't see anything but dimples. [It was] a fat little hand. That's all. She said, "I don't know," very weary. She was really undecided the whole dinner. My father begged her, "Please, just take her. Let her go somewhere every day." The lesson was every day and I was to walk there. It was just to take me, to send me somewhere, because I quit the kindergarten. They had to take me out of there. They put me with the [piano] teacher.

I would take two hours to get there—just about three blocks. I had a great interest on the way. There as an apothecary. [The] apothecary fascinated me. I just wanted so badly to go in and just look at it. I never did any harm to anything. Those white . . . in all the apothecary, those white jars—porcelain? I would look at that with such envy. I just prayed somebody would give me one of those things, but they never did. They would allow me to come in. I had to climb five steps. That was on the way to the teacher. I would be allowed to stand and watch. I would stand there a long time. I don't know how they didn't kick me out of there.

Finally, I would reach the teacher's place. That was wonderful, because she wasn't there and the baby was there with the servant. The baby was two years old. That was wonderful. She had all the toys. I played with the baby and was very happy because I didn't want to take piano lessons. I was delighted with the music that I heard. I still am. I'm really a listener. That's where you learn the music. You listen and you learn. Then the teacher has very little to do. The teacher has a very easy job if you get a kid that knows the music. That's what you need. People don't understand it, but musicians know it.

I'll be waiting for my teacher all [day]. [It] doesn't matter how long she took or how late she came. Then, we'd sit down to the piano to have a lesson. She had a round chair that went around. It had the lining, the material which you sat [on], had all the holes . . . <points to a similar item> That's what I mean. The seat was like that. The teacher . . . I would play anything. Anything that I played, don't ask me what it was. I have no idea. I didn't want to do the lessons. I knew the notes. My father taught me that in bed where all the notes are . . . till [I knew them

by] the memory. I had no idea but one ledger line. I completely finished my education. I thought was wonderful. I know the staff line. That's it, I decided. I'm not going to [learn more], because it's no fun. The teacher would sometimes hit me with a pencil on my arm. That didn't matter to me. I wasn't offended or anything. I just thought my teacher was like a goddess to me. I thought she was a perfection of a human being. She couldn't do wrong. That was my idea of my teacher. I never said one word to her the entire time I studied with her. I never said one word. Don't ask me why. I don't understand but that's the truth. I had some sort of fear or awe. I was completely in awe of her.

She would give me an announcement, a homework assignment. I would come home. The first thing I would do was go outside. In the summertime, there was a stove for being heated with . . . not just the coals, but wood. Naturally, the burns fell into the bottom. I thought, "That's the place to put the announcement," so nobody would find it. I wasn't interested in doing the announcement. Then I saw some ledger lines and said, "Oh, no. Not me!" Imagine a kid deciding herself what she is going to do or what she's not. I was interested in music. I didn't want all those lines and things, no! I suppose I practiced. My father would invite friends, close the shutters inside. I don't know what I played.

I do know one thing. In one year, the teacher came . . . I am skipping something . . . The teacher had one concert for her students. I never met any of the students. I was the smallest. I was playing with the baby. I spent so many hours there. That was the first time I met them. I had to play something. I don't know what I played, but the teacher was pleased. Alright, that's all I can tell you about that.

A year later, after I started, the teacher came to the house and told my father, "I would like her to appear on the radio." By that time, I was playing [the] first Invention by [Johann Sebastian] Bach [with] two voice[s], not three voice[s].⁶ <hums> That one. I knew how to play that. My father took me to the radio [station]. We had to walk a few blocks. He went into the room where the piano was. It was a room without windows. It had a carpet there and a piano—that was all—and, of course, a seat. I had never played on a grand piano before. He told me that there, somewhere in the wall, there is going to be a voice that will tell me to start and I

⁶ Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was a German composer and musician of the Baroque period. Invention No. 1 was composed by Bach for piano.

am to start. He wanted to go home and listen with our friends at home. The radio and the electricity in Berdjansk played a big game. It almost never was on. It was once in a while. We thought we had radio and electricity. We didn't know any better. It was just a terrible case of it. The man said, "Start," and I started. As soon as I started, in a few bars, the electricity went off. There I was in the dark, all alone in the room with a grand piano, brand new. I went ahead and played my "Invention" to the very end. That was something that my father never forgot. He knew the light went off. He knew he trained me to play in the dark, because he would close the shutters.

<interview pauses, then resumes>

Zhanna: I found out only when I became a teacher and I started teaching many people, many beginners and saw them develop . . . I thought, "Well, pretty soon I'm going to give this [student] the first Invention of Bach." [I was] thinking it is an easy piece. Do you know that I never had anyone play it well? I never had a pupil who played this Invention well except someone who was very advanced. It is not the same, the first Invention." It shows that it's not an easy piece. [Even my father's friend,] Nicoli, who was a whiz playing all the transcriptions and everything, he couldn't play the Invention. Bach is funny. You know what Bach is like? I mean for a pianist. Both hands are completely evenly distributed. That's why it was so difficult. I didn't know that. [A] kid doesn't know difficulties.

John: Could you describe your parents just a little bit, as to what kind of people they were?

Zhanna: There is no question. There is no bigger hero in my life than my mother. She was a quiet person, delicate person, beautifully mannered without any malice ever to anybody. [She was] a superb housewife, wonderful cook and mother. When the Germans came and took us out to the ghetto, she did things that discounted herself completely. No one could stop her. She would get up, and get out of the ghetto, and risk her life to be killed. Then [she would] walk—goodness knows where—and then come back. That was the last thing she did.

I always think that I cannot compare anybody's heroism to it, but my father finished it in the column—in the death column—when I jumped out. My father started a conversation

with a Ukrainian guard.⁷ There were Germans with the big rubber whips surrounding both sides of the columns of Jews and there were Ukrainians in between with rifles. I heard my father talk to this Ukrainian. He put on Ukrainian language, because he spoke Russian. He grew up in Poltava [Ukraine].⁸ He knew Ukrainian. He said, “Look, take a look at me.” He said, “You know I am not a Jew. See my two children. They are not Jewish either. That is why I am not a Jew. My wife is different.” My mother was a beautiful Jewish person, but she looked Jewish. My father didn’t and us kids really didn’t either. He took out his one lifetime thing—a golden pocket watch. He was holding it like this to him so he [the Ukrainian guard] saw it. He [indicated he] would give to him. He said to the guard, “Look away if my child steps out.” I was next to father, walking and listening. I thought, “That’s what he wants me to do? Well, how am I going to do it?” Seeing everything around, you’d be surprised. A lot of Jews were walking, too. They heard what my father was saying. They were as tight and tense about it as anybody. I mean, everyone for everyone else. If anybody can jump out, G-d bless them. I knew that my sister . . . I always thought that [she seemed] not two years, but 10 years younger than me. She never went out of the gate by herself, never. She was always with mother. She always loved dolls. She was devoted to the dolls. I never touched a doll. I just wanted my apothecary and going into town. That is what I wanted. I knew he didn’t mean my sister. He meant me. I had to jump out somehow. Next to me was mother, and then my sister, and me, my father, grandfather, and grandmother. Six of us made a row in this . . . enormous column and many, many [Jews] . . . 16,000.⁹ I was looking and I looked at the side of the road and I couldn’t believe it. A big ball, huge, bigger than this <indicates something very large> of wire with sticks . . . what do you call it?

John: Barbed wire?

Zhanna: Barbed wire, rolled up. When you roll it up, it is stiff. There is in the middle a hole. When I looked at that, I saw two women standing, watching the column. I knew they’re not Jews. They’re onlookers. I thought, “If I don’t jump now, I never will. Because I will be . . .” I immediately understood, “I’ll be one of the onlookers. I can pretend. I’ll become one of the

⁷ In Ukraine, as in many German-occupied territories throughout Europe, antisemitism, nationalism, ethnic hatred, anti-Communism, and opportunism often induced collaboration with the Nazi regime. Such collaboration was a critical element in implementing the Final Solution and the mass murder of other groups whom the Nazi regime targeted. Collaborators committed some of the worst atrocities of the Holocaust era.

⁸ Poltava is a city located on the Vorskla River in central Ukraine. It is located approximately 410 kilometers (255 miles) northwest of Berdjansk.

⁹ In total, about 12,000 Jews were killed in Kharkov in 1941-1942.

onlookers.” I pretended that I was doing something with that wire. I moved out, stepped inside the hole, and looked at the women. They were looking at me, terrified. I just was stationary. I looked back. There was a German with whip. He was looking at me and not doing a thing about it. Finally, he passed me. [The] Ukrainian was already in front, walking ahead of me. There I was. I realized I am apart from the column. Anything could have happened to me at any instance. I could have been killed many ways.

John: Did you know what going on in terms of where all those people were going and what was happening?

Zhanna: That is a very good question. We had been told lies—all kinds of lies—ever since Germans invaded Russia.¹⁰

John: About when was that? Just to get . . .

Zhanna: June 21, 1941. That was only two or three months after Babi Yar.¹¹ Babi Yar [was] where 34,000 Jews were massacred in two days. The Germans had their line of thinking and of action. They would choose a very high place with a ravine. They would kill people, or not kill, and throw them down there. The dead and the not dead would be buried then, but get it out of the sight. In my opinion, to this day, I don’t know anything I despise more in any government or people is the secrecy and lies. The way they could do any hideous thing through secrecy and lies. They can do anything. Stalin knew it all—every bit of it.¹² He never said a word to the Jewish population [such as], “We want to save your lives. We will give you a train and take you all away from [here] because they are killing Jews.” We didn’t know anything.

¹⁰ On June 21, 1941, German forces invaded the Soviet Union in "Operation Barbarossa."

¹¹ Babi Yar [Ukrainian: Babyn Yar] was a ravine on the northwestern edge of Kiev, Ukraine. On September 29-30, 1941, the SS and German police units and their auxiliaries, under guidance of members of *Einsatzgruppen* [German: mobile killing unit] C, shot 33,771 Jews in small groups in the ravine. This was one of the largest mass murders at an individual location during World War II. In the months following, thousands more Jews, as well as non-Jews including Roma (Gypsies), Communists, and Soviet prisoners of war were killed at Babi Yar. In all, it is estimated that some 100,000 people were murdered at Babi Yar.

¹² Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin (1878-1953) was the leader of the Soviet Union from the mid- 1920’s until his death. He is considered one of the most powerful and murderous dictators in history. Stalin and the Soviet government are generally believed to have been aware of the persecution of Jews, especially after Germany invaded the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941. Indeed, many events that have come to be called ‘the Holocaust’ took place on Soviet territory. Soviet forces also got a first-hand look at the atrocities inflicted upon Jews when they pushed west into Poland, Belarus, and Lithuania and began liberating extermination camps in the summer of 1944. However, Soviet propaganda tended to present the war with Germany as an ideological battle rather than any persecution specific to Jews.

My father . . . when he heard that the Germans are killing Jews he didn't believe it. He said, "That's a lie." My father didn't believe it because he was in Poltava—a beautiful, historic Ukrainian city, gorgeous. He was living there. The Germans came in the First World War and they were looking for Jews—to make friends because they spoke Yiddish. They made friends. My father had friends, German soldiers, and then we ordered a piano from Germany. We had an upright piano from Germany—a beautiful piano. We'd order music from there, written music. Music is music. Anybody can read it. We had piles of it and everything. We said, "Why? Who is going to believe them killing us? We're friends!" Stalin could have changed it. Any one of them could have changed it. They didn't, so we're not obligated with any thanks.

John: What were you all told where were you all going?

Zhanna: As I said, that's excellent question. We were told and we were hoping that we were being sent to work. We were willing to work. Of course, this is no blessing, working. It's the working conditions that mattered, not the fact that you had to work. We didn't mind the idea of work. Still, my father and I . . . to this day, I am still a very gullible person. For instance, I blame myself when I hear such horrendous person is in Iran—[Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad—speak and there is a threat of nuclear weapon.¹³ Especially the persecution. I just don't think there is anything worse. We were under bombs all the time. Since the first day of war in Russia, the bombs were everywhere. Every night, we had to go somewhere, either down in the ground or in some hotel or for some reason was safer than our place. We had to walk somewhere and sleep there. I was never scared. What we went through, to be running away from persecution all the years of war, that's what we were scared to death [of] is to be grabbed by some people with hate. When the bombs [fall], they fall on everybody. Just so you can be with everybody equal. That's a very strong thing. It's stronger than the fear of death. Persecution is the most ugly thing on earth . . .

John: Briefly, before the war started what were the relationships between the Jews and non-Jews where you grew up?

¹³ Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was Iranian president from 2005 to 2013. During his presidency, Ahmadinejad was viewed as a controversial figure within Iran and internationally because of his economic policies, disregard for human rights, and his push for a nuclear program. He was also a vehement Holocaust denier and outspoken opponent of the State of Israel.

Zhanna: We were the only Jews that we knew on our street. We were there for five [or] six years. We never experienced any kind of open hatred. Maybe sometimes somebody will mention, “Ah, you know, did you hear somebody say that he’s a ‘yid’?” In Russian it’s . . . [a derogatory term] like a “negro.” It would hurt us. We weren’t religious Jews. There were no religious Jews. I’d never seen a rabbi in my life in Russia and I never seen a synagogue. There were none. The churches, they exploited . . . but not all of them. Some people still had some paraphernalia in the house with symbols of Christianity. The Christian people, they didn’t know when I was a child if I were a Jew or not. Nobody asked me. I learned I was a Jew because, when I was five years old, I had to guard my father in Berdjansk, in the little town.¹⁴ They took him six times to interrogation. They would say, “You are a Jew. You are rich. You give us your money.” My father would take out the watch, the same thing he had in gold. They said, “We are not interested in your watch. We want your money.” This is completely off the wall thing. Why would a Jew—a working Jew—have golden money? Anyway, they let him out every time, but we never knew whether they would let him go or not. People were snatched in the middle of the night everywhere.

John: Who was interrogating him or . . .

Zhanna: [The *Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopanosti*] KGB.¹⁵ There is also [*Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del*] NKVD¹⁶. . . I don’t know how many Americans understand NKVD. It’s the abbreviation for the same thing as KGB, only a new name. It was there for years.

¹⁴ Waves of repression rolled across the Ukraine in the 1930’s. In 1932-1933, natural factors and bad economic policies combined to cause a severe famine in Ukraine also known as *Holodomor* [Ukrainian: death by hunger], which killed an estimated 5 million Ukrainians. In an attempt to eliminate the threat of Ukrainian nationalism and any independence movement, the Communist Regime used the famine and an intensified policy of repression as a method of instilling fear and facilitating social control. Large segments of the Soviet population were terrorized during the Great Purge (or Great Terror). Three widely publicized show trials and a series of closed, unpublicized trials were held in the Soviet Union, which successfully eliminated the major real and potential political rivals and critics of Stalin. The trials were the public aspect of the widespread purge that sent millions of alleged “enemies of the people” to prison camps. In a series of purges and harsh repression that continued throughout the 1930’s, over a half-million Soviet citizens were accused of treason, terrorism, and other anti-Soviet crimes and, without a trial, shot or deported. Many died in appalling conditions in Gulag labor camps in Siberia, central Asia, and other locations deep in the interior of the Soviet Union, where they were forced to work excessive hours in extreme cold with little food. Many of the victims of the Great Purge were ethnic or religious Jews, although the Jewish population was not specifically targeted. Like so many other citizens who had simply never joined the Communist Party, Zhanna’s father, Dmitri, was arrested, interrogated, and jailed several times. Zhanna began waiting on the corner outside their house, watching for the approach of the secret police, so she could warn her father inside.

¹⁵ The *Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopanosti* [Russian: Committee for State Security] of the Soviet Union, also known as the KGB, was established in March 1954 in Moscow. The KGB was responsible for foreign intelligence,

You were interested in knowing what the motivations they gave us, if any, when they . . . were pushing us out of our lives. The conversation was always [that] they had some camps. We understand there were some camps where people worked.

<interview pauses, then resumes>

Zhanna: Not until the time when we actually left our houses and we are together in one spot, which was very much at the end of our street.¹⁷ It was very public and still there was no knowledge. Still we were hoping that it was some special place, which is not going to be nice at all, but is going to be anything but death. We didn't understand. We weren't criminals. We were citizens, very lawful citizens. That's what happened. We gathered in one place, and the Germans were taking pictures and laughing at us. That was very painful. That was horrible. People standing on the street, watching, not knowing anything either. Nobody knew anything. This is how you can do to people anything. This is why when there is a government that won't tell you things, I never trust that for a second. I just despise that.

We had to walk 20 kilometers [12 miles] all day long—winter, the worst Russian winter. Night came and we still weren't at the ghetto. We went to the tractors, *zavod* [Russian: factory]—*zavod* means tractor factory—with barracks designated for us to fill up, but we didn't reach. It was too far. My family—mother, father, my sister, and I . . . four of us. We lost track of the grandparents—we found ourselves in a big field—very cold winter wind—unbearable. Only three people would fit into the little wooden structure, whatever it was designated for. It was about this narrow and this wide <indicates size with arms> so three of us could fit in, but not four. We had to take [turns]. Especially when I think of my mother . . . she had asthma, and her heart wasn't good, and her shoes weren't designed for anything like that. I don't know how she endured it. I think about it so many times, practically every day. We pulled through the night and

domestic security, the protection of the country's political leadership, the supervision of border troops, and the general surveillance of the population.

¹⁶ The *Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del* [Russian: People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs], also known as the NKVD, was established in 1934. NKVD was the central law enforcement agency within the Soviet Union, responsible for the public police force and the Gulag system. NKVD often is used to refer specifically to the Soviet secret police, which at times was part of the agency, and is known for its political repression. NKVD underwent many organizational changes and eventually became the *Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopanosti* (KGB).

¹⁷ On December 14, 1941, the Jews in and around Kharkov were ordered to move into the barracks of a machine-tool factory in the city's factory district by December 16, 1941. At least 10,060 Jews were forced to surrender all of the valuables and goods they had brought with them and crammed into 26 barracks, with no plumbing, heating, or food and only limited access to water.

started walking again. That wasn't too terribly far away. [A] couple of hours and we were at the ghetto.

The ghetto: the buildings [had] filthy floors, wet, cement. That was the ghetto. We were allowed . . . all of us were taken together to fill up some containers with water only twice in two weeks. Not a crumb of food ever. Nothing. Bathrooms was the worst thing of all. Bathrooms [were a] disgrace. Old women having to go to the bathroom like that. It just hurts to talk about it. It was totally inhuman. Then, one day we saw a pyramid being built right in the middle of the small ghetto. It was growing and growing. What it was, they wanted all of our possessions, absolutely anything, all that we had to be piling up. It just kept growing. They took everything. The Germans were greedy, stingy, merciless. They took everything they could. We were left with nothing.

Then I saw, everybody saw, trucks coming in. One truck [was an] open truck with babies, all the babies in one truck. Then some more possessions in another truck. Naturally, the people who could not walk—the elderly . . . they said—the idiots—they said they were going to Poltava, that we were walking to Poltava. [We were actually going] exactly the opposite. Poltava is south of Kharkov. We were going north. One solitary road and it was north. We were going to Poltava. My father looked once and said, “Forget it. We are not going to Poltava.” We knew then. Even then, when we knew this was a death march.¹⁸ Saying ‘death’ is one thing. Knowing what kind of death is another thing. Facing it is something else. A human being just does not visualize being dead. You just don't know yourself being dead. We started walking. It was just about mid-day when they created these huge, long columns all six people [wide].

I think I ran away within the first 15 minutes of walking, but then my sister two days later appeared where I was hidden. People saw her and came and said “You know, people are saying her sister is in town, on the street, too.” The people who saved my life immediately said, “Bring her here right away.” They were risking their lives. It wouldn't have taken any but seconds.

Ruth: Who were they?

¹⁸ On December 27, 1941, several hundred Jews who had been concentrated at the factory were executed after they had been told they were being sent to work in Poltava. The final liquidation of the Jews confined in the factory in Kharkov began on January 2, 1942 and lasted several days. The Jews were taken to a ravine outside the city called Drobitskii Iar (also spelled Drobitsky Yar), shot, and thrown into a large trench that had been dug.

Zhanna: They are righteous. They are very much honored. They are Ukrainians. They were very well educated [and] very wealthy for the place where we're talking about—Russia.¹⁹

John: Do you remember their names?

Zhanna: Names . . . my son and daughter-in-law went and visited them [the Boganchas family]. We correspond. We talk on the telephone for hours. No, they are famous. There aren't too many of them—people like that. How I ended up with them and my sister . . . all that is a marvelous story. [In] the book²⁰ . . . when I talk about [my experience] . . . has to be a part of the book, all this . . . because this story lasts so long over so many places and so many wild things happen that only could be planted . . . I am not really a believer in G-d. I am, in a very extreme case, that I think this universe somehow had to be put together so perfectly. You are sitting here with your brain working and me and there are three people . . . I mean, we all have a body, and all have a brain, and eyes, and everything. Who did it? This is what really puzzles me. I am sort of like a scientist who knows high science and then they believe in G-d because they don't think they can figure it out. How is it possible to make such perfection of each little place—the fingers, the eyes? It's just . . . When I think about this book and Greg [my son] and I get together, we talk about the story. No such a story we think, because it happened in so many places and so unexpected turnout of things. People sacrificed their lives for us, not only the Boganchas—that is their name—but also during the time when we were forced to be moving out.

All we wanted to do was stay in our town. We had to change names.²¹ I had to change my birthday nine months, because I could not be 14. All we wanted to be was in an orphanage. We knew that since we were musicians who played a lot there and people knew us, people would recognize us. That is what happened. People would recognize us and go and report to the Germans. The Germans would say, “We need a pianist. We don't have anyone playing.” [They needed people] being able to play so they can put on a play for soldiers. I found myself playing, hiding in the spotlight. That's my daughter-in-law's name [for the book]. Candy's his

¹⁹ Yevdokiya Boganchas (1899-1976) and his wife, Prokofiy (1901-1984), were the parents of a schoolmate, Nicolai Boganchas. The Boganchas family sheltered Zhanna and Frina until arrangements could be made to take them to a safer place. They helped develop a cover story and false names for the girls and hired a cart to take them to the outskirts of Khakov. From there, the girls walked to a town called Liubotyn, where they caught a train for Poltava. Yad Vashem has honored the Boganchas as Righteous Among the Nations.

²⁰ Dawson, Greg. *Hiding in the Spotlight: A Musical Prodigy's Story of Survival 1941-1946*. New York: Pegasus Books, 2009.

²¹ When the sisters adopted new identities as non-Jews, Zhanna and Frina became Anna and Marina Morozova.

[Greg's] wife. She's a marvel. She named the book this way. Otherwise, it was going to be *Fantaisie-Improptu*, [Frederik] Chopin's piece, because I loved it.²² I knew how to play it. When I had to leave the house, there was no room to take anything. I couldn't take anything anymore and the piano couldn't be taken. They took away my father's violin the very first time. As soon as they [the Germans] walked into the town, they came in to see what they can take away from us. They looked at the piano and they saw the violin and immediately took it. It was a lifetime possession of course. I saw *Fantaisie-Improptu* on the stand on my piano and I just grabbed it and put it right on me from here to there <indicates how she hid the music on her body>. I had it on my stomach, I think all the way to America. I brought it here. I just never parted with it. I kept playing it during the whole war. People just loved the piece. They were crazy about the piece.

It is funny because now, whenever somebody hears that I don't play piano, they can't understand why. For instance . . . Rabbi [David] Silverman.²³ He's so famous. People are crazy about him. There is a lot to be crazy about. He's the most knowledgeable person—most wide, broad-minded person, knows music and everything. I never had enough time to talk to him for more than five minutes. He never asked me why I don't play. He assumed that maybe I don't want to play. I think he is quite peeved about that. People were hateful to me when they found out that I'm not going to play anymore. They say, "You can't do that." I say, "Hey, I want to be independent and have my spine work for me so I can butter my bread." When you do play, there isn't that much appreciation . . . yes, it's fine. They take it for granted. When you stop, [they say,] "You have no right to stop playing!" as though I like the situation.

I love to play, but I inherited my father's weakness. He was a very strong man. I am strong too. I have wonderful strong health. He always complained about a shoulder blade. You had to hold violin like this. <against the shoulder> He always fidget and everything. I found out when I started playing piano—being in school, sitting down and everything—that's when I found out I have a pain—something with muscles, maybe shorter muscles or something. I knew at the age of eight years old that it was a bad pain, but the child goes running and everything. That's

²² Frederic [French: Frédéric] Chopin [Polish: Fryderyk Franciszek Szopen] (1810-1849) is widely considered to be one of Poland's greatest composers. Chopin's *Fantaisie-Improptu* is a solo piano composition composed in 1834 and published posthumously in 1855.

²³ Rabbi David Silverman is a founding member and the current Dean of the Atlanta Scholars Kollel (ASK), a center for Jewish learning in Atlanta, Georgia.

what was needed—[a diagnosis] from a knowledgeable person that would tell me what to do, but nobody knew anything. They didn't know smoking kills people—really kills. That's how my husband died. I kept playing concerts, playing day and night. I started rehearsing with the ballet in the theater—that's with the Germans. There would be the ballet, then the choir, then the soloists, and then singers. I was the only pianist. I would just play and play forever. Then in the evening [I would] walk out and play some solo for them.

John: Who was the audience exactly?

Zhanna: The audience were the Germans. It was the German army . . . anybody. If the officers find out there is a good show, then they will join the soldiers. Otherwise, [it was] Austrian soldiers, and German soldiers, and there were also Italians.

John: Where exactly was this?

Zhanna: This was in the town of Kremenchug [Ukraine],²⁴ which was . . . we reached Poltava. Then from Poltava, we had to run because people recognized us. We had false names and we were calling each other old names. We moved to Kremenchug. The most ridiculous story happened in Kremenchug when we came there. We made a up a new story that we had an aunt there in Kremenchug and we were looking for an aunt. Naturally, her name was Morosova. Our false name was Morosova. *Moros* in Russian is frost—common name. It was a false name. We walked into Kremenchug and knocked on the window or on the door and people say, “Yes, what do you want?” [We said,] “We are looking for our aunt.” [They asked,] “What's her name?” [We answered,] “Morosova.” The woman answers, “Well, you know, she died recently.” That was a disaster. We didn't have any idea of what to do. We didn't know anything about this nonexistent person. To them, that's a woman they knew well. They got together. People started . . . the neighbors got together [and said], “Here are the nieces. They are looking. The nieces . . . Morosova . . .” They were talking among themselves and everything. [We thought,] “Oh, mercy! They ask us any question about our aunt . . . What are we going to do? Our heads will be [cut off].” This kind of thing happened.

²⁴ Kremenchug (also spelled Kremenchuk) is an important industrial city in central Ukraine, on the banks of the Dnieper River. It is approximately 80 kilometers (50 miles) northwest of Berdjansk and 115 kilometers (71 miles) from Poltava.

We finally did reach the orphanage, the only orphanage. We were snatched out of there. Actually, we involuntarily left it. We didn't want to leave the orphanage. The suspicion of why . . . because there was hunger there, and lice, and we wanted to stay there. We weren't allowed once they heard us play. There was a piano that we played for ourselves. They said "No, there is nobody here in town that plays like this. You've got to play. You don't want to stay here with these overgrown cucumbers and all this lice." [We said,] "No, we want to stay." We weren't allowed. If we had insisted on staying, they would interview us. That's what you are doing. Now I can tell you about the orphanage, but at that time . . .

John: Do you remember the name of the orphanage?

Zhanna: Greg, my son, is amazing. He has found on internet things you would never dream of. There in Kremenchug, in that town, what we did find—twin sisters look exactly alike, old ladies—they heard us play in Kremenchug. We found out 60 years later. Their pictures . . . They went to Kharkov [Ukraine], that's the name of our town.²⁵ Kiev [Ukraine] is huge and so is Kharkov.²⁶ Kharkov [has] over a million people, but more now. The first museum in Ukraine is in Kharkov.²⁷ The first trial of Germans was in Kharkov.²⁸ They hung three Germans and one Ukrainian for doing what they were doing. I don't think necessarily just to the Jews, because they were doing horrible things against everyone. The German life was not nearly as sweet as they anticipated because Stalin burned everything.²⁹ Everything was burned. There was no food or anything. That is why the people were walking in streams from Kharkov to Poltava, where it was not the situation. They didn't burn everything. It's not a big city. In Kremenchug, it was pretty well intact. There were no stores. You couldn't buy anything. The town, the houses stood up.

²⁵ Kharkiv or Kharkov is the second-largest city in Ukraine, located in the northeast of the country.

²⁶ Kiev or Kyiv is the capital and largest city of Ukraine, located in the north central part of the country on the Dnieper River.

²⁷ Kharkov is home to the State Natural History Museum of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University. Founded in 1807, it is one of the oldest European Museums as well as a major research and educational center in Ukraine.

²⁸ On December 13, 1943—long before the end of World War II—Ukrainians tried three German prisoners of war and one Soviet citizen for atrocities against civilians and prisoners of war, including using "death vans" (vans in which carbon monoxide exhaust fumes were redirected in order to kill all of the occupants). All four admitted guilt and were executed.

²⁹ In October 1941, during the final phase of the German invasion of the Soviet Union, German forces approached Kharkov. The Soviet Army was ordered to defend the city while its factories were dismantled for relocation farther east. As a result of the ensuing battle, much of the city was left in ruins and most of Kharkov's industrial equipment had been evacuated or rendered useless by the Soviets. The occupying German troops confiscated large quantities of food and terrorized the population. Many people began to flee.

John: Did you have any knowledge of where your mother and father went to after you were separated?

Zhanna: No . . . I still think about that endlessly. Although I understand that their life ended the way . . . Babi Yar . . . Now I hear that some people in Odessa [Ukraine] also are saying the same way, in the ravine.³⁰

That brings me to something I want to tell you about . . . I met a man yesterday that I think you [Ruth], and I, and also John . . . are very welcome to go with us to Odessa, New Odessa, the delicatessen.³¹ The people are from there. They know the history and he was telling me the [unintelligible, 52:16, sounds like “Storal”] history partially. I really think we would enjoy this. Plus, the food is genuine.

You ask me about their ending. We will never know individually how they died. We understand that there was only one more person—also a musician—that ran away from the columns and that’s all. Can you imagine that only three people ran away—two sisters and a man? We don’t know his name. We just heard that he was a musician. I don’t know if we will ever know. Maybe he’s dead already.

John: What was day-to-day life like during that war period?

Zhanna: [It] depended on whether you were in an orphanage, or whether you were playing in a theater all day long, or you were performing. That’s the way it goes. The stay in Poltava was unbelievable. That was the first place. Actually, the very first place was to get away from Kharkov, our city . . . When we left Kharkov, we had to get to Lyubotin.³² Lyubotin was just a village where the railroad connected Kharkov and Poltava. That’s what we needed. We wanted to get to Poltava. We did. It is amazingly funny, and dangerous, and everything what happened in Poltava. The bridge we had to cross without documents with the Germans guarding, and the bread we ate in the train station, where a man who slept through one night in the waiting room

³⁰ Odessa is a port city on the Black Sea in southern Ukraine. Between 80,000 and 90,000 Jews were in Odessa in 1941, when the Romanian army (an ally of Germany) occupied the area. In two incidences in October 1941, the Romanian army assembled and shot or burned alive a total of almost 40,000. The remaining 35,000 were sent into ghettos and camps and eventually killed as well.

³¹ The New Odessa European Market & Deli was a grocery store and deli located in the Atlanta, Georgia neighborhood of Druid Hills. A man named Victor Reznik owned it. It was opened in 1995, but has closed since this interview.

³² Liubotyń or Lyubotin is a city in eastern Ukraine 24 kilometers (15 miles) west of Kharkiv.

with us. There were 50 people there waiting on another train. What are you going to do? [You] spend the night. We were there. In the morning time, I was sitting as far away as you and I are sitting, and he decided to take his boots off—very high boots . . .

<interview pauses, then resumes>

Zhanna: This is absolutely to die for, this story. This guy, he was tired of his boots. He pulled them off. Then he started taking off, unwrapping each rag. The rags were from the end of the foot to the knee and so were the boots. He had so many rags wrapping his feet and his legs. We were sitting [there with] nothing to do. All of us were the audience watching this operation. Then he reached for his bag again after his feet were free from the rags and the boots here. He reached and he pulled out a pretty decent size loaf of bread with those hands that he was doing . . . I was horrified. My sister and I just looked . . . I mean, we had the cleanest possible . . . my mother—the way everything was clean . . . and we saw those hands going and reaching that beautiful Ukrainian bread . . . black. We know what the Russian bread is like, what it should be like. By the way, they are changing it now. It is just terrible. It is the best bread in the world. We were so hungry. He tore off one piece and gave it to my sister. She took it, and he tore off another piece and gave it to me. Naturally, I remembered what he was doing but there was no hesitation. I ate it knowing what the hands did. I never will forget that: that I ate it. That's how hungry you can get. It's filthy, but the bread was good.

We had to wait until morning time until we could start walking into town. We were at the station. We were going to live in Poltava. We had to have daylight. We knew that we had to cross the bridge and that's scary. It was a gray morning, gray light, gray air . . . something falling. I realized that we are in great danger, that we don't [have] no documents yet, no documents of any kind. I pulled something over to here. <indicates her lower face> I was trying to hide myself. My sister walked behind me. The German came very close to me with a rifle and pulled the cloth down and turned to his buddies and said, "*Das ist kinder* [German: These are children]. This is kid." That did it. They stopped looking at us and we passed the bridge. That was scary. Maybe that bread did give us courage.

As soon as we crossed the bridge, we knew we had to start knocking on the doors and windows because we can't survive in the cold. We knocked on the house that opened up. All the Russians always opened up. Not all of them. One percent sometimes don't open up and don't

. . . but they were marvelous people. That's how we were saved. We just couldn't have done it without wonderful people helping each other. They let us in and . . . the window was allowing as much light in as this window here on the porch. <indicating the room they are in> It was wonderful. The sun was [shining] in and everything. The first thing they say is to sit down and eat. They gave us something to eat. We talked. Whatever fables we were telling them about our story [were] all false. Then, when we finished eating, I turned around and saw a piano there. The man said, "You know, can you play the piano?" I said, "*Ja* [German: yes], I can." [He said,] "Oh, good!" I sat down and played. The man said, "We need a teacher for our children. You, can you teach our children? We want them to learn. Nobody is playing this piano." I thought, "Uh, oh." They were wonderful, great people, but we had to find an orphanage. We can't say it. When people invite you in, they would help us, to put us up, and everything. We don't want it. We want to be in an orphanage. Why did we want to be in an orphanage? Because they take children for a checkup, doctor's checkup. Many children in orphanages never knew their parents. They don't know anything [like] to whom they were born. They have no name and no time when they were born. That's how orphanages are. We needed that so that we would be allowed to go and get papers with our [false] name.

<Disk 1 Ends>

<Disk 2 Begins>

Zhanna: As I was saying about people want to hear a story and you cannot find an opportunity to tell the story of how it started, where it ended. You can give the beginning and the end and nothing in the middle, because there are so many episodes that are so tremendously interesting, unexpected, unprepared, and all that. It is always a pity. You will tell, let's say ten things that happened in the book and leave 90 others behind. The book isn't long. It's 270 pages—no more. It's not a long book.

I don't know whether to go on with Poltava, because we eventually we stayed there only a little over a month, I think. We had to leave because the Russian people from Kharkov came to get some food and they saw us in the street. They had no idea what happened to us. They didn't know whether we died or not. Then when they would see us, they would start screaming, "You are alive! You are alive!" and grab us and everything. Then somebody heard us call each other . . . instead of me being called "Zhanna," she [my sister] called me "Anna." The person

who was helping us and keeping me in the house said, “Hey, what’s going on? I’m suspecting you.”³³ I just cried. I could hardly stop crying I was so scared. He was a very noble person. His wife, by the way, was taken by the Russians before the war and sent away. She was a teacher. He was a professor. He ruled the town because he knew languages. He knew German in perfection.

John: You had to watch out for both the Germans and the Russians. You had two different types of enemies.

Zhanna: You are so right, because anybody who knew us . . . the Russians knew us. The Germans . . . if they’d known we were Jewish, they wouldn’t take us anywhere unless . . . My sister and I, we were never raped. We were not raped. That is amazing these days when you see these free people what they do to each other. No war or anything and so many rapes. I always say, “For goodness sakes! What kind of a world are we living in?” When there was war on and there were two kids and they didn’t do it, but they didn’t know we were Jewish. They kept wanting to hear us play. I played [Edvard] Grieg’s Concerto seven nights in a row.³⁴ They were bringing all kinds of schnapps and all sorts of delicacies all to the window. They weren’t allowed to come in. They would leave it right at the window in the yard. They just wanted more music—many Austrian people, soldiers.

No, we had to leave town. We were lying about our identity and this man who kept me was with his *Nyanya* [Russian: nanny] . . . his *Nyanya*, who brought him up from birth—little lady, very, very old. He could not afford to keep anyone in the house who has false identity because he was the biggest person who had translation, perfect translation for Germans. The peasants around town depended on his help to negotiate with the Germans or the government, because they didn’t know what to do. He was a learned man, and he just couldn’t afford to risk his life or anything like that. He said, “But I will arrange the best escape for you.” He did and so they did in Kharkov. They would hire a horse and buggy [with] the people who would ride us out of the town and tell them where to go. That’s how we were moving—facing something completely unknown every time. I would not repeat that. My mother and father: they couldn’t do

³³ After spending a few days tutoring the two children of a Russian family in Poltova in exchange for room and board, Zhanna had arranged to stay with Oleg Stepanovich. Stepanovich was employed as a translator for the Nazi commandant in Poltava. His wife had died in a camp in Siberia. Frina stayed with another family.

³⁴ Edvard Hagerup Grieg (1843-1907) was a Norwegian composer and pianist. His Piano Concerto in A minor is one of his most popular works and among the most popular of all piano concerti.

it because they were grown-ups. Nobody would do for grown-ups what they would do for children.

John: What were some of the other moments when you were in the greatest danger?

Zhanna: The danger was when some people who came from Kharkov—ballet dancers—who joined the theater in Kremenchug. They got furious because they found out that my salary was the highest in the theater. The director of the theater was very grateful to me because I could work endlessly. I never stopped. Anything they needed me to play, I would. Those dancers, they relied an awful lot on their wonderful legs, and looks, and picking up men or whatever. Those dancers were furious when they found out that my salary was so much higher than theirs, but think of this: there was no place to buy anything. There was no store. I had all this money, which had been thrown away. It's the principle. They could not stand that the pianist . . . after all, they got the legs. What can you do with the legs without the music? Tell me. Have you ever heard of a show without music, dancing, and singing, and everything? You've got to have some music! The director understood that. I had wonderful relations. He loved the music.

They went and they said, "They are not who they [say they] are. They are not saying who they are. They are Jews." The Germans said, "Prove it." They didn't want us killed, because they wouldn't have a show. She said, "Yes, I have here an example two people who were in [Kharkov] Conservatory. This young teenager with [her] mother. The mother is working in a costume room . . . the two people here who knew their parents in Conservatory." They called those two people, and of course, they knew my parents and us. They were there. They lied to them. They said, "No, they are not Jewish." The Germans let them go very easily. The Germans didn't want to kill us because there would be no good. They would have no pianist. They did the same thing in Berlin [Germany].³⁵ When we went to Berlin, the same people went and said it to new management. The new management went through the same steps and said, "No," and they were left with nothing. How about that? That's mind-boggling, isn't it?

John: [They] don't kill you [because] you're the piano player.

Zhanna: As I say, maybe sometimes important people are necessary . . . [you] never know.

³⁵ Berlin is the capital and second most populous city in Germany.

John: What do you remember about when the war ended? Where were you and what was your situation?

Zhanna: I remember that. We were in Berlin when the Russians started pressing. When the Russians were really pressing . . . back to Germany with all the Germans. Everyone knew that it's nothing to be expected . . . [Russians would not be] very loving [to the Germans]. You can just imagine what the Russians had on their mind when they got to Germany. Almost millions of people, almost all men died or were killed in Russia in the war. My sister and I, we grew up during the war about three [or] four years. My sister—quietly, but very sternly surely—made up her mind to be a different person than I am, and she is. She refused to stay in Berlin to meet Russians. She insisted on going away with the rest of our troupe—the actor's troop—south where the different armies came in—the English and the French. The Russians [came] just from one place. She was determined. I made up my mind, “Well, it is my little sister. I am not leaving her, so I will go with her.”

We were by Munich [Germany].³⁶ It took us many days to get south. The trains moved very slowly. We were among Germans and they spotted us immediately. Now German was Russian. We spoke German in a Russian way. They knew right away we weren't Germans. One time, I thought they were going to squeeze us to death. They really wanted to hurt us. It was so tight [on the trains] . . . humanity, so close. It was scary. We survived, but it took days—five or six days—to go a considerably short trip. We were in Augsburg [Germany] for a while.³⁷ Then we were in Kempten [Germany].³⁸ It's not far away from Augsburg. It's a smaller town. We were there when the Germans [Americans] came in. That was quite a morning. We were up early—my sister and I—and we put on our best clothes. We were the only two people in the entire town walking around, determined to find Americans. We never found any. We did have . . . the window shutters would open up . . . look at us and close again—the Germans. They didn't want to see Americans. Nobody was out except my sister and me. We never found any so we came home again.

³⁶ Munich is the capital of the German state of Bavaria. It is located on the River Isar, north of the Alps. After World War II, the city was occupied by the United States.

³⁷ Augsburg is a Bavarian city in southern Germany, approximately 65 kilometers (40 miles) northwest of Munich.

³⁸ Kempten is a Bavarian city in southern Germany, approximately 90 kilometers (55 miles) southwest of Augsburg and 120 kilometers (75 miles) west of Munich.

Then, the next day, I had to go with some papers somewhere to some office. I walk into this place with a desk and I see a foot on the desk. They were talking about that the Americans putting their feet on the table and on the desk. I said, “That’s unheard of.” That’s what I faced. I saw an American there. Then they put me in another room. They said that I had to go into another room. I saw quite a few people—maybe a dozen people and some women. That is the first time I heard the English language. I’d never heard it in my life. I was astounded at the English. I thought, “No, no, no, this cannot be. This is no language.” “This is ridiculous,” I thought—especially the women. There were two or three women who were talking. I said, “Oh, they are putting on a show for me. This cannot be. It is just so awful.” [They said,] “the . . . the . . .” You [English speakers] don’t think you are doing that, but for a Russian, “the table” or “the . . .” the article—unheard of sound in Russian language. I thought, “Oh, no. I’ll never learn that.” That was my invisible impressions.

Then they were saying that there was going to be a dance where people of town were invited. I wanted to go to it but I didn’t get to it. Somehow I didn’t make it there. People were saying, “Oh, it is different. You cannot imagine what Americans dance like.” They said, “It’s not like a dance even.” It was Jitterbug.³⁹ It was brought there and they had never seen Jitterbug. I never got to see it there. It took me much longer. We were taken out of Kempten. We were housed in a school with our troupe. Just cots that are layers . . .

John: Bunks?

Zhanna: Bunks. Of course, we thought it was heavenly, because it was announced the war was over. No [more] bombs most of all. We didn’t care about bombs at all. They didn’t scare us a bit. We would have never gone into the bunker or hiding from them—let them fall, the bombs—but it was illegal. We weren’t allowed to stay in any building when the alarm . . . I am talking about Berlin and what happened to Berlin. The alarm [sounded] every night and many times sometimes. We were dying to get some sleep. The first thing we did was sleep after the war. We were so hungry for sleep. I slept 30 hours every day. For one month we did it. We just slept practically the whole day. That’s how starved the body was for sleep [after] such long loss of sleep.

³⁹ A dance called the “Jitterbug” first became popular in the 1920’s in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City. The music that this dance accompanied was jazz, which by the 1930’s was also called Swing, and which traced its origins to Ragtime, Dixieland, and Blues.

Then they moved us very close to Munich to camp by the name Funk Kaserne.⁴⁰ Funk Kaserne turned out to be a huge camp of 5,000 displaced persons from France, Italy, and any place you want.⁴¹ There were fewer Russians there than anybody else. There was a contract in Yalta between Stalin, and I think it was [Dwight] Eisenhower, or it was an English, too.⁴²

John: [Winston] Churchill and [Franklin] Roosevelt?

Zhanna: I don't know. There was a couple of them. Didn't they meet more than once? What it was, the important thing for the Russians and for the survival, was that they signed the paper that all—Stalin insisted on that—all Russian and eastern people who were brought to Germany for hard labor—and they were called “*Ost* [German: east] workers” that means east workers . . . O-S-T . . . *Ost* workers—all of them had to be going back, by force if necessary.⁴³ When we came to this camp, we just . . . our troupe was placed in a barrack. We heard a rumor that there are Russians—just like ourselves being Russian—but there are some Russian people who were brought to the camp and they are in the basement locked up.⁴⁴ They were brought by force. The next thing, we heard that Larry Dawson . . . That's the brother of my husband. I knew the brother first and then I had the husband. When I came to America I met the husband, my future husband,

⁴⁰ The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) operated the Funk Kaserne Emigration and Repatriation Center near Munich, Germany. It was originally a military barracks built in 1936. *Funk* is German for “radio” and *Kaserne* means “barracks.”

⁴¹ When hostilities ended on May 8, 1945 in Europe, as many as 100,000 Jewish survivors found themselves among the 7,000,000 uprooted and homeless people classified as displaced persons (DPs). From 1945 to 1952, more than 250,000 Jewish displaced persons lived in camps and urban centers in Germany, Austria, and Italy. Allied authorities and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) administered these facilities. Eventually, DPs were repatriated to their home countries, reestablished themselves in new countries or immigrated outside of Europe. Most of the DP camps were closed by 1950.

⁴² The Yalta Conference (February 4-11, 1945) was the last wartime meeting between the three chief Allied leaders: President Franklin Roosevelt of the United States, Prime Minister Winston Churchill of Great Britain, and Premier Joseph Stalin of the Soviet Union. They met at Yalta in the Soviet Union to discuss the postwar order in Europe. They agreed on the complete denazification of Germany, the division of the country into zones of occupation, and the Soviet Union agreed to join the war against Japan.

⁴³ From 1942–1944, nearly three million Soviet citizens from German-occupied eastern and central European territories were gathered in mass round-ups and deported to Germany, Austria, and Bohemia-Moravia as forced laborers in various war-related industries. The laborers were known as *Ostarbeiter* [German: eastern workers] and wore an “OST” identification patch. The majority were young women sent to Germany as maids and nannies. Other Ost workers were housed in private camps owned and managed by the large companies or in special camps guarded by privately paid police. Working and living conditions were typically very brutal.

⁴⁴ After the conclusion of World War II, Western powers, including the United States, were obligated to repatriate (send back) all persons living in Western Europe who had been born in Soviet territory. Initially the United States military authorities in Europe cooperated in the repatriation program, and between 1945 and 1948, 2 million Russian refugees were returned to the Soviet Union. There they faced exactly what they feared: many were imprisoned, exiled to Siberia, or even executed.

David . . . not Larry, David . . . three years younger . . . who was a graduate of Julliard School.⁴⁵ He was having a fine career . . . We heard that there is such a person by the name Larry Dawson who has freed the Russians. That means he went against the contract. It is not called a contract. There is a better word for it.

Ruth: Treaty?

Zhanna: A treaty, yes. It's between the countries. That was big news. We didn't know who the person is. We just knew that it was the head of the camp, and so that was it. We thought that the camp . . . when it was established, at first the gates were not closed. Then they closed the gates, because the Russians were bringing people in and locking them up. That was stopped.

Then, the next thing when we saw Larry Dawson, the head of the camp, was when I noticed a house, a building in the camp, where nobody goes to. I thought, "I better go, and take a look in it, and see what kind of building it is," never hoping what I would see. It's full of chairs just like in a church or a concert hall. It also had a little stage . . . not much of a stage . . . and an upright piano. I thought I would go and try it and see if it works at all. It wasn't anything to write home about. It was out of tune, but it was a piano. It sounded and played a tune. I was very excited. I went back to my friends and I told them what I saw. They said, "Oh, we are going to give a concert right way," because they are ready to do their stuff at any time. We had been doing it every day for years. We put out a paper, hung a paper [poster], and everybody came. There was one person who was in military garb. It was Larry Dawson. We would have never known that had he not come backstage. Now my sister and I did our stuff. We played the four hands [two players play on a single piano]. We had wonderful four-hand literature: [Franz] Schubert,⁴⁶ [Ludwig van] Beethoven,⁴⁷ [Johannes] Brahms.⁴⁸ [It was] gorgeous stuff. We were

⁴⁵ The Juilliard School was established in 1926 in New York City. It is a private performing arts conservatory offering programs in dance, drama, and music.

⁴⁶ Franz Peter Shubert (1797-1828) was a prolific Austrian composer who wrote symphonies, operas, vocal works, and a large body of chamber and piano music.

⁴⁷ Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) was a German composer, widely considered to be one of the most famous and influential of all composers.

⁴⁸ Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) was a German composer and pianist who wrote symphonies, concerti, chamber music, piano works, and choral compositions.

very well trained. Our first trainer of chamber music was [Vladimir] Horowitz's sister, who was a marvelous pianist when he was a boy.⁴⁹ She was the best pianist in Kiev.

The concert finished. Everybody was happy. We were backstage. We saw this man come in—the one in military garb. We saw strange enough that he was moving toward Frina and me, instead of fully grown women . . . all that . . . lovely women. We couldn't understand . . . looking amazed . . . He comes to me and he started speaking German—I mean very American German. [It was] very funny. If you ever heard an American speak German, it is so hilarious. I was trying to understand what he was saying. It wasn't easy. I spoke German well. In the air, I just learned the language that way. He was saying, "Will you come—you and your sister—to the place where my UNRAA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration] comrades are?"⁵⁰ He said, "We have a house. We are all together there and they love music." [They were] very educated, highly educated people, terrific bunch of people. Have you heard of UNRAA? Yes, tremendous organization. Finally, he did explain. He did say, "I will pick you up tomorrow night and we want to hear you play there." [We said,] "Alright."

He came, and got us, and took us there. He put us together at a dinner with all the friends. [It was] funny because they had so many different nationalities in UNRAA, but no Russians and a few Americans. He [Larry Dawson] was the head of it. At the dinner table, we were [at our] first dinner with Americans. We wanted some mustard. It turned out it was peanut butter. We had never seen it in our lives. It was very funny, some of the things we didn't know what it was. We got some Spam, and we it was good stuff we thought.⁵¹ Then, I could see that our host, Larry Dawson, got awfully restless. He was pointing on the piano. He wanted to hear the piano. I went to sit down. He sat down very close, with practically his nose in the keyboard. I played *Fantaisie-Improptu*. He wanted to hear it again and again until finally the people said,

⁴⁹ Vladimir Samoylovich Horowitz (1903-1989) was a well known Jewish Ukrainian pianist and composer who came to the United States in 1928. His older sister, Regina, was a concert pianist and a teacher at the Kharkov Conservatory.

⁵⁰ The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was founded in 1943. Its mission was to provide economic assistance to European nations after World War II and to repatriate and assist the refugees who would come under Allied control. UNRRA managed hundreds of displaced persons camps in Germany, Italy, and Austria and played a major role in repatriating survivors to their home countries in 1946-1947. It largely shut down operations in 1947.

⁵¹ Spam is a brand of canned precooked meat products introduced by Hormel Foods Corporation in 1937. Spam gained international popularity after it was used by the United States military during World War II.

“We want to dance.” The *Fantaisie-Improptu* doesn’t go so. It was a lovely evening [with] very, very fine people—music and food was good too.

Then, the next day, Larry Dawson comes back. He says, “Girls, I want to know what you want to do. You are still teenagers and you missed years of study. You have to practice now. You don’t have to perform anymore. You’ve got to practice.” [We said,] “Yes, but where do we practice?” [There was] no teacher. He said, “We have to think where you are going to go. Maybe to school here or somewhere else.” No, we didn’t want to be in Germany. We were trying to choose England, France, and Italy. Somehow nothing was making much sense. We didn’t know anything [about] where to go. One time, I thought it was a joke when he said, “Would you like to go to America?” I said, “Who wouldn’t like to go to America?” I never thought I would go to America. I want[ed] to go Russia so I didn’t think about America. My sister and I said—just for the sake of acknowledging that we do want to go to America because everybody else wants to go to America—we said, “Who doesn’t want to go to America?” He took it seriously. He started telling us, “You know you are of age still to be adopted. I have a wife and children at home. We just bought a farm.” This man turned out to be the most fierce music lover you have ever met in your life. He grew up in a family where the children spent all of their time listening to music . . . a player piano. They all learned to do it, and they heard only the best artists and only the best repertory. They knew Beethoven, Brahms, and Bach, and everything. They just knew it. He was going to do something for us to continue studying.

Before we could turn around and really make plans, he came and he said, “Would you like to play for 3,000 freed Jews from the camps? “Oh, yes,” we said, “How? That would be the biggest thing.” I just wish my parents could have been there. We agreed right away. He said, “You have to have time. You have to learn new pieces, new repertories.” I got the very difficult Beethoven Sonata, and my sister got a difficult [one too]. He got some [Felix] Mendelsohn and this and that.⁵² He said, “I will get a piano and put it into this little, little house.” [It was] one-fifth of this house. It was right in the middle of this campus. It was a sort of a stop for people who were going around and checking everything—just a little place. He put the piano there. He went around checking on everything all the time as the head of the place. He said, “I’ll be here.” He came every hour. He came to see what we were practicing, how it was going. Unfortunately,

⁵² Jakob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (1809-1847), known as Felix Mendelssohn, was a German composer, pianist, organist and conductor.

he gave us instructions. That he couldn't do, because we really had wonderful teachers. Russia is a magnificent place for specialists and music, [with] the best musicians. Not only that, but we had professors. He was coming and telling his suggestions. It was the funniest thing, but we were trying to accommodate him—anything that could be done. Some of the things he asked us couldn't be done. Thank goodness for good composers. We had that going on. In less than three months the concert was on. Greg has the program. It is in the book. The whole UNRAA came. Everybody from UNRAA came to this concert. It was the first concert after the war.⁵³

John: Where was this? What city?

Zhanna: Munich.

Ruth: Did he know you were Jewish at that point or just Russian?

Zhanna: No. We were Jewish.

Ruth: Had you spoken about the fact that you were Jewish?

Zhanna: Yes . . . because when Larry Dawson met us, he said, "The war was just over. You two, you have been without parents and everything?" He didn't know the story for sure. He said, "Is there one thing that you would like to have if you thought that you could get it? What would be one thing you wanted to have?" Both of us said in a choir together, "Our name back." We couldn't stand it anymore. That of course opened up the whole . . . He found out everything and then his mind was made up. This concert was . . . I thought that this was one concert I played that I knew I played badly, but I didn't care. Every concert when I play, if I didn't play quite right or something like that, it's "You've got to correct it." This concert was entirely different. We were there together. This always touches me. It was just too much symbolism. Too many people . . . It's too symbolic and too important . . . live people.

That went over and then Larry started to worry about how to send us to America. It was almost impossible. There was no quota at all for Russians to go anywhere.⁵⁴ They had to

⁵³ On April 13, 1946, Zhanna and Frina performed at a piano concert held for survivors at the Landsberg Yiddish Center near Munich, Germany.

⁵⁴ In the aftermath of World War II, the United States limited the number of immigrants allowed entry into the US based on a national origins quota that had been established in 1924. The quotas in place severely limited the immigration of Eastern Europeans. About 50,000 displaced persons from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were ultimately able to come to the United States, but millions more were forcibly repatriated to the Soviet Union. Many Russian immigrants who came to the United States did not come directly from the Soviet Union and many claimed

return to Russia. I mean us. We were supposed to go there. They killed all the people when they returned. Every one of them sent to Siberia right away and then killed them. I didn't think so. I was going. I thought, "Nobody would do any harm to me." I was very much like my father. [I thought,] "Why would they do to me? I have been waiting for the army to come and they'll kill me? Makes no sense."

John: Why were they killing people who went back?

Zhanna: Because they are so envious and jealous of western life, because they have not given Russian people in the beginning all wonderful advantages like freedom . . . freedom of press, number one. That's number one, because if you don't have that everything is secret then. You know what I think of secrecy. The people, in their mind, have seen, tasted, and just realized the type of life, how different it is outside of Russia. They didn't want them around. It's poison. The light, daylight . . . all of a sudden sunlight thrown on the situation.

After months of trying, Larry ended up winning permission for us to go on the first boat with displaced persons going to America. [The] *Marine Flasher* [was] a military boat made over for passengers—nothing fancy, but a boat⁵⁵ When we got on it, the food was unbelievable to us. It was really food, but we couldn't eat it because we were nauseated every instant. For nine days, I was so sick I couldn't bear to think of food. There were Polish people mostly on it. I would say over 90 percent were Polish people. They found out that we were Russians. They said, "This is ridiculous for you to go to America. Why are you going? You say you have no relatives there." They were disgusted with us. They were rude and offensive. We decided we're going to stay away from them. We weren't in our company. It was quite a trip. Our stomachs were sick and the company was impossible. Larry said to us, "Remember one thing—you are going aboard the boat. It does not mean at all that you are going to get anywhere. They can take you out at any time, any moment, no matter where you are in the ocean and return you." That's the way we

to belong to different Slavic nationalities rather than being Russian. Some had been transported to camps in Nazi Germany during the war; others had fled westward to escape the advancing Soviet Red Army in 1944 and 1945. Others were "White" (anti-Bolshevik) Russians who in the 1920's had settled in East European countries (Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland, and the Baltic States) that came under Soviet domination after World War II.
⁵⁵ The *SS Marine Flasher* was a converted troopship that brought the first displaced persons (DPs) to the United States when it set sail from Bremen, Germany on July 5th, 1946 and arrived at New York City, New York on July 15, 1946. There were 822 passengers aboard, the majority of whom were Polish and German refugees.

came. We never knew whether we were going to get to America or not, [despite] already being on the boat.

We arrived to New York [City, New York] and a designated person to meet us is not there. Everyone who arrived . . . little by little, they are gone. They all were met, or picked up, or taken away, or something, but not us. We were the only two. It is hundreds of people. The day was getting colder. There was nobody there. We had no way, nothing to go buy . . . no language . . . no explanations . . . just sitting there. Finally, there was a person who was supposed to meet us. It was Paul Magriel, a Jew, who was a critic of [the] New York ballet.⁵⁶ He was a close friend of the Dawson boys, especially David. Larry knew him. He received a letter with the request. David was on a tour with the string quartet. He couldn't pick us up. He wanted to, but he was not in town. They asked Paul Magriel and he agreed. He was late. He was very late. It was well over two o'clock.

Finally, when he came, we did speak German. I learned to speak German in the street. My sister [learned it that way] too. I spoke it very fluently—maybe incorrectly, but I spoke it. Paul Magriel knew his Jewish [Hebrew or Yiddish] and probably German too. He said, “Where would like to go first?” I said, “A bookstore.” [He agreed,] “Yes.” [I said,] “Yes, a dictionary please.” We went to Fifth Avenue.⁵⁷ He said, “I am taking you to Fifth Avenue.” We go there. Big deal, Fifth Avenue. For my sister and me, it might as well be Twenty-fifth Avenue. We don't care it's Fifth Avenue. We don't know what it is. We went to the store. We walk in and a Russian man sells books. He says, “What are you doing here?” to us in Russian. “We came to get book, a dictionary.” *Slovari* [Russian: dictionary] in Russia. He says, “This is crazy. You shouldn't have come here. This is an awful decision.” We said, “Well, we had to go somewhere.” He said, “Absurd! I just cannot understand why. This is . . .” He could hardly even sell a book! We bought a book and went out.

⁵⁶ Paul David Magriel (1906-1990) was a dance historian, critic, and author. He was librarian at the American School of Ballet and was later curator of the dance archives at the Museum of Modern Art. He was also an art collector and tour guide at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

⁵⁷ Fifth Avenue is a major thoroughfare going through the borough of Manhattan in New York City, New York. It is considered among the most expensive and best shopping streets in the world.

Paul Magriel took us somewhere else. We went to Grand Central Station.⁵⁸ He was going to put us on a train to go to Virginia, to take us to Larry's wife and the children, because we were going to go on the farm. We had to catch a train. The only thing he thought he bought us a box of candy—chocolate candy. We welcomed it very much. We went and sat down on the train and we were eating when the train started going, chugging off. My sister and I were getting closer and closer to fewer chocolates. To us, we didn't know anything. We just know a man came into the train wagon and said, screaming at us, "This is the place. This is Charlottesville [Virginia].⁵⁹ You have to get off." The candy was here [on my lap], and we got up and the candy went all over the floor. It was nighttime. It was already nighttime.

Paul Magriel wrote a message saying that we need taxi, to ask for a taxi, and to ask where the place is. The place was called Crozet [Virginia].⁶⁰ [Crozet] a tiny little place with 500 people or something and a farm there, but they knew it. They called the taxi for us and gave us the tickets. We had enough money. Somebody gave us money to buy the tickets. We entered the taxi. He seemed to know where to go, but then he couldn't find the place. We went around and around and around. We're going through Virginia *pasza* [Polish: pasture, farmland]. I just remember smelling honeysuckle. I don't know if I ever smelled it in Russia. I loved it. It was wonderful. Then it started to rain and we still couldn't find a place. Finally, we arrived to the house where he said he thinks this is it. The wife walks out. It was one o'clock at night, one thirty or something. She walked out completely sleepy and she saw us. She got us into the house and she went and gave money or thanked the chauffeur. He really was wonderful. He didn't leave us anywhere. He really stuck it out.

She remembers it differently than us. She remembers that she gave us something to eat in the middle of the night, but I don't remember it. I guess we were absolutely exhausted. I just knew that I found myself in bed with her mother, and with her [Grace], and a child. We went to sleep in a bed with all these strange people. They took us. Then in the morning we got up and we had to eat food we'd never seen. We had oatmeal—unknown in Russia. Nobody eats oatmeal in Russia. Cream of wheat yes, but this oatmeal had nothing but oatmeal. With it, we got bacon

⁵⁸ Commonly referred to as 'Grand Central Station,' the historic Grand Central Terminal is a commuter railroad terminal that has become an iconic New York City landmark.

⁵⁹ Charlottesville is a city in the central part of the United States state of Virginia.

⁶⁰ Crozet is a village in the United States state of Virginia. It is approximately 12 miles west of Charlottesville, Virginia.

but that farm, very salty bacon, so it was full of salt. The oatmeal had no taste. I didn't know what to make out of it. That was okay. We didn't care really. We found out that we all have to get ready after breakfast and go to the new house, which they bought, and start settling that place and remodeling it and everything. The little children, one was eight months or six months, Georgie, and little Laddo was three years old. We established with a life on a farm. We were no farm girls I'll tell you that. We were pianists. It's just no use to continue. It was just endless and endless adventure.

The next thing, actually in a big way, what we had to do is to go and be examined in big music schools. We decided to go to Peabody in Baltimore [Maryland], a very good school.⁶¹ That was it. We practiced there. There was a piano [at the farmhouse]. We went for an examination, a test. At that time, they had a director, very dignified, very famous man—Reginald Stewart was his name—a conductor.⁶² He conducted the city orchestra and was also was director of the school. He welcomed us and gave us an audition. We played for him. We played very little. Right away he said, “Full scholarships,” without any hesitation. We were jubilant. We walked out of that beautiful building and Larry walk out with us. We were chatting with us, [asking] what do we want to do now? [We said,] “Lunch!” We were starved. [He said,] “Well that will be fine.” He said, “And then what?” We said, “Then we have to go home and get ready.” He said, “No, we are going to Julliard now.” [We asked,] “What? You asked this man to give his time, and listen to us play, and give us scholarships, and now we are going to go somewhere else?” He said, “We are going to do it. I'm telling you, we've got to do it.”

The next thing, we went home first. We were expected at home. We got ready and got the permission and got time for when. Julliard said, “Yes, come. We'll hear them. We will listen to them.” We went there and there was another hearing. Three people, famous, wonderful musicians were the jury. Our future teacher, who became our teacher was there—a very good friend of David's. David went to school together so they knew each other how they played—

⁶¹ The Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University is a conservatory and university-preparatory school in Baltimore, Maryland, founded in 1894.

⁶² Reginald Stewart (1900-1984) was a Scottish-born conductor and pianist. He is best remembered as the conductor of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (1942-1952) and the head of the Peabody Conservatory (1941-1958).

Rosalyn Tureck, a specialist of Bach.⁶³ She was the favorite of . . . what is the name of a very big Republican leader, author . . . thinker . . . died?⁶⁴

John: [William F.] Buckley?⁶⁵

Zhanna: Buckley! Favorite of Buckley. He liked Bach and he liked Rosalyn Tureck. She was there, and my teacher, Muriel Kerr, and the director of Julliard, who was the teacher of my teacher.⁶⁶ That was something. We had to play. The first thing that happened [was] my sister played. Then I sat down to play. Before I was asked to play anything else, my future teacher, Muriel Kerr, she jumped off her seat from behind the desk and went and kind of shoved me a little bit on the bench. [She] sat down by me and started playing something that I just played. I was astounded. All I could think of [was], “My G-d! That’s all I want to do, is to play the way she does.” It was so marvelous. It was just heavenly. It continued. Larry Dawson was not allowed into the room in Julliard, but he was allowed in the room at Baltimore. It ended and they called him in and pushed us out. It was finished. Larry came out absolutely . . . could just . . . riding with his happiness—full scholarships! It was really some trip. We didn’t go to Baltimore. You should have seen the letter. I think Greg has the letter of Reginald Stewart of what he said to Larry Dawson when he found out.

John: They were competing for you?

Zhanna: I don’t know. We let them compete when we went there. We tried them. Larry was amazing. He was merciless when it came to presenting us. He just was determined and he was right, because Reginald Stewart was insulted a little bit. It was just another day in his life. The thing that made difference to us—let’s face it, Julliard School is famous all over the world. To this day, the word “Julliard” . . . they think I am a different person when I say the word “Julliard.” It’s really not all that astounding. The jury who chooses you has got to like you, has got to think that you are worth something.

⁶³ Rosalyn Tureck (1914-2003) was an American pianist and harpsichordist who was particularly associated with the music of Johann Sebastian Bach.

⁶⁴ The Republican Party is one of the two major contemporary political parties of the United States.

⁶⁵ William Frank Buckley, Jr. (1925–2008) was a conservative American writer and political TV personality. He founded the conservative journal *National Review* in 1955.

⁶⁶ Muriel Kerr (1911-1963) was a Canadian pianist who taught at the Juilliard School from 1942 to 1949.

The studying started. That dictionary, the Russian dictionary, I took it to class all the time. I was one of those students that . . . she loved her students coming to hear the lessons of other students. I learned as much from that as I had from me [my own] lessons. I was very much interested. I just thought she was unbelievable a musician. She had a Russian husband, Naoum Benditzky—a cellist, excellent cellist, wonderful.⁶⁷ He became my “papa.” He and I were just like daughter and a father. His own son said to me after he died, the son said, “You were a better daughter to him than I was a son to him.” They didn’t see each other enough or something like that. I kept the correspondence up with him. I had this incredible company. For instance, they always had people like . . . the pianist who was in Julliard. He was really the best pianist ever lived, I think.

Ruth: Joseph?

Zhanna: Joseph Levine [was] unbelievable.⁶⁸ Once I heard him play, my student in Indiana University⁶⁹—a very intellectual guy from the east—he told me, “Do you know the recording of [Johann] Strauss’ [*Blue Danube*] waltz, the transcription of Joseph Levin?”⁷⁰ I said, “No.” At this school of music there was a music store across the street. I said, “Well, you wait, and I’ll go see if they have it.” I bought the record. I went and heard it. I went straight back to the store and bought five more. I just never heard anything like it. It is heaven. For him playing piano, it was just like a joke. He would wake up, he would be asleep, and he would wake up, and go on the stage with eyes practically closed, and start playing a concert. He was practically asleep. It was easier for him to play than for any pianist I ever seen or heard of and it sounded like it. It was just unlike anything I know.

John: Could you tell us briefly about meeting your husband and what that was like in the beginning?

⁶⁷ Naoum Benditzky (1900-1972) was a Jewish Russian cello player who immigrated to the United States in 1921. He played with the Gordon String Quartet and the NBC Symphony Orchestra.

⁶⁸ Joseph Levin [Russian: Josef Lhévinne] (1874-1944) was a Jewish Russian pianist who immigrated to the United States in 1919 and taught piano at the Julliard School in New York City, New York.

⁶⁹ Founded in 1820, Indiana University is a public research university located in Bloomington, Indiana, United States.

⁷⁰ Johann Baptist Strauss II (1825-1899) was an Austrian composer who came from a family of renowned composers and performers. He composed light music, particularly dance music and operettas, but became famous for his waltzes—especially *The Blue Danube*. *The Blue Danube* is the common English title of *An der schönen blauen Donau* [German: *By the Beautiful Blue Danube*], a waltz composed in 1867 by Johann Strauss II.

Zhanna: The first time I met David was because the wife of Larry Dawson, our adopted mother, took us for a treat from Croze, Virginia to the Library of Congress to Washington [D.C.] to hear the [Gordon String] quartet play.⁷¹ We went there and I have never heard a string quartet. I heard a lot of music but not a string quartet. We walked in and [it was] marvelous scenery there—big hall and the columns. We were in the back of the hall, very far away from the stage. Of course, a string quartet is not an orchestra. I heard a sound. I thought, “What is that? I thought it’s a string quartet, but I hear a horn.” It was David playing. That’s how he sounded. As Greg wrote after his death, an “unearthly tone.” It would sound through anything, incredible tone quality. It was a wonderful quartet. It was the first quartet I ever heard. We heard the concert. After the concert, the two people, David, the violist, and the cellist, Fritz Magg from . . .⁷²

<interview pauses, then resumes>

Zhanna: Those two were curious to see what’s all the fuss. We were already accepted into schools. When they heard it, they said they wanted to hear. The musicians wanted to hear now, to see what they think. They came to a party. It was really a funny thing. They were the only people beside Grace, the wife, myself, and the hostess. We were so shy to meet wonderful musicians. We hid ourselves. We were in the kitchen. They were in the dining room, those two—Fritz and David—with a piano there. We just wouldn’t leave the kitchen. Finally, the hostess pushed us out and the door was swinging. We stood there looking at them and they were sitting there looking at us. [It was] very funny. We wouldn’t say a word. I just saw that David had absolutely the bluest eyes I ever seen—extraordinary. The next thing, we had to sit down at the table with them. [There was] not much said there, trying to speak my German with an Austrian musician. I didn’t feel that I am ready for that. They said, “Well, why don’t you play something?” We decided to play four hands. That was very funny. We played Beethoven’s Overture arranged for four hands. They have played this Overture over and over with wonderful orchestras. Both were from the best orchestras. They played with all of them. They didn’t know that there was a transcription for four hands—for a piano. You can imagine them probably

⁷¹ The Library of Congress is the research library that officially serves the United States Congress, but which is the de facto national library of the United States. It was the first established cultural institution in the United States and is the largest library in the world. It is located in Washington, D.C., which is the capital of the United States, located on the Potomac River, bordering the states of Maryland and Virginia.

⁷² Fritz Magg (1914-1997) was a cellist from Vienna, Austria. He was a principal cellist of the Vienna Symphony and Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, a member of the Gordon and Berkshire String Quartets, and a professor of cello and chamber music at Indiana University.

looking down and saying, “How ridiculous! Could it be farther away from [the] original?” We played it decently. We played it the right way and with temperament. It was Beethoven. It wasn’t just anything. It was the spirit of Beethoven. They were so agitated and so interested. They were peering into the music right in back of us, and whispering, and exchanging. They couldn’t get over—more fun—that four hands can play Beethoven’s *Overture*. That’s supposed to have wonderful orchestration. We played it just with four hands. We played it thousands of times during the war. It was a favorite piece. They didn’t hear anything else, but we used to play all the military marches by Schubert. That was also very fun. We also played Brahms’ *Hungarian Dances*, which is terrific music I think. I love all the repertory and still do. They had more fun. After we sat down at the table, they were talking to each other deciding, and discussing how this and that . . . We didn’t know any of that. We just played.

The next thing was Thanksgiving. David was invited to the farm to come and see the new house, and to meet the children, and, of course, hear us play if he wanted. David paid a visit to Virginia to the new house. He stayed only three days. He took time off the tour. We had more fun. He was so much fun. It was just laughs. Larry and David were very, very close brothers. In a big family with five children, they were the closest because they were three years apart. David was the youngest and then Larry was three years older. They grew up together completely. What they did, they always listened to the radio ballgames. [They were] really crazy devoted baseball fans. They knew everything. They wrote letters of baseball to each other. Greg read them. Both boys know the letters—from Europe. Just the funniest thing from here to Europe. Larry was in Europe. David was in the army, too, and so was **Fritz**, but in this country. Larry was in Europe.

He [David] brought the viola. He said he brought the music and he wants to play with me. Naturally, he played the repertory. Violas don’t have much repertory to play. He played those pieces that he has played thousands of times, and I have never seen the music, and never heard. He had to use every bit of his . . . diplomacy and careful sort of guiding. I was reading it. It’s hard to play anyway, but reading it for somebody . . . He was really exceptional in the way he did not discourage. He didn’t patronize me either. I mean, we both kind of understood there is a lot of work for me to do on the piece. He just pointed out some things, and wanted me to replay a few places, and left me alone otherwise. I wasn’t shy or anything. It was a very good time. We played those things. Then he also wanted us to play solo.

It was a wonderful visit. The brothers were listening to the radio until it was pushing at our throats. That's what they do. They needed to listen to baseball. Then he had to go. He simply had to go. He lived in New York at that time. The next time he came to visit my sister Frina and me, [was] in Clara de Hirsch residence between Second and Third Avenue in New York [City].⁷³ It was a very old building with girls living there—low rent. The HIAS [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society] organization paid our rent.⁷⁴ We were studying then. David came to see us, to have dinner with us. Then he decided that he wanted us to go and spend summer in Connecticut . . .

<Disc 2 Ends>

<Disc 3 Begins>

Ruth: This is Ruth Einstein. John Kent unfortunately had to leave us. We are going to carry on somehow without him for the rest of the interview. Zhanna, you were talking about meeting your husband and he is not your husband yet.

Zhanna: He made a big point of inviting Frina and myself to his house, a summer place—not his own—designated for the string quartet where the quartet performed every week through the summer. On Saturday or Sunday, [they would] play the performance of string quartet program of repertory. He wanted us to come there. We weren't agreeing, because we found a place to practice. We felt that we needed to practice a lot for our lessons in school. We thought that we would be too isolated in the country, because it's very much [in] the country. You would have to be a self-sufficient person with self-sufficient needs, but we were still too young. We wanted to see much more and not just practice. We didn't want to go, but he insisted. He would come over to New York from Connecticut and ask over and over. Finally, he said that his mother and the brother were going to be there. We decided that we would go. It was not easy to say 'no' to

⁷³ The Clara de Hirsch Home for Working Girls was founded in 1897 to provide teenage, mostly immigrant girls with comfortable lodging, vocational training, and social activities. The home was located on East 63rd Street in Manhattan in New York City, New York. Beginning in the 1930's, the home sheltered growing numbers of young European Jewish refugees, as well as self-supporting students of various New York educational institutions. In 1960, the board of directors sold the building and in the following year, the organization merged with the 92nd Street Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA).

⁷⁴ The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) was founded in 1881 to help the constant flow of Jewish immigrants from Russian in relocating. During and after World War II, they had offices throughout Europe, South and Central America and the Far East. They worked to get Jews out of Europe and to any country that would have them by providing tickets and information about visas. After World War II, they assisted 167,000 Jews to leave DP camps and emigrate elsewhere.

David anymore. It just wasn't. We spent the summer with his family there. His brother, Bill, who was the oldest brother in David's family, he taught me how to drive while we were there. That was an achievement. Hearing string quartet music is just . . . cannot be better education for a musician.

Ruth: I know that you were becoming a musician. How were you becoming an American or were you? You had to make this transition from Russia . . . if you go all the way back, from being Jewish, to hiding as a . . . in Russia, and then going to Germany, and now here you are in America. How did you take all of those identities and start to mold them into the person you are now? 'Meld them' might be a better way to say it.

Zhanna: Yes. We really understood that we were in a different spot in the world. We had a lot of things to get over. Like, for instance, to get used to everything, to get used to people's habits. We lived with Larry's wife and two children. The language in itself had to be learned. We had to be understood and then we were preparing for going to New York to start studying.

Ruth: I mean, that is a lot of pressure just at that [age].

Zhanna: You are so right. It was very difficult for us. We were also responsible for the two little children, mostly it is for the baby. He had to have someone with him all the time. His personality was wonderful. He was the best natured baby. His little brother—who was two years old, two and a half maybe—he was very business-like, very precise, and very different personality. He didn't get very close to us and didn't involve himself with any type of details or get stuck with us. The baby depended on us.

Ruth: How old were you at that point?

Zhanna: At that point, I was over 17.

Ruth: Seventeen?

Zhanna: Going toward 18, yes. Also, Grace decided that we should go to high school.

Ruth: I was going to ask . . . your education must have been completely put on hold. I mean, you put it on hold in Kindergarten basically. What happened? How did you continue?

Zhanna: I did go to school, of course.⁷⁵ I went to sixth grade only in schooling. It was all music and music can eat up a lot of energy. Nevertheless, you'd be surprised. When we went to school in Croze, Virginia, she bought for us the kind of traditional outfit for school girls—a pleated skirt with a design of blocks [plaid], little sweaters, and tennis shoes with socks. We went to the Library of Congress to the concert that way.

Ruth: Did you feel like you could be a child? Your childhood had been . . .

Zhanna: Let me tell you what it was like. When we went there, we really were hoping to learn some English, and there was nobody who was teaching this. What we found [was a] complete belittling of education. The education that we did get in Russia was real education. We were a guest. They were teaching them some little cooking in the kitchen, which we knew, too. It was no education. We finally stopped. We complained so much.

Ruth: There weren't other types of classes? Was it because you were a girl? What was the problem?

Zhanna: No, not at all. We were together in the same class. We simply found that we weren't being educated. We understood that.

Ruth: What did you do?

Zhanna: They could have done something little bit to give us a little English or something. They never did.

Ruth: Did you have anything in common with these other kids?

Zhanna: Absolutely nothing. They didn't really kind of look at us. They would look at us and turn away right away. They were probably shy and scared—who knows. The teachers and administration, they've got two girls. They might have been interested maybe in music. Now . . . this is the first time I ever thought of it . . . I am sure that they knew we were musicians because that is the way Grace would present us. [They had] no interest. It was amazing. Also, I was getting fatter and fatter. I never was really fat.

⁷⁵ After their family had moved from Berdyansk to Kharkov sometime around 1936, nine-year-old Zhanna and seven-year-old Frina were accepted at the prestigious Kharkov National Kotlyarevsky University of Arts, also known as the Kharkov Conservatory. The Kharkov Conservatory is one of the leading colleges of art in Ukraine.

Ruth: Too much oatmeal?

Zhanna: Frina and I went to take the baby for a walk every morning very early to go to First store [a country store near the Crozet, Virginia farm]. It was a couple of miles. We would take the baby going there. We would come there and buy a Clark Bar.⁷⁶ Every day, we ate the Clark Bar.

Ruth: That's a good was to start becoming American.

Zhanna: It was five cents. Now you pay 75 cents and you don't get the same thing. You don't get as much. They've got Clark Bars this long now. <indicating a few inches>

Ruth: It is an interesting question. Here you were with this very cultured, musical family . . . then there is the rest of America, kind of represented by a Clark Bar. How did you put that together?

Zhanna: We didn't. We didn't like it, Frina and I—especially myself, because Frina was always much younger, as I told you, in her growing. She was a late bloomer. I remember endless talks about politics at the dinner table. We talked at the dinner table about the world. We had books to show the world. For instance, all my life in Russia, I knew the situation of the black people in Africa and everywhere. That's why, when I came here, it wasn't a new idea to me. I was just discovering, to see what it was like in reality. The black people recognize it in me very easily. They see right away. I make friends with black people immediately. I don't know how they know, but they have that feeling.

Ruth: You are getting close to a period of time when the United States went full into the Cold War and here you are with a Russian accent.⁷⁷ Did you ever [experience] any repercussions for being a Russian in a Cold War America?

⁷⁶ The Clark Bar is a milk chocolate peanut butter candy bar originally manufactured in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1917. The New England Confectionery Company (Necco) bought the company in 1999.

⁷⁷ The Cold War (approximately 1945 to 1991) was a prolonged state of political and military tension between the powers of the Western world, led by the United States and its NATO allies, and the communist world, led by the Soviet Union, its satellite states and allies. It was waged on political, economic, and propaganda fronts and had only limited recourse to weapons. The Cold War ended with the fall of the communist system of government in the Soviet Union in the late 1980's.

Zhanna: Not at all. I felt one thing about that period. I thought it was absurd and ridiculous that the Americans felt any fear of the Russians at that pathetic time for Russians, because Russia was destroyed totally. Russia lost all its men. All the men were gone.

Ruth: Like 26 million people.⁷⁸ Something like that?

Zhanna: No, more.

Ruth: More than that?

Zhanna: More. I mean it is the horrendous upset of the century. They weren't able to do anything. Here, they were looking under the bed [for] Communists. It was so ridiculous. I knew it. I felt, "[That's] baloney! What are you doing?" Stupid, but . . . it happens very often when Americans are not aware. They are doing things that are so elementary for the rest of the world . . . the fears—undue fears . . . Thank G-d for America. The war might have ended completely differently—much worse and later. Maybe it would not have ended if not America they stepped in and did their job. It's a big heart.

Ruth: After the liberation, as you are talking about America and Russia and the last great effort together was the liberation of Europe, what did you know about how Jews had been . . . what happened to the Jews of Europe? You already knew a lot about what happened to the Jews of Russia from your own family's experience. What you heard about the Holocaust . . . what did you think?

Zhanna: We knew it earlier. There were lots and lots of rumors. When the concert that I told you took place, we knew that it was disaster for the rest. We heard of ovens.

Ruth: You had already heard of that?

Zhanna: We heard of ovens. They had something else like ovens . . . another thing?

Ruth: Crematorium?

Zhanna: Crematoriums.

⁷⁸ Casualty estimates for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) vary widely, but at least 20 million Soviet soldiers and civilians (including Jews) died during World War II. Estimates generally place the number of dead and missing Soviet soldiers between 8,800,000 and 10,700,000. Civilian deaths in occupied Soviet regions are estimated between 7,000,000 and 24,000,000. Civilian deaths were results of direct violence, starvation, disease, or occurred while performing forced labor.

Ruth: In Russia, you had already heard?

Zhanna: No, you are right. In Russia, I don't think I heard in Russia about the ovens. I think it took to a much later time, here [America] in the end of the war . . . not here . . . in Germany. [We were] already out of Russia.

Ruth: There is one part that I missed when you were talking before and that is the period of time after 1939 when the Germans moved into Poland. You knew that the Stalin-Hitler Pact was probably going to be broken.⁷⁹ What did your parents talk about? How did they talk to you about that time and about any imminent danger you were in? Leading up to when you were taken on that march, that whole period where your world was just about to collapse, how did your parents talk to you about it? What did you know?

Zhanna: The parents talked to each other. To us, it was the same thing. Everything that they talked about politically we knew. The Russians really were so delighted when the pact was made between Hitler and Stalin. People were astounded, but when we saw the change in the life in Russia . . . all of a sudden, for one year [1940], we had a life worth living. We didn't have to stand in line at four o'clock in the morning. We had stores packed with food, with merchandise. If we had money, we could buy something.

Ruth: When exactly was this?

Zhanna: That was as soon as we heard . . . it was one year before the war. They [the Germans] came to Kharkov in June 21, 1941. It [World War II] started in 1939. We had a year that was unbelievable. We thought that . . . when the war was announced by [Vyacheslav] Molotov on the radio, in the streets. . . we thought we had to pay for our good year.⁸⁰ We had not had a year like that ever. It was a life that we tasted and it was finished.

Ruth: When it started to unravel, what happened first?

⁷⁹ The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (also known as the Hitler-Stalin Pact and German-Soviet Non-aggression Pact) was a non-aggression pact between Germany and Russia signed August 23, 1939. The pact provided that the two countries would not attack each other, independently or in conjunction with other powers; would not support any third power that might attack the other party to the pact; would remain in consultation with each other with regard to their common interests; would not join any power or group of powers that threatened the other; and would solve all differences between them through negotiation or arbitration. The public pact was accompanied by a secret protocol, reached on the same day, which divided Eastern Europe into German and Soviet spheres of influence. The Pact ended on June 22, 1941, when Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union.

⁸⁰ Vyacheslav Molotov was a Soviet politician and diplomat who served as Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1939 to 1949. He was a principal Soviet signatory of the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact of 1939.

Zhanna: The war started. That's what the unraveling was—the war.

Ruth: As the Germans came in to Kharkov, you said that you went to a ghetto . . .

Zhanna: There were some period . . .

Ruth: What happened before then?

Zhanna: When they [the Germans] came in, the very first thing [they did was] they started hanging people on the trees and the on statues.⁸¹ They were merciless. They were going around demanding merchandise, robbing . . . knock on the door, come in and go through everything greedily and take it. They could take anything. They held my mother to the wall and us screaming. We would have given anything just to have her let free and they let her free. [They were] disgusted they did not find anything—very, very mad. They were a quite a bunch. This went on and they had to establish their kitchens in the fresh air. They don't eat peels of potatoes. Russians don't eat peels of potatoes either. We certainly did use them, because they threw them away in the garbage. We could get it together and my mother was frying some cakes that way. It wasn't a very long time. It was something June . . . October [1941]. Actually, we left the house in December in the beginning.

Ruth: Were you forced to leave your house?

Zhanna: [We were] absolutely forced. It was an announcement. Get out of there or death.

Ruth: It was just for the Jews?

Zhanna: Just were the Jews.

Ruth: You said that the relationship between Jews and non-Jews was really pretty friendly before then. When did that start to change? Did the Ukrainians start to also feel angry or aggressive towards the Jews?

Zhanna: No, there was a very interesting thing going on in Ukraine, where I was. There was Ukrainian police. They were the helpers of the Germans. That was sort of above us civilian

⁸¹ The Germans occupied Kharkov on October 24, 1941. Anticipating that acts of sabotage and diversion would occur, the army ordered "Jews and Bolsheviks should be taken first for collective reprisals. Saboteurs and persons offering armed resistance would be hanged in public." By the end of October, three civilian political commissars had been shot and seven saboteurs (including one woman) had been publically hanged.

people. When the time came to go over and deliver the Jews, the Ukrainians were there . . . delivering to the German. All of them had to have Jews out and end them.

Ruth: Why do you think they did that?

Zhanna: Why? Herr [Adolf] Hitler, that's all.

Ruth: The Ukrainians . . .

Zhanna: Why they did it? It's very much a historic fact that the Ukrainians had fun beating the Jews. Cossacks⁸² and pogroms⁸³ were a tradition. That was a matter of fun. That was how to be a man.

Ruth: Did you remember any of those kinds of things?

Zhanna: No.

Ruth: From your childhood or before?

Zhanna: No.

Ruth: Was it after the October Revolution that that nationalism was kind of toned down a little?⁸⁴

Zhanna: That kind of obvious showing and proud stuff going on did not exist. What existed was KGB. They were arresting Jews all over the world, trying them without a trial. There [was] never a trial, never practice of law. They never had to say to any family to give report where they . . . You didn't know where they were, are they alive, and what was done to them, and why. Nobody knew anything. You see how horrifying that is?

I cannot tell you how I felt during the eight years of [President George W.] Bush.⁸⁵ I just cannot even begin to tell you. It was horrible. It was so darn close and closing in with those

⁸² Cossacks are a community of semi-independent warriors who united in the fifteenth century and were loyal only to the Russian Czar. Cossacks were primarily located in Russia and Ukraine. The name is derived from *kazak* [Turkic], which means "free man" or "adventurer."

⁸³ Pogrom is a Russian word meaning "to wreak havoc, to demolish violently." The term is used to refer to the organized, and often officially sanctioned, violent riots against Jews in the Russian Empire and in other countries during the nineteenth and twentieth century.

⁸⁴ The Russian Revolution in 1917-1918, also called the October Revolution, was a coup that overthrew the Czar and brought the Bolsheviks (a Communist party led by Vladimir Lenin) to power after the conclusion of a bitter civil war in 1921.

awful people in the White House with him—that Carl Rove.⁸⁶ When they talked, it was just dismal. I could not be more grateful for the president we have [President Barack Obama].⁸⁷ I'm just in heaven about it. Like everybody, all of us makes mistakes. He's allowed to make mistakes, too. This is a very hard time for you and me, when they are . . . Hillary [Clinton] and him were there and they spoke.⁸⁸ There is no solution.⁸⁹ Do you have any way to go over their opinion, to think of something brighter and smarter to do than to give the land, some land to have two countries?

Ruth: You are talking about the Israeli and Palestinian . . .

Zhanna: Today's situation there. What is that? Tell me. I have a friend so bright, so intelligent. She was in Siberia during the . . . She evacuated during the war because her mother was a worker in a hospital. She was a nurse. She came back and she got a marvelous education. She knows languages—English and German. She cannot stand to hear that the Jews have got to give some land to the Palestinians. I want to give them land only for one reason: because I don't know what else to do.

Ruth: You picked a topic that would probably require another 25 hours of tape.

Zhanna: I thought you were going to say 25 years.

⁸⁵ George Walker Bush (1946-) was the 43rd President of the United States. He served from 2001 to 2009.

⁸⁶ Karl Rove is an American Republican political consultant and policy advisor. He was Senior Advisor and Deputy Chief of Staff during the George W. Bush administration until his resignation on August 31, 2007. Rove resigned while under investigation into his role in the controversial dismissal of seven United States Attorneys in 2006. It was suspected that the White House and the Department of Justice targeted the attorneys for dismissal in an effort to secure political advantage.

⁸⁷ Barack H. Obama is the 44th President of the United States, serving two consecutive terms from 2009-2016. He is the *first African-American* elected as president in United States history.

⁸⁸ Hillary Diane Rodham Clinton (1947-) is an American politician. Her husband, William Jefferson Clinton served as Governor of the state of Arkansas from 1983 to 1992 and as the 42nd President of the United States from 1993 to 2001. She served as a Senator in New York from 2001 to 2009 and as Secretary of State in President Barack Obama's administration from 2009 to 2013. She ran for the Democratic nomination for President of the United States in the 2008 and 2016 elections.

⁸⁹ Zhanna seems to be referring to the Gaza War, also known as Operation Cast Lead in Israel and as the Gaza Massacre or the Battle of al-Furqan by Palestinians, which was a violent three-week (December 27, 2008–January 18, 2009) armed conflict between Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and Israel. Palestinian casualties during the war were significant and Israel was ultimately victorious militarily, but worldwide public sympathy sided with Palestine. In May 2009, United States President Barack Obama met separately with Israeli President Shimon Peres and Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, at the White House in Washington, D.C. in an effort to negotiate a peaceful resolution. President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton publically supported a two-state solution and a cessation of Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

Ruth: Twenty-five years minimum. Actually, what I was thinking of is the Stalinist period that preceded World War II. [It] must have been so frightening for all intellectuals, for Jews, and so many people were being thrown into the Gulag anyway.⁹⁰ Do you think that the people were welcoming Hitler because of that, just to get rid of Stalin? What do you think was really going on?

Zhanna: Really smart. Yes, especially Ukraine. You are right, but it lasted a very short time. People smelled right away this horror that was spread on them, too. They didn't care for them either. They started kicking them out. Germans were succeeding, in spite of everything, until they got to Stalingrad.⁹¹ Stalingrad really finished them. They froze to death. They couldn't stand it anymore. The Russians were very far away from any kind of western borders. Those people [the Russian soldiers] know their territory. They made mincemeat out of them. They [the Germans] started running. They were running back fast and eagerly.

Ruth: During that period you were still in . . .

Zhanna: We were in the orphanage still, with the lice.

Ruth: The lice as your companions, right. I also didn't catch which group of people went to Berlin and how you ended up leaving to go to Berlin.

Zhanna: When the Germans were in charge of the theater, they were in charge of our lives. The Gestapo was always something [frightening] to Frina and me.⁹² They simply said, "You are going." They moved us from one place where we lived in music school. They moved us to a place where all the other actors were going to be before they take us to Germany. These people needed to bring the evidence of having had a troupe that performed for their soldiers, which was

⁹⁰ Gulag is an abbreviation of *Glavnoye Upravleniye Ispravitelno-trudovyykh Lagerey* [Russian: Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps]. Gulag is the system of Soviet labor camps and accompanying detention and transit camps and prisons that housed the political prisoners and criminals of the Soviet Union from the 1920's to the mid-1950's. At its height, the Gulag imprisoned millions of people in Siberia, central Asia, and other locations deep in the interior of the Soviet Union. Conditions were extremely harsh and the death rate was high.

⁹¹ The Battle of Stalingrad took place between July 1942 and February 1943. In brutally cold winter weather, the Soviets were able to successfully defend the city of Stalingrad. The battle is considered to be a turning point in the war in favor of the Allies. The battle was also one of the bloodiest in history, with both sides suffering tremendous casualties.

⁹² Gestapo is an abbreviation of *Geheime Staatspolizei*, which means "Secret State Police." It was established in 1934 and placed under Heinrich Himmler. With virtually unlimited powers, it was highly feared. The *Gestapo* acted to oppress and persecute Jews and other opponents of the Nazis, including rounding up Jews throughout Europe for deportation to extermination camps.

their job, to justify their wartime activity. We were brought to Berlin. We were playing concerts not only in Berlin, but every day they would send us on a tour. We would play for *Ost* workers. They [pretended they] were very humanitarian people to allow *Ost* workers, who were labor workers, to give them their own art. Those people [*Ost* workers] were miserable there. They liked to hear Russian songs and hear some music, but that wasn't what they needed.

Ruth: You went right into the lion's mouth.

Zhanna: We were in it. There was no way out, because every time when we had any idea of wanting to do something else the matter of suspicion was the end to us. That was a terrible point to be at because they would start asking . . . false names, false story, people knew us. We had a terrible . . .

Ruth: You must have been terrified, [living with a] kind of a low-grade terror the whole time.

Zhanna: Are you surprised that we said, "We want our names," [to David]? There wasn't hesitation for a minute. He said, "Oh, you have different names?" That was interesting, but [there] is nothing like it.

Ruth: What did it feel like to you to reconstitute your truest person . . .

Zhanna: [It was] everything. We felt the end of the war was the beginning of our life.

Ruth: What did you have to look forward to? You knew that you were alone from your family, that you lost everyone.

Zhanna: We didn't care. We had our names. We were not anymore in the mercy of these people who can put a stamp on us for life and say something, whatever they choose to do. This is disgusting. This is awful.

Ruth: I am going to skip ahead now. It is too interesting to talk about all that part. I guess I'll have to get your book. We know that you married David at some point. Tell me about the life that you started together, and your children, and what it meant to you to have children.

Zhanna: First of all, I want you to know our wedding was given to us by my wonderful, beloved piano teacher and Naoum Benditzky. It was in their home. The party was. <points to a

picture> See Mr. [Dimitri] Mitropoulos?⁹³ He was at our wedding [on December 14, 1947], sitting with the bride in a love seat like this at the wedding. I just love to think of that. He loved David. He loved him. He was in his orchestra, a principal there. <points to another picture> That is my picture with Muriel Kerr.

Ruth: We'll get [images of] those another way later.

Zhanna: Both of us. I was in school. We got married and we lived in New York [City]. He played with [Arturo] Toscanini's orchestra,⁹⁴ with Naoum Benditzky, and Frank Miller,⁹⁵ and all the wonderful musicians. I was going to Julliard. I was going to lessons, and more than to lessons—to other people's lessons. It was very busy life. Then David found that it wasn't enough money just playing with Toscanini. He had to join some Broadway show to add to the money. At that time, it was "Look Ma, I'm Dancing," the show.⁹⁶ He was playing that at night, coming home very late, and getting up in the morning again, both of us going our ways. I used to go to the concerts of Toscanini and hear that.

Finally, what happened was that he dreamt all his life to be in a string quartet. He didn't want to be in an orchestra. He didn't care who conducted. He played with the best conductors—all of them—beginning very early in life, in school still. In Julliard, he played with **Zhukovsky** as a student. Just name anybody and he knew them. It was in Music Mountain in Connecticut where we went.⁹⁷ We were already married.⁹⁸ We went for the summer concerts—

⁹³ Dimitri Mitropoulos (1896-1960) was a Greek conductor, pianist, and composer who became a United States citizen. David greatly admired Mitropoulos and, at the time of David and Zhanna's wedding, he was the principal conductor of Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra.

⁹⁴ Arturo Toscanini (1867-1957) was an Italian conductor, considered one of the great virtuoso conductors of the first half of the 20th century. From 1937 to 1954 he directed the NBC Symphony in New York City, an orchestra sponsored by the U.S. radio network.

⁹⁵ Frank Miller (1912–1986) was a principal cellist with Arturo Toscanini's NBC Symphony Orchestra.

⁹⁶ "Look, Ma, I'm Dancing" was a musical directed by Jerome Robbins and Georgia Abbot. It opened at the Adelphi Theater in New York City, New York in January 1948.

⁹⁷ Music Mountain hosts the oldest continuing summer chamber music festival in the United States. Sears Roebuck built Music Mountain in Falls Village, Connecticut in 1930. Music Mountain has four houses for resident musicians and students and Gordon Hall, a chamber music hall. It was founded as the permanent home for the Gordon String Quartet, one of the leading string quartets of the time. After the Gordon String Quartet disbanded, Music Mountain became the summer home of the Berkshire String Quartet. David played for both.

⁹⁸ Soon after their wedding, David accepted a position at Indiana University as a teacher and a member of the Berkshire String Quartet in 1948.

summer series. A man by the name Wilfred Bain, who became Dean Bane of the . . . ⁹⁹ He wanted to have a string quartet.¹⁰⁰ Do you realize that that was the first string quartet ever in a University? There was never such a thing in an American University.

Ruth: You moved to Bloomington [Indiana].¹⁰¹ You said your older son was born . . .

Zhanna: Greg was born . . . both of them were born in Bloomington.

Ruth: They were both born in Bloomington. What was it like for you? Can you describe your feelings around . . . you had your sister, but you had left your . . . I'm not sure if you had any other family in Russia, but this whole thing behind. Here you were making a new life . . .

Zhanna: No. People don't realize . . . I had a phone call from a neighbor last night saying to me, "Why you never told me? How did you look for your relatives? How did you find them?" I said, "Wait a second. I never looked for them and I didn't have any." There were no relatives. The thing is: the relatives that had survived all thought that we were dead. I had one relative that would not give up looking. She started looking for Frina and me immediately when she came back from [unintelligible, 31:28, sounds like "Evercreation"] immediately. For instance, our professor, [Abram Lvovich] Luntz—who was our teacher in [Kharkov] Conservatory—he just kept crying all the time for us, because he loved us as his children and not just as pupils.¹⁰² People were looking for us, but nobody looked for us like Tamara, my cousin, who died only on March 11 [2009].

Ruth: She found you? How did she find you?

⁹⁹ Wilfred Bain (1908–1997) was an American music educator, administrator, and an opera theater director at the collegiate level. Bain was Dean at the University of North Texas College of Music from 1938 to 1947 and at the Indiana University School of Music from 1947 to 1973.

¹⁰⁰ The Berkshire String Quartet was an American classical chamber group that was founded in 1916 and disbanded around 1941. In 1948, it was founded again as the successor of the Gordon Quartet, which had disbanded the year before. At the urging of Wilfred Bain, the Berkshire String Quartet was in permanent residence at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana and preformed at the summer chamber music festivals held at Music Mountain in Falls Village, Connecticut. Founding members included Zhanna's husband, David Dawson, on viola, Fritz Magg on cello, Ulrico Rossi on first violin, and Albert Lazan on second violin.

¹⁰¹ Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana houses The Jacobs School of Music, a music conservatory established in 1921. Until 2005, it was known as the *Indiana University School of Music*. In 1948, Zhanna and David moved to Bloomington. Zhanna and David taught at the university and David played for the Berkshire String Quartet, which was in residence at the university.

¹⁰² Abram Lvovich Luntz was a professor at the Kharkov National Kotlyarevsky University of Arts (Kharkov Conservatory).

Zhanna: <nodding “yes”> She was two years younger than me. She started calling me right after [the collapse of Communism in] 1990. She was telling me that she is my sister. I said to her right away, “I have only one sister.” It is in the Russian language that you can call your cousin a sister. It is perfectly all right, but usually people have to know who the person is. I’d been in this country a great many years when she was calling me. When she was saying, “I am your sister,” I would answer to her, “No, I only have one sister.” I thought she’s mixed up.

Ruth: You didn’t know who she was?

Zhanna: No idea. She was calling so much and so often, I got so tired of it. I was answering it in the middle of the night. Sometimes, I was too sleepy to answer. One day, she called up. It was already two [or] three weeks later. We had a conversation. All of a sudden, [I realized] the aunt was her mother, whom I knew very well . . . Aunt Eve. She said something, just a word about this. I said, “What?” I said, “You said ‘Aunt Eve!’” I said, “Then you are Tamara!” Immediately I knew the child and I said, “Your sister is Celia.” That immediately woke my . . . [I asked,] “What was your father’s [name]?” Semyon was his name—a wonderful man. She didn’t realize. [I said,] “Don’t you see you are thinking the same language? It is not the same thing. When you say ‘sister,’ it is only Frina.” She and Frina were the same age exactly, and I was two years older, and then her sister was five years older. To me, that was the oldest person. I always thought that I would like to be like Celia. Celia died too—about four or five years ago from terrible cancer. It just ate up her upper arm. Both of them were doctors, had great education. Now there’s only left her one single son she had. He’s alive, and he has one boy, but he’s divorced. The wife doesn’t really care much about the child.

Ruth: You were able to make a connection with part of this life that you had left?

Zhanna: When we left Kharkov, we have not heard one word, one letter, one picture. It was finished since 1941. It was exactly January 1942 [when] we left, and we never heard the name of one person that we ever knew.

Ruth: Until . . .

Zhanna: Until 1990. Then slowly it started to unravel. I tell people, “How . . . what about pictures?” I would never have one picture if it wasn’t for Tamara. Tamara was getting ready. She was an incredible person. Her sister, Celia, doesn’t do anything. She was just telling her, “Don’t

do anything.” Tamara sends me pictures of mother and father that are on the table. I have enlarged them. She sent her family’s pictures, which is my family. She wrote to me once a 45-page letter in Russian the history of my mother’s family, which I never absorbed. It was very wonderful things. It just takes one person. I try to explain to people. I didn’t have any more—the memory left—because nobody talked, nobody contact, nothing. It’s amazing that I remember as much as I do.

Ruth: This is a kind of broad question: as your children were growing older, what did you tell them about your past and about your life?

Zhanna: When they were little, it was impossible to frighten them with horrible things. How would I explain to them if I didn’t tell them what happened? It was out of the question. Then what happened [is] that when Greg started working for paper: the people at the paper kept very close touch and this is so small together. From the paper, they were interested [in] musicians because they would always play [and were] out. They knew David and me being a Russian. They started asking questions of Greg because he was with the paper. He ended up having me tell him the story. This is such a long story and this was very compact. He had certain space. We have that article.¹⁰³ He wrote an article. It was a revelation to the whole campus. They thought it was incredible. That was the only thing that happened. Then it got quiet and the whole question of Holocaust somehow had to go through the period of becoming more important. It did become more important.

Ruth: When did you start thinking about yourself as a survivor?

Zhanna: I knew always I was a survivor because I did it. I was surviving doing it. In which way do you mean?

Ruth: The term “holocaust survivor” did not really come into use until people were refugees really in the 1940’s and 1950’s. It’s changed a little bit. How did you start to think of your own past?

¹⁰³ Zhanna’s son, Greg Dawson, originally wrote an article about his mother in 1978 for the Herald-Telephone newspaper in Bloomington, Indiana, where he worked as a feature writer and columnist.

Zhanna: Living in a situation of healing. I am very devoted to NPR [National Public Radio].¹⁰⁴ I wake up at five in the morning to listen to it. I want to hear the very first core things. I'm terribly interested in politics. [Politics is] my second interest immediate after music. Music is my life. You can't do anything without politics. Just recently, it dawned on me that a person's life is decided very much by where they are born. If you are born into Hitlerism or Stalinism . . . I don't even want to say communism, because I think that one day communism is going to be elevated to things like capitalism because capitalism stinks. That's what I very politely will say. I don't like people to tell me something else. It very simply and easily throws away the lives of other people. It's just terrible. I am very, very liberal—as liberal as they come. [I am not] being an idiot. I am not so liberal that I'll come out and go undressed. I am conservative in many ways. I like to be living in a polite society. I don't like rudeness. I love good manners. I believe in it.

Ruth: What did you teach your children about the world? You had this very traumatic . . .

Zhanna: They're very liberal. So was their father.

Ruth: Specifically, what did you tell them [your children] about what it's like to be in this world and what they should do here . . . from your own experience?

Zhanna: I was living with them. They saw the treatment that we received, that we gave to other people respect. They are wonderful one way, my sons. I am very proud about them one way: they are not materialistic. Not materialistic in America—*Bravissimo* [Italian: very good]! I mean, meet materialistic . . . I know some black people who are very materialistic. It doesn't look good on them either.

Ruth: It is a prevailing culture, as you said. I was curious how you taught them not to give in to that culture.

Zhanna: I will give you an example. For instance, when my second child was born and I was doing teaching . . .

Ruth: What's his name?

¹⁰⁴ National Public Radio (NPR) is an American privately and publicly funded non-profit membership media organization that serves as a national syndicator to a network of 900 public radio stations in the United States of America.

Zhanna: Billy [is] William Dmitri. Greg is Gregory Fred. Fred is for one reason. It was the best friend that David ever had. That was his name. William Dmitri is [named for his] two grandfathers.

I'll give you an example: I got a first helper to come in to clean once a week in my house when I got the second child. Gregory was . . . ten. He got an idea that he was going to just leave it all to the cleaner. I had wonderful cleaning people—wonderful ladies. He didn't understand. I said to him, "You have got to not do just that. You have got to make it as nice as possible for her to clean. You have to have so much respect that you have to thank her all the time. You are very lucky. Don't you dare ever expect her to do something." Those little boys were listening to me. They never forgot it. That's where you start. That's enough. It impressed them. That makes all the difference in the world.

Ruth: You mentioned a little earlier—I don't think we were on tape—that you have started going to a synagogue. I was wondering how you took that part of your identity back and how you embraced it?

Zhanna: I was never religious. I was a product of Soviet life. I was definitely Jewish all my life. All of my parents, the whole family was Jewish except when my uncle—the only brother of my father—married a Christian. We knew she was Christian. She was the only one in the whole family—a large family. I started to answer about . . .

Ruth: About starting to go to synagogue.

Zhanna: Here, in this vicinity . . . I love musician's company. It is my life. I spend my life with them. Just think [about having] piano and violin in the house every day. Then my husband and me exposed to all the marvelous musicians—the best in the world. They are fun. I was alone here. I didn't feel that I made any friends. I had one family for friends. The health food store—Return to Eden . . . they [the owners] were Jewish.¹⁰⁵ They always wanted me to go to synagogue. I found that synagogue would cost something like 700 or 800 dollars a year. I thought this is not the kind of money that I can spare at all. That was one reason and the other

¹⁰⁵ Return to Eden was a family owned and operated health and natural foods grocery store located on Cheshire Bridge Road in Atlanta, Georgia. It opened in 1993 and closed in November 2014.

reason [was that] I didn't know what to do in synagogue. I didn't know what would they do there. Partially, I was right.

Then what happened . . . Greg wrote that article that I showed you, the paper, "Return to . . ." and I gave it to the friends at Return to Eden. They loved it. They said, "Now you have no excuse not to go to synagogue. You should go to synagogue." I said, "Yes, I'd like to." I still didn't know how to start or how to go about doing it. What happened then was that the man—the husband of the young woman. There were four people there: the parents and two children—he wrote an email to me saying, "Now, I want you to know there is a group of people who meet regularly every week who are not Orthodox Jews. They don't belong in any kind of group of Jews except that they are Jews. That's all." I thought, "That's me." I have to try it. I went to synagogue. I said, "Here I am. I am completely unorthodox person." It's a very Orthodox synagogue—very Orthodox.¹⁰⁶ I didn't know how Orthodox. I said, "I got this email and I understand that you have a group of people that meet here that are just plain Jews." Do you know that it has been about five months that I have been going there [and] no one knows such a group? He dragged me in. He can play tricks. Nobody at all knows such a group. I discovered that there is one fabulous rabbi. [He is] fabulous, developed musically, very deep man, very full of temperament, and very Orthodox it turns out. His teaching is wonderful. When I go to the sermon or service . . . What's the difference?

Ruth: The sermon is the talk that happens inside the service.

Zhanna: Okay, Right. When I go to that, I am completely lost because you get a book and you follow the book with them. I don't know one word of Hebrew. I don't know one word of Hebrew—no Hebrew. If you read the translations . . . I think that their translations are not up to snuff. They are not good translations. I don't like them. Then they are written so small you need to have very good glasses to read it and the books are heavy. I decided since I have no company, no friends, I have no musicians, I have to try something. I thought, "The Jews are my very loved people." I love the people there. They are just wonderful to each other. It is a very friendly situation. It's nice.

¹⁰⁶ Orthodox Judaism is a traditional branch of Judaism that strictly follows the Written *Torah* and the Oral Law concerning prayer, dress, food, sex, family relations, social behavior, the Sabbath day, holidays and more.

Ruth: Let me ask you a real throwback question. I am curious. I know you grew up in the Soviet Youth . . .

Zhanna: . . . flag, red scarf, red tie . . . [Young] Pioneer.¹⁰⁷

Ruth: What about your grandparents?

Zhanna: They were so wonderful. I had the best grandparents. We loved them exactly the same as mother and father. They were terrific people [and] Grandparents. They would do anything for us. We just loved them. They never found it important to do anything. We were going to school with everybody else so we had to be like them. Yes, I wore a red tie.

Ruth: Did they still have a sense of their Jewish upbringing and their Jewish culture?

Zhanna: They would talk about their friends that we didn't know, their business at that time, and different politicians. The life under Lenin was very good. When Lenin was in charge before Stalin, the business thrived and Russia had a very good time—a very good period at that time, communications with other countries. Stalin finished it all. He came out with his Five Year Thing [Plan] . . . *Pyatiletniy* [Russian: five-year] it is called there.¹⁰⁸

Ruth: The “Five Year Plan” it is called . . . how to destroy a country in five years.

Zhanna: He destroyed all the peasants, which is horrendous. Look at the misery they have had for centuries, being slaves. It's unforgivable. This country has got to stand on its feet sometime. The education is wonderful. They can do anything. Now they've got that oil too. Where is it? Forty million [or] 40 billion is in the pockets of [Vladimir] Putin.¹⁰⁹

Ruth: I have taken a lot of time. I wanted to ask you one big question.

¹⁰⁷ The Young Pioneers is a communist youth organization. Children in the organization wear a red scarf of neckerchief.

¹⁰⁸ Joseph Stalin aimed to modernize the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) through a series of nationalized plans for economic development, known as the Five Year Plans. His goal was to make the USSR self-sufficient and expand industrial production. The first three plans were developed and instituted between 1928 and 1938. The first step was to combine individual farms into a system of large state collective farms. In theory, this would free the peasants from agricultural work, allowing Stalin to create a large industrial work force in the cities. Collectivization was ruthlessly put into action by deporting an estimated one million wealthier peasants. The forced collectivization of the remaining peasants was often fiercely resisted and resulted in the disruption of agricultural productivity and a famine in 1932-33.

¹⁰⁹ Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin has been the President of Russia since 2012. Putin served as prime minister from 1999 to 2000, as President from 2000 to 2008, and again as Prime Minister from 2008 to 2012. At the time of this interview (2009), Russia had amassed hard currency reserves estimated to be as high as \$600 billion thanks to its oil and gas income from skyrocketing energy prices.

Zhanna: Of course. I think you are one of the biggest pleasure I have had in my life because you are so up on everything.

Ruth: We try. I know writing your book was probably a cathartic experience . . .

Zhanna: Yes.

Ruth: In thinking back, what did that experience of escaping from being shot into a pit with your family and given this chance at life, what does that mean to you?

Zhanna: It means to me that I am a different person. I wouldn't be this way at all. This world is not right. It is not right. The discrepancy for what it means to lead a life for one person is against somebody else. There is no resemblance. People are so greedy. Why do they need repeated things? All of this banking things that is going on and credit cards.¹¹⁰ Look at the credit card thing. They torture the people over it. One minute too late—get the door—one minute. It is unbelievable. It is the personalities that make the atmosphere. I am a very different person from many other people.

Ruth: What do you mean by that? Give me a . . .

Zhanna: Compassion . . . For instance, I want all the immigrants . . . Mexican immigrants to be happy, to be educated. I think it is a shame and a major crime not to give the children health care. One thing in Soviet Russia: health care. Wow. I mean, health care . . . The people were being helped. Here, it is such a whole new politic[al] idea—political obsession. [Americans say,] “Oh, what do you want? You want to give medical care to everybody? You want to be like England or Canada? Don't be like Soviet Russia.” Capitalism is a sense of pride here. In Russia, capitalism wasn't a sense of pride. To me, I have seen already capitalism. I've seen communism and lots and lots of ugly things, but I say that they both need to learn. Why are they living? Why not to give people a life? That's what I mean by that. I cannot stand this business of going against . . . not taking into consideration education of children, because that means the whole life is ruined. I don't know how many more things I can identify with. I bet people do call me an

¹¹⁰ Zhanna seems to be referencing the financial crisis of 2007 to 2008 and the large amount of Americans who were evicted from their homes as a result. The crisis began when sky-high home prices in the United States turned decisively downward. As home values plummeted and interest rates climbed, borrowers began to default on their home loans. The housing market was then flooded with foreclosed properties for sale at reduced prices. The crisis spread quickly, first to the entire US financial sector and then to international financial markets. It was not limited to the financial sector, however, as companies that normally rely on credit—like banks and the auto industry—also suffered heavily.

extremist. Look what an extremist I am: feed the people! Yes, they should work. Yes, there would be outstanding people and not outstanding [people], but they need to eat. I don't think it is very complicated.

Ruth: Play a little music [for them] also?

Zhanna: I know you feel exactly the same way. You have . . . how am I going to find out about . . . you, yourself, have not been in the Holocaust but your other relatives, your grandparents. You told me that your Father was a wonderful pianist, but you knew him where?

Ruth: My father? I'll tell you about that after the tape. I'll tell you later.

Zhanna: I don't think it is any less interesting than . . .

Ruth: I know, but this is your tape for your family.

Zhanna: I would love to know. I don't know anything about you. Did you write a book about yourself?

Ruth: No. Let me go ahead and say, *Spasiba* [Russian: Thank You].

Zhanna: That's the end of the book.

Ruth: *Spasiba*, for now. We'll stop now. Thank you so, so much for agreeing to speak with me and with John. I hope your children and grandchildren enjoy hearing this story from how you want us to tell it.

Zhanna: One day, the grandchildren will have their place of growth and you cannot foresee. Every one of them is different, but my sons . . . that's something else. Greg is engrossed in the subject. Billy is extremely intelligent and [a] wonderful person. One thing we were arguing about two days ago because we started talking about what is the future of Israel. He just blew up at me. He said, "Mom, Israel has just ruined the life of Palestinians." I said, "Yes? How? By taking them into the hospital and giving them medical care and warning their children to be out of the outside when there is going to be somebody who's going to be invading—the army?" "No," he said, "They have taken away everything from them. They have killed them by the hundreds just for those rockets." I said, "Yes. How would you like to have the rocket every day, nonstop?" No, there was just no question. Then I said to him, "Yes, but you don't have to hit somebody back

with incredible power so big as Israel have against the Palestinians.” I said to him, “Look, what is going on with Kim [Jong-il] with North Korea.”¹¹¹ Daniel Schorr, whom I can trust my life to this man . . . he just cannot be distrusted.¹¹² He simply said, “Forever we have been trying to meet this man, this government. No matter what we do, it always turns back to one thing that he keeps doing.” He said, “Eventually, we’ll have to do the worse thing.” I said it to Billy, “Billy, do you know what? When we do it, would you like to do just a little scratch to him or are you going to hit him?” I said, “Every aggressor has to be aggressed ten times as much just for being an aggressor. That’s the thing that counts.”

Ruth: You certainly lived that in your own life. I am going to have to stop now because we are running out of tape and I don’t want to have to stop you in mid-sentence. Thank you again, so much.

Zhanna: Ruth, it’s my pleasure. I’m just not going to be satisfied until I know about you.

Ruth: Okay, we’ll talk. We’ll have plenty of time to talk.

Zhanna: I have to know what made you the way you are.

Ruth: Thank you, Zhanna.

Zhanna: You are really are an exceptional individual.

Ruth: Thank you.

<Disk 3 Ends>

INTERVIEW ENDS

¹¹¹ Kim Jong-il was the supreme leader of the communist Democratic People's Republic of Korea, commonly referred to as North Korea, from 1994 to 2011. On May 25, 2009—shortly before this interview was conducted—North Korea successfully detonated a powerful nuclear device underground and conducted several short-range missile tests. The test was nearly universally condemned by the international community, which had already imposed sanctions on North Korea in an effort to get the country to give up its nuclear weapons program.

¹¹² Daniel Schorr (1916–2010) was an American journalist who wrote for the *Christian Science Monitor* and *The New York Times* before becoming a reporter and news analyst for CBS, NPR, and CNN. He was known for his commentaries about governmental institutions and politicians.