

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

MEMOIRIST: JANINA PRINZ KOZMA
INTERVIEWERS: SARA GHITIS
 RUTH EINSTEIN
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INTERVIEW BEGINS

<Begin Disk 1>

Sara: Today is April 26 [2002]. We're in Atlanta interviewing Mrs. Janina Kozma.

Janina: Kozma. Right.

Sara: Could you pronounce your name for us?

Janina: Janina Kozma.

Sara: Could you spell it please?

Janina: First name too? J-A-N-I-N-A. Last name, K-O-Z-M-A.

Sara: What was your maiden name?

Janina: My maiden name was Prinz. P-R-I-N-Z.

Sara: Where were you born?

Janina: I was born in Poland.

Sara: In what city?

Janina: In Delatyn,¹ which used to be on Polish-Romanian border and today is Russia and probably the name has been changed too over there.

Sara: What was the name in Polish?

Janina: Polish name was Delatyn. D-E-L-A-T-Y-N.

¹ Delatyn is a spa town on the Prut River in the Carpathian Mountains. The town is approximately 500 kilometers to the south east of Krakow, Poland in present day Ukraine. The town was once a part of Poland but became a part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics after World War II.

Sara: Do you know what the name is now?

Janina: No.

Sara: Do you know where it belongs now?

Janina: It belongs to Russia. Or one of the republics. Or maybe Romania. Who knows?

Sara: In what year were you born?

Janina: It was 1920.²

Sara: What memories do you have of your early years?

Janina: I don't have from my birthplace. I don't have any memories because I was three years old when my parents moved to Krakow [Polish: Kraków].³ I was brought up in Krakow and then in Wieliczka [Poland]⁴ and then in Gdynia [Poland]⁵ on the Baltic Sea.

Sara: What are your earliest memories of life?

Janina: Of life before the war?

Sara: Yes.

Janina: I have memories from Krakow, from Wieliczka, high school years, and college in Gdynia. Gdynia was on the Baltic Sea 24 kilometers west of Danzig. I was there until the war started. The day before the war started we took the train . . . the [unintelligible: 2:22] train back to Krakow. We came to Krakow August 31, 1939. Next morning, the first of September, the Germans bombed the railway station. Everybody was trying to go away from the Germans so there was a big exodus. Everybody tried to rent horse and buggy and go on exodus. We were going on horse and buggy east toward the Russians, but we found out the Polish army was retreating and Germans were coming. We were following the Polish army. We found ourselves between two fighting armies. Sometimes we had to wait when the bullets were flying from one end to another. After a week, we slept overnight in an apartment house. In the morning, the Germans were there. The first thing they did, they confiscated the horse and buggies. They needed the horses for the army so on foot we had to go back to Krakow.

² According to Janina's *Petition for Naturalization* to become a United States citizen, she was born March 5, 1920.

³ Krakow (also known as 'Cracow') is the second largest city in Poland, situated on the Vistula River. The city is one of the oldest in Poland and dates back to the 7th century.

⁴ The city of Wieliczka lies in the south central part of Poland in the Krakow metropolitan area.

⁵ Gdynia is a city in Poland on the southern coast of the Baltic Sea. It is part of the larger suburban area of Gdansk, Poland. After World War I, this territory was given to Poland so as to provide them with a route to the Baltic Sea. The 'Danzig' Corridor, as it was called by the Germans, was a major source of contention between the two countries as it split Germany into two with East Prussia no longer connected to Germany proper. During World War II the Danzig Corridor was occupied by the Germans, including Gdansk and Gdynia. Gdansk was renamed 'Danzig' by the Germans. After the war, Gdynia and Gdansk were both returned to Poland and assumed their original names.

Sara: Hold on were you at that time?

Janina: I was 19.

Sara: What other members of your family were there?

Janina: I was with my mother [Irma]. My father [Marc] was in another city. During the war, we went back to Krakow and when they start forming ghetto, I said I didn't want to go to a ghetto.⁶ So we went to Wieliczka.⁷ They called . . . the whole city was a ghetto, but you could live anywhere you like. We didn't know what plans the Germans had for Wieliczka. Finally they said they wanted to make it *Judenrein* [German: Jew free].⁸ You understand? That was, I think, 1942. They ask everybody to come to the marketplace. My friend gave for me and for my mother a false ID [identification]. He took me on a bicycle and my mother went on horse and buggy to Krakow. We went to stay for a while with a maid who used to work for us for about ten years when we were living in Krakow. We couldn't stay long so we decided to go east to Lwow [Polish: Lwów]⁹ where nobody know us. We were afraid with forged papers somebody may just call our name, which was not the name on our papers, so we went to Lwow.

I tried to get a job with a company just like Hasting [sp: 5:12] here, selling product like Hasting. They said I had to leave my papers with them. The *Gestapo*¹⁰ had to check who is getting employed by the company. They let me know when to come. We were staying in Lwów with one of my mother's friends who was Ukrainian. On the same floor, there was a Polish Baroness. She was renting rooms. There was a young German student who was studying forestry in Lwow. [He was] trying to go away, not to be drafted to the Russian front. That was a German

⁶ In March 1941, the Germans ordered the establishment of a ghetto in the south of Krakow. Between 15,000 and 20,000 Jews lived within the ghetto boundaries, which were enclosed by barbed-wire fences and, in places, by a stone wall. The Germans established several forced labor factories and camps within and near the ghetto. Almost half of the ghetto's inhabitants were murdered or deported to labor and extermination camps in spring and summer of 1942. In March 1943, the remainder of the Krakow ghetto was liquidated.

⁷ In May 1941 Germans set up a ghetto in Wieliczka, in which they held about 7,000 people and was liquidated on August 28, 1942. Most of the Jews were transferred to the ghetto in Krakow, and from there to the death camps.

⁸ *Judenrein* is a German term that means to be "cleansed" of or "pure" from Jews. The term was used to denote areas where all of the Jewish population had been murdered or deported.

⁹ Also spelled 'Lvov.' Lwów was once a Polish town in the southeast of Poland. It is approximately 450 kilometers east of Krakow, Poland. Since World War II, it is known as 'Lviv' and is a city in western Ukraine. The Germans renamed the town 'Lemberg' and established a ghetto there in 1941. By August 1942, more than 65,000 Jews had been deported from the Lwow ghetto and murdered. In 1943, the ghetto was destroyed.

¹⁰ *Gestapo* is an abbreviation for *Geheime Staatspolizei*, the secret state police of Nazi Germany. 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. The Gestapo ruthlessly rounded up Jews throughout Europe for deportation to extermination camps.

from Sudetenland¹¹ from Czechoslovakia.¹² We became friends. He was my age. Then they called me that I am accepted but I had to go get my papers at the city hall. When I came to the city hall to get my papers, a *Gestapo* in civilian clothing came and said, “You know what? Your papers are forged.” I said, “What makes you think that?” He said, “You know what? Look. We didn’t pay attention.” He flipped my picture, which was on the lid. It was not signed. Everybody who tried to get their papers, when they made their application, they signed their picture so if they get separated, they know which picture belongs to which papers. My picture wasn’t signed. He took my pocket book, threw everything on the table and looked around and picked the card from the German student. He said, “You know that man?” I said, “Very well. He’s my friend.” He almost let me go away. He said, “You know what? I have to go to another room. Wait for me here.” When he went to another room, I ran away. I ran away and that night I spend in a dumpster. The next morning I went to the cousin of the Ukrainian lady where my mother and I were staying. I told her to tell my mother to go away because they may come and look for me there. So my mother left and I told her to tell her we’d meet back in Krakow, that I am going back to Krakow. I found out that that German . . . the *Gestapo* man who let me go away . . . that German student was his cousin. He was afraid he was involved in my forged papers. So I was really lucky.

I was afraid to go from the main train station so I took the bus back to the next station of the train and went back to Krakow. My mother went back to Krakow too. We met at the maid’s [house] who used to work for us. She took us to a convent of Saint Albert’s order.¹³ She told them that we were escaped from Germany from forced labor,¹⁴ that we are Christian and

¹¹ The *Sudetenland* was an area along the border of Bohemia and Moravia near the Sudeten Mountains. The *Sudetenland* had a predominately German population that was incorporated into the boundaries of Czechoslovakia after World War I. The area became a major source of contention between Germany and Czechoslovakia until the Munich Conference yielded it to Germany in 1938 as an attempt at appeasing the Germans.

¹² Czechoslovakia is the common reference for the Czechoslovak Republic, a state that was founded in 1918 from several provinces after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian state at the end of World War I. It was occupied by Nazi Germany in 1938. From 1948 until 1989, it was under Soviet control. In 1993, Czechoslovakia separated peacefully into two new countries, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

¹³ Albert Chmielowski (1845-1916) was a Polish religious brother and founder of the Albertines. He is a saint of the Catholic Church. He began a life of working with and for the poorest of Krakow. He founded the Brothers of the Third Order of Saint Francis, Servants of the Poor, known as the “Albertines” or the “Grey Brothers”. Later, he founded the women’s congregation of the Order. The Albertines established shelters to give warmth and shelter for the most vulnerable and soup kitchens for the hungry, as well as nurseries and institutions for homeless children and youth. During the Nazi occupation of Krakow, many Jewish girls found shelter in the Albertine convent.

¹⁴ The Germans subjected millions of people (both Jews and other victim groups) to forced labor both inside and outside concentration camp, often under brutal conditions. Forced labor was often pointless and humiliating, and imposed without proper equipment, clothing, nourishment, or rest.

that we are escaped from forced labors. The people in the convent took us in. It was a working convent. They had abandoned children, old people, crazy people. When the Germans came, they liquidated all the psychiatric wards.¹⁵ They killed the dangerous. The un-dangerous, they left in the street. The convent took them in. So we had all kinds of crazy people I had to motivate. I had to work. We were cooking meals for the prison, which was down the street . . . not the big one, a small prison. We were doing all kinds of work. Across the street was a hospital owned by monks. We were doing laundry for them. We were peeling potatoes and cooking soups for the prison. I had to motivate the crazy folks to peel the potatoes, to do some kind of work. I was there two-and-a-half years with my mother. We didn't have any papers, because I lost the papers. They were no good anymore because I was arrested with the false papers. When we were in the convent, we didn't have any papers. Then, in East Poland, when the Ukrainians collaborated with the Germans . . . the Germans promised them that after they win the war, they would make their own country.¹⁶ They had never had their own country. They were always part under Polish government and Russian and Romanian. So they collaborated with the Germans. They were killing Polish people in the East. A lot of Polish people from the east were coming west. Many came to Krakow. Since there were so many people, they established an office which were making papers for them. We took advantage of that. We went and registered under different name as people who came from East Poland to west to go away from the Ukrainians. So here we had the papers.

We were staying at the convent. There were all kinds of people there. There was one, she was a crippled lady. We were congregating together in that room. We were sleeping a few people sleeping in the same room with no water. There was water in the courtyard. In winter, it wasn't very nice to wash up in in Poland in the very cold temperature in the middle of the courtyard at the fountain. One of the ladies who came from eastern Poland was a schoolteacher. She was friendly with us. She sit with us and we were talking. One of the maids in the convent suspected that the woman was Jewish. She had a very dark complexion. And she suspected us.

¹⁵ The Germans practiced a euthanasia program derived from pseudo-scientific theory that considered psychiatric patients "life unworthy of life" (*lebensunwertes Leben*). In Germany and German-occupied territories during World War II, mentally and physically disabled patients living in psychiatric institutions were systematically murdered.

¹⁶ In Ukraine, as in German-occupied territories in 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. Nationalists in the west of Ukraine were among the most enthusiastic, hoping that their efforts would enable them to establish an independent state later on.

For a few liters of vodka and a few pounds of sugar, she went to the *Gestapo* and said that there are Jewish people in the convent. There was a nanny who had two small Jewish children. She was working for a doctor and his wife. I don't know if they went to concentration camp.¹⁷ She was keeping the children. She was dressing the boy in dresses. Anyways, I was going out. The food in the convent was very bad. We didn't have much bread. We were eating barley soups cooked with horse . . . not meat . . . horse buns from horse. I was going out to work a few days a week to a couple which were working selling some produce in the market. I was keeping their house when they were away. Next morning, I was going to that place to work. I saw *Gestapo* coming but I didn't know where they going. I went to work. After awhile, a girl came from the convent and she said "Go away because *Gestapo* came. They took your mother, took the children and took the schoolteacher from Eastern Poland. They took them to the big prison at Montelupich¹⁸ in Krakow." I said, "Now it's too late." It was very close to the convent. I said, "Now it's too late." I closed the door. I heard a knock on the door. I opened the door and hid behind the door. They run into the house. The same door, I run in the stairs down. When they saw that I am not there in the house, they went in the staircase. They were shooting in the staircase. But I was already out—that was three stories—in the street. I went to the next house and asked the Polish people to let me stay. "The *Gestapo* is after me." I stayed there until the evening. In the evening, I went to another convent where I knew that a Jewish woman with a daughter is hiding. I went there. She said her cousin from the country came to visit her. So I was staying in the other convent. There were a few people there, like a girl who used to be in the Polish army. She had an apartment. She said, "Why would you stay here? Why won't you come to my apartment?" So I went to stay to her apartment.

¹⁷ The term *concentration camp* refers to a camp in which people are detained or confined, usually under harsh conditions and without regard to legal norms of arrest and imprisonment that are acceptable in a constitutional democracy. In Nazi Germany between 1933 and 1945, concentration camps (Konzentrationslager; KL or KZ) were an integral feature of the regime.

¹⁸ Montelupich Prison is a jail located on Montelupich Street in Krakow, which was used by the *Gestapo* throughout World War II. Only male prisoners were held at the Montelupich prison; females were housed in a nearby convent. The Jewish political prisoners in Montelupich were treated much worse than the other prisoners. They lived in the cellar, were given paltry food rations, and were frequently tortured. After weeks or months in the prison, they were transferred to Plaszow to be killed or sent to Auschwitz or Gross-Rosen. It is still a prison today.

In the meantime, my mother was in prison. The children were lucky because the Red Cross¹⁹ took them to Sweden. The lady, which was not Jewish, arrested with my mother, was being interrogated. The Ukrainian asked the *Gestapo*, “Why are you interrogating her?” He said, “Because she’s Jewish.” He said, “No. She was my teacher in Lwów. She is not Jewish.” So they let her go. She told me later she was with my mother in Montelupich. In the meantime . . . that was two days before Christmas in 1944 . . . I was staying with that girl which took me from the convent to her apartment. [On] the eighteenth of January, the Russians came so we were liberated but they evacuated the prison. I don’t know if they killed my mother in the prison or during the evacuation. I was free here because the Russians came. We came out in the morning. We saw the killed Germans, the horses in the street. Most of them were without shoes because the Polish people were taking off the shoes and the clothes and everything from them. Anyway, for us, that was the day of liberation. The war was still going on until May, but in Krakow we were free already on January 18, 1945.²⁰

After the war ended, I found a job as a secretary in the office who was building the high voltage lines for the electrification of the country. I was secretary to electrical engineer. I was working there. They gave me . . . all that belonged to the government because it was the communist government. All the employees . . . I got another apartment. There was an apartment and everybody, whoever was . . . They gave me a room in the apartment. We all had the same kitchen. I was working in the office. Then I met my husband. I went to the Jewish center to see . . . everybody, most Jewish people . . . My husband came from Bavaria. He was liberated by the Americans in Bavaria. He was not my husband then. We all came to the Jewish center to see who was left alive. I didn’t have anybody. My father was left alive. He was on forged papers. He was working as a Christian for *Organisation Todt*.²¹ You know what was *Organisation Todt*? They

¹⁹ The International Committee of the Red Cross (“Red Cross”) is a humanitarian institution based in Geneva, Switzerland. During World War II, the Red Cross was able to rescue some children and prisoners from Nazi persecution.

²⁰ German forces evacuated Krakow on January 17, 1945 and Soviet forces officially entered the city two days later, on January 19, 1945. The war in Europe officially ended on May 7, 1945 when German General Alfred Jodl signed an unconditional surrender to the Allies in Reims, France. The following day, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel officially surrendered to Soviet forces in Berlin.

²¹ *Organisation Todt* was a civil and military engineering group named after its founder, Fritz Todt, an engineer and senior Nazi figure. The organization was responsible for a huge range of large-scale construction projects including military factories and fortifications both in pre-World War II Germany and in Nazi Germany occupied territories during the war. One of its primary responsibilities was building the *Autobahn* (highway) network in Germany. It became notorious for using forced labor. About 1.4 million laborers worked for Todt, among them concentration camp prisoners, prisoners-of-war and compulsory laborers from occupied countries. Many did not survive.

were the ones . . . Germans . . . they were building the bridges which were bombed by Polish underground and all that. My father was architect, an engineer.

Sara: What was your father's name?

Janina: Marc Prinz [sp]. He was an architect with a Vienna diploma. They sent him with the *Organisation Todt*. He had forged papers from a crazy guy from an institution as a Christian. They sent him towards Latvia to the territory by Vilna [Lithuania]. He was working, directing the people to reconstruct the bombed bridges, whatever was needed to be done. When the Russians came they arrested him, they thought he was German. It took three months before he came home. So he survived the war and my mother didn't.

Sara: Do you know what happened with your mother?

Janina: I don't know what happened. I know that she was in Montelupich prison. When they saw the Russians coming they evacuated the prison. I don't know if they killed some of them inside the prison or during the evacuation.

Sara: Did you have any siblings?

Janina: I have half-sister and half-brother.

Sara: What happened with them?

Janina: They're here. My half-sister is in Poland and my half-brother is in New York [City, New York].

Sara: I want to go back in time. You said you started working as a secretary.

Janina: After the war.

Sara: After the war. What kind of education did you get?

Janina: I studied two years of law. That was as far as I could get. I had studied in Gdynia [Poland]. That school was . . . something new . . . that was combination . . . the *Lyceum*. We had to study law for Maritime Law to work in Maritime commerce. We had a law professor which was one of the founders of the Polish Maritime Law.²² Then I had to run. With the last train, we went [to Krakow]. That was as far as I went. I had two years of college.

Sara: Was it common in those days for a young woman to go to college, to go to the University?

²² Gdynia Maritime University was established in 1920 and is the largest state school of higher maritime education in Poland and one of the largest in Europe. The University prepared graduates for officer positions on marine vessels and administrative and managerial positions at land-based companies and institutions in the maritime industry.

Janina: Of course. Sure. It was not like you went to college to another place. You were at home. We didn't have dorms or like here that you go and stay at college. You were going to college but you were living at home.

Sara: How would you describe the social-economic status of your family?

Janina: We were middle class, well-to-do, not rich but comfortable. My mother was piano teacher and language. She was a playing concert pianist before she married. Then when she married, my father didn't like her to do it anymore.

Sara: As far as your Jewish identity . . .

Janina: That was one of the things of the intellectuals in Poland—they were more assimilated. I was not the one that live in a *shtetl*.²³ I didn't live in a ghetto.²⁴ I was always living between the Christians. My family was . . . we knew that we were Jewish, my family. They went twice a year or three times a year to the synagogue. They didn't speak Yiddish.²⁵ In that time, they were from Galicia,²⁶ so they spoke German because Galicia was occupied by Austria. In a sense, many people were talking, "I'm not Jewish. I don't speak Yiddish." I understand [Yiddish] because my husband was from an Orthodox Jewish²⁷ family in Krakow. He spoke with his family Yiddish. Because I spoke German, I understand everything in Yiddish. But I don't speak Yiddish.

Sara: How did you meet your husband?

Janina: When I was working as a secretary, there was a girl in the convent who was a runaway from Belzec [Polish: Belżec].²⁸ She was in the convent with me. She was not arrested during that time. She was working. She was a seamstress. She lost her husband and child in the camp.

²³ The Yiddish term for town, *shtetl* commonly refers to small towns or villages in pre-World War II Eastern and Central Europe with a significant Jewish presence that were primarily Yiddish speaking.

²⁴ The term 'ghetto' originated in the sixteenth century first in Venice and then all over Europe. The term referred to areas within cities where members of minorities (typically Jews) lived and were often restricted to by the authorities as a way to separate them from the majority Christian population. During World War II, the Germans used ghettos to further segregate and imprison regional Jewish populations.

²⁵ Yiddish is the common historical language of Ashkenazi Jews from Central and Eastern Europe. It is heavily Germanic based but uses the Hebrew alphabet. The language was spoken or understood as a common tongue for many European Jews up until the middle of the twentieth century.

²⁶ Galicia was a political and geographical region between present-day Poland and Ukraine. Once a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the historical region disappeared from the European map after World War I. By the start of World War II in 1939, western Galicia was occupied by the Germans and eastern Galicia was occupied by the Soviet Union. Today, the east part of former Galicia is part of the Ukraine, while the western part belongs to Poland.

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ In February 1942, the Germans began operating a concentration camp on the outskirts Belzec, of a town in southeastern Poland. Belzec was part of the Operation Reinhard program, which also included the death camps of Sobibor and Treblinka. All three camps were pure extermination facilities, that is, the Germans intended that any Jews who went into the camp were never come out again.

She was working as a seamstress in a fur company. She was putting the lining in the fur coats. My job was to take the specifications of what the engineer was doing for the building of the high voltage lines between the cities. In the Polish government, you need . . . let's say that he made the specifications. I had to take the specifications to the Minister of the Interior to be approved, to get the parts to build it. When I was going out in the streets to do business for the office, I was doing business for myself. I went visiting my friends. One day I decided to go the fur place where my friend was working. They let me in in the salon where the people were coming to try on their furs. And they called her in to talk to me. In the meantime, people who were working in the [unintelligible 24:05] behind, they had a peephole to look in the salon, to see what customers came there. My husband was looking in the peephole. After I left, he said, "I'd like to meet the girl." So she told me, "Somebody would like to meet you. Why don't you meet him? He's making good money. He's a fur cutter." I had a blind date. That's the way we met.

Sara: What was his name?

Janina: Ike. In Polish . . . I-G-N-A-C-Y. Ignacy. In Yiddish, I think 'Itzhak.' His name was Itzhak . . . Isaac, I don't know. He had a Yiddish Name.

Sara: What else do you know about him?

Janina: About?

Sara: Your husband.

Janina: I met him after the war. His side of family who survived was already out of Poland. His brother went to Israel. His sister went to Germany, his married sister. Another sister was leaving. [She] married an Englishman, living in England.

Sara: Where was he born?

Janina: My husband? In Krakow. In Poland. He's native of Krakow.²⁹ We met in October. We went to visit my father, which was living in Chrzanow [Polish: Chrzanów],³⁰ which was, I don't know, 20 or 40 kilometers or miles west of Krakow. We were engaged in my father's house. We decided to get married next June. When we came back to Krakow, my husband said, "We cannot wait that long. We have to get married soon because I am planning to leave Poland. We have to leave Poland." So we decided to get married on his birthday, January 6.

²⁹ According to his *Petition for Naturalization* to become a US citizen, Ignacy Kozma was born January 6, 1914 in Krakow, Poland.

³⁰ Chrzanow [Polish: Chrzanów] is a town in south Poland approximately 50 kilometers west of Krakow. During World War II, all of its Jewish residents were forced into a ghetto and later transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Sara: What year?

Janina: In 1946. January 6, 1946. We had a civil wedding. We didn't have any Jewish wedding or anything like that. I didn't tell anybody. Then, in July, we left Poland. We crossed four borders illegally before we came to France. That's where my son was born. I was five months pregnant when we left Poland.

Sara: You said your husband came from a religious family.

Janina: He came from a very religious family in Krakow. They have wholesale dairy products in the Jewish quarter. It was called Kazimierz³¹ in Poland . . . in Krakow.

Sara: You crossed four borders illegally?

Janina: After the war, in July of 1946, I was five months pregnant. We decided to leave Poland. We had to hire somebody to pass us through the borders. We found somebody. That was \$100 per person. We paid him to pass us through the Polish-Czech borders. In the meantime, there were other preparations. We knew a shoemaker who put gold plates in the shoes and gold *Deutschmark*³² in our heels. Polish money was no good. So we bought German dollars. I was pregnant, so I had a belt on my stomach with money. We had two little pieces of luggage with our clothing. The one who was supposed to take care of our crossing over the border, he told us to go to Orlova [sp: 28:14], which was on the Polish-Czech border, and wait until he gave us the sign that we were ready to cross. We were staying two or three days in a hotel in Orlova. He said, "Today, leave your luggage in the room. My soldiers . . ." He was working with some border patrol who he was paying off, so they wouldn't bother us. There was a little creek. He said, "Just like young lovers, hold hands and go to the little bridge over the creek. On the other side, you'll be in Czechoslovakia." On the Polish side, nobody bothered us. We left our luggage. We passed the creek. We went on the Czech border. The Czech patrol took us in. That was during lunchtime. He frisked my husband. The woman who frisked the women wasn't there. She went to lunch break so nobody was frisking me. In the meantime, we never got our luggage. The

³¹ Kazimierz is a district in the city of Krakow that lies along the Vistula River. Historically, it was an independent town where Jews were moved in 1495 and separated from the Christian residents of the area. It became a bustling center of the Jewish diaspora in Europe until the walls around the Jewish quarters were torn down at the end of the 18th century. The district then became part of the city of Krakow. Wealthier Jews moved out of the crowded district but many stayed to be close to the many synagogues. During the German occupation of Krakow, the Nazis forced all of the city's Jews, including those in Kazimierz, into the ghetto in Podgórze, across the river. After the Holocaust, Kazimierz was essentially devoid of Jews. In recent years, the area has undergone a revival as a tourist destination and a center of Jewish culture.

³² The *Deutschmark* was the standard of money in West Germany from 1948 until 1990 and the unified Germany until it was replaced by the Euro in 2002.

Polish guys, they thought maybe we had money in the luggage. We just had everything what we had on . . . what we were wearing. Our luggage was gone. But we had the money. They thought everything is in the luggage. Nothing was in the luggage but clothes. They asked us where we want to go. My husband gave him two cartons of Polish cigarettes and he became a friend. He said, "Where do you want to go?" I said, "We want to go to Germany." My husband's sister was already established not far from Munich [Germany].³³ They had wholesale horses and cattles. They were making good money already. We didn't have any papers. When we crossed the border, we tore up all of our Polish papers. We didn't have a piece of paper on us. They put us on a wagon for cows, with the straw on the thing. A train to go to Orlova from Bratislava,³⁴ which was in Slovakia. We came to Slovakia and we had to spend the night over there. It was terrible. The bedbugs was eating us up. It was terrible. The next day they put us on a train, again for animals, to Vienna. On each crossing of the border, there was Russian patrol. That was before Austria broke away from the Russian government.³⁵ Austria was the first one to break away from the Communist government. They were lucky because the Czech and the Hungarian tried it later but they were more . . . [30:56].³⁶ They couldn't do it. Anyway, we came to Vienna [Austria].³⁷ When we came to Vienna, on the border there was still the Russians. They asked us, "What are you doing? Where are you going?" One of the people who was traveling with us said . . . we understood what they were saying, the Russians . . . but he said, "They don't understand. Those are Greeks who are coming from concentration camp going back to their country." So they let us

³³ 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.

³⁴ Bratislava is the capital of present-day Slovakia and is situated on the border of Austria and Hungary.

³⁵ After World War II, Austria was divided into zones and occupied by the Allied powers. During the Cold War, Austria was a controversial point of contention between the Soviet Union and the United States and its Western allies. In 1955, occupation ended when Austria was finally restored as an independent state and proclaimed a neutral country.

³⁶ Janina is referring to the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the Prague Spring of 1968. The Hungarian Revolution was a spontaneous revolt against the Communist government and its Soviet-imposed policies. In October of 1956, students and workers took to the streets, demanding more personal freedom, more food, the removal of the secret police, and the removal of Russian control. After initially promising to negotiate a withdrawal of forces from Hungary, the Soviets changed their mind. Instead, the Soviet Union and its allies invaded and crushed the revolution. In 1968, the Czechs enjoyed a brief period of political liberalization known as the Prague Spring. In January, the head of the Czechoslovak Communist Party led a series of reforms that promised improved civil rights and liberties and progress towards democracy. The Soviet Union and its allies saw these reforms as tantamount to counterrevolution. In August, they invaded the country and quickly occupied it, retaking positions of power and halting any reforms.

³⁷ Vienna is the capital and largest city of Austria. It is Austria's primary city, with a population of about 1.8 million, and is the cultural, political, and economic center of Austria. At the time Janina arrived in Vienna immediately following World War II, tensions between the Soviets and the United States and its Western allies were high over who would control Austria and its capital.

go again. From Austria, we came to Munich. In Munich there were already Americans.³⁸ So we were free in one sense. In another, they wanted to put us in a . . . how do you say . . . ?

Sara: Displaced persons camp?³⁹

Janina: No. No displaced persons camp. To camp to be sure we don't have any diseases . . .

Sara: Quarantine?

Janina: Quarantine. I say, "No way. I am not going to any quarantine." So we run away from the American office. We called his sister which was in Wurmansquick, close to Eggenfelden, close to Munich. She send a horse and buggy for us and we came to her house in Wurmansquick. She knew everybody in the United Nations office.⁴⁰ They were already a few months in Germany and established. They knew everybody. She took us to the [UNRRA].⁴¹ They legalized us. They gave us the DP [displaced persons] papers. We stayed with his sister in that small place. Then we went to DP camp in Eggenfelden,⁴² which was a little bigger. I said, "I don't want my child to be born here in Germany." So here we decided to go to France. My husband's brother was living in Paris [France]. We paid again. There were French demilitarized people who were making business transporting people through German-French border through Strasbourg [France].⁴³ We paid them again. It was \$100 per person. I was in my ninth month. In [city name: 33:13], they had military one . . . what you put down the sides, the canvas sides

³⁸ From 1945 to 1949, Germany was occupied by the Allied forces and divided into four administrative zones by the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, France and the United States of America. The American Occupied zone was in the southern portion of Germany and included the cities of Munich, Frankfurt am Main, Stuttgart, and Nürnberg.

³⁹ When the war ended in Europe, millions of people were left uprooted and homeless. They were classified as displaced persons (DPs). Allied forces established temporary facilities known as Displaced Persons Camps (DP camps) in Austria, Italy, and Germany. Often, shelter was improvised and DPs found themselves housed in everything from former military barracks, summer camps and airports to castles, hotels and even private homes. In 1946 and 1947, the number of DPs in the camps rose substantially and conditions were often overcrowded and harsh. New organization and policies eventually took shape that substantially improved the DPs camps. Refugees were given some authority to manage their own affairs and some survivors began to establish new political and cultural lives. Many DPs married and started families while in the camps. 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.

⁴⁰ Wurmansquick is a town approximately 100 kilometers east of Munich in Bavaria in Germany. After World War II, it was in the American zone of Germany.

⁴¹ 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.

⁴² Eggenfelden is a town 110 kilometers east of Munich in Bavaria in Germany. After World War II, it was in the American zone of Germany. A DP camp was established in Eggenfelden in late 1945.

⁴³ Strasbourg is a city in northeastern France located close to the border with Germany.

closed. They took us through Strasbourg to the city of Nancy⁴⁴ in France. There was this . . . UNRRA . . . United Nations. Everybody was already there. They asked us where we want to go. So they gave us free tickets from Nancy [France] to go to Paris. We came to his brother's house. We found out he was with his wife and child on vacation in Switzerland. So a neighbor took us in. We stayed overnight.

Then my husband says, "We have to legalize ourselves. We are illegally in France. We have German DP papers, which is not a passport. We are illegal in France and we'll be arrested." Next morning, we came to Nancy [on] November 1. Then we came to Paris. On the fourth, we went to go to take pictures to go to the prefecture of police to take our temporary papers, IDs. We were sitting on the big boulevard, drinking coffee and having breakfast. All of a sudden, I got in pain. I got in pain and we couldn't go. We never made it to make the pictures to go the prefecture of police. We didn't speak French then. My husband called a taxi. The taxi didn't ask anything. He looked at me and took me to Roche Hospital in . . . [35:05] in France. They didn't ask anything either. They had socialized medicine⁴⁵ so they didn't ask who would pay for it or whatever. They admitted me to the hospital and told my husband to go. They say, "Come tomorrow. It's the first child so it'll take a little longer." So I came to the floor [35:25] to the hospital. My son was born the next morning. There were 16 women in the room: eight on each side and 16 babies in the middle and no nursery. They kept a woman eight days in hospital in France in that time. My husband didn't come one day, second day, third day. The women started asking me, "Do you have a husband?" I said, "When I came here, I had a husband." The fourth day, he came. He was arrested. He went in a hotel because he didn't want to stay at the friends' house. So he went to the hotel. At the hotel, they were checking the list. They saw the name. Who is he? He didn't have any papers. They arrested him. When they arrested him, with interpreter he explained everything. He said his wife is having baby over there. They checked [it] out. They gave him temporary papers. They said, "When your wife is ready, bring your wife and baby." It's not like here where you fill out the paper and mail for to renew your papers. You had to go and spend the whole day at the prefecture of police with a new baby. That's what happened. After eight days, when I was ready, I went back to the hotel where my husband was.

⁴⁴ Nancy is a city in northeastern France.

⁴⁵ Socialized medicine is a term used to describe medical and hospital services administered by a government and paid for from funds obtained usually by assessments, philanthropy, or taxation.

We went to the prefecture to get temporary papers for three months, then for six months, then for a year.⁴⁶ We were staying in France ten years. My husband was working as a furrier.

Sara: You were pregnant when you were running from one country to the other?

Janina: Yes. Never see a doctor.

Sara: When you think about that, what . . .

Janina: When you're young, you don't think about it! You just go! My husband was trading Polish cigarettes for some kind of food. The food they were giving us was bad. I was pregnant, there was no milk, none of . . . he had to trade for when we were traveling. Then once we came to Germany, his sister had everything. Then when we went to France, after . . . another story. Everybody take advantage of you when you are a newcomer. The saddest thing is that there were people who are Polish Jews from concentration camp. They sold us an apartment, which didn't belong to him. We were there. We had to leave it to buy another one. That was not that you bought apartment. That was just key money, to be able to get in. We paid like . . . that was 150,000 *francs* . . . I don't know how much that was in dollars. Anyway, he sold us apartment that didn't belong to him. We had to leave it to buy another one. Then we stayed in the other ten years.

Sara: So your son was born in France?

Janina: My son was born in France. Yes. November 5, 1946.

Sara: What . . . How did you name him?

Janina: Georges. I don't know why. No, I remember. I remember why. My mother was always talking about [and] was very taken by Chopin and his girlfriend, George Sand,⁴⁷ and she was telling . . . I named him 'Georges.' I don't know why. His name is Georges. He's an anesthesiologist in Sarasota, Florida.

Sara: So you spent ten years in France?

Janina: In France and one year in Munich. Then the French government was very unstable. They were challenging all the time. Every new minister which came tried to make new rules to better the French economy. One who came was blocked out the import of raw pelts from Canada.

⁴⁶ After World War II, the French government instituted an active immigration policy in order to reconstruct the economy and increase population growth. The National Office of Immigration allowed three types of residence permits: a "temporary permit" that was valid for one year; an "ordinary" permit that was valid for 3 years; and a "privileged" permit that was valid for 10 years.

⁴⁷ Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849) is widely considered to be one of Poland's greatest composers. Chopin had a long time love affair with French novelist Aurore Dedevant, aka, George Sand. The couple lived outside of Paris, France for many years.

So there was not much work in the fur business. My husband's sister was living in Germany, in Munich. When the climate was much better for fur business, she found him a job in a big company in Munich. He went to work there. I went there. We went for one year. We lived one year in Munich before we came to America. His sister, the one from England, came to America. Her husband came on a contract from General Motors.⁴⁸ She sent us the papers because it was no future in France. The economy was very bad. We didn't want to live permanently in Germany. His sister sent us the papers. It took a year when we were in Munich. It took a year to get a quota number.⁴⁹

Sara: Did the thought of going to Israel, then Palestine, ever cross your mind?

Janina: Never. My husband's brother, yes. My husband's brother went to Israel. My husband had a brother in Paris, France, which later immigrated to Australia. He was very religious. From Australia, he sent his daughter to *yeshiva*,⁵⁰ to London. He wanted her to marry a rabbi. He had a hat factory in Australia, in Melbourne.⁵¹ The brother who went through the Israeli war of 1948.⁵² After the war, [he] went to Australia. [He] came to us, stayed with us for a while, then went to Australia. He's a professionalist, too . . . a hat maker . . . so he was working with his brother. Then when his brother wanted his daughter to marry a rabbi. He wanted to move to Israel. So he moved to Israel. The other brother bought out his share in the hat factory. They moved to Israel. The daughter married a rabbi. The rabbi couldn't make a living as a rabbi, so he was selling

⁴⁸ Founded in 1908, General Motors Company is a corporation that designs, manufactures, markets and distributes vehicles and vehicle parts. General Motors had opened an automobile factory northeast of Atlanta, Georgia in Doraville in 1947. General Motors was a major employer in the Atlanta area and contributed to continued post-war industrial growth in the area.

⁴⁹ In response to fears about influxes of Communist or Asian immigrants, the United States Congress passed the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952. The 1952 Act established a national quota at a rate of one-sixth percent of each nationality's population in the United States in 1920. As a result, the majority of the visas annually available were allotted to immigrants from northern and western Europe. Eastern Europeans who fell under communistic Soviet Union rule were given minimal quotas to enter the United States.

⁵⁰ *Yeshiva* (Hebrew for "sitting") is a Jewish educational institution for religious instruction that is equivalent to high school. It also refers to a *Talmudic* college for unmarried male students from their teenage years to their early twenties.

⁵¹ Melbourne is the capital city of Australia, located on the south east coast. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, many displaced survivors emigrated from Europe to Australia, settling in cities like Melbourne.

⁵² The Arab-Israeli War of 1948 broke out when five Arab nations invaded territory in the former Palestinian mandate immediately following the announcement of the independence of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948. Fighting continued until February 1949, when Israel and its neighboring states of Egypt, Lebanon, Transjordan, and Syria agreed to formal armistice lines.

insurance. <laughing> His brother passed away in Jerusalem,⁵³ but the family still lives there . . . his wife and the daughter, who has six or seven children . . . who knows. They live in Israel.

Sara: When you came to America, where did you go?

Janina: We first came right away to Atlanta [Georgia]⁵⁴ because my husband's sister was living here. Her husband was working for General Motors. He was the one who sent us the papers. He provided the guarantee for the housing to stay with her. She was working for [unintelligible: 42:37] Brazil. She knew the owner. She was very friendly with the owner. The owner gave us the guarantee of work. We had a guarantee of work and guarantee where to stay. We wouldn't be a burden for the government. She sent us the papers, but it took one year to get the quota number because Polish quota was overloaded. We came to New York [City]. She was waiting. We came on [RMS] *Queen Mary*.⁵⁵ I have a picture here when we [were] boarding *Queen Mary*. Because we were ten years . . . we came about . . . after Christmas 1956 . . . we were already ten years . . . my husband was working ten years after the war. None of the organizations would pay for us, so we paid our own way. We came on *Queen Mary* from Cherbourg.⁵⁶ We had to travel. We had a lot of luggage. We were buying things they said was cheaper over there than here, like silver and crystal and all that. It was easier to go on the boat than by plane. We had to take that many pounds per person on the ship to come to America.

Sara: What year was that?

Janina: We arrived in New York [City] on January 4, 1957. His sister was waiting for us. We spent a night in New York. Then we took the train to Atlanta. We stayed with her for two or three months. Then we rented our own place. My husband couldn't work in his profession. Atlanta wasn't good for to be in the fur business. He went to New York to look for work. A lot of people from Krakow he knew were long time already established furriers in New York. They

⁵³ Jerusalem is the capital of the State of Israel. It is also Israel's largest, most populated and most religiously diverse city as it is considered a holy place in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim tradition.

⁵⁴ Atlanta is the capital of the state of Georgia, located in the southeast of the United States of America. The city is one of the largest metropolitan areas in the US and home to one of the largest Jewish populations in the South.

⁵⁵ *RMS Queen Mary* is an ocean liner operated from 1936 to 1967 by the Cunard Line. The *Queen Mary* primarily sailed in the North Atlantic Ocean between Southampton (England), Cherbourg (France) and New York City (USA). During World War II, the liner was converted to carry Allied troops. After the war, the liner was returned to passenger service, continuing transatlantic service.

⁵⁶ The passenger manifest for the *RMS Queen Mary* shows Ignacy, Janina, and Georges Kozma leaving from Cherbourg, a port city located in northwestern France, on December 29, 1956 and arriving in New York on January 4, 1957. Ignacy and Janina are listed as "stateless", whereas Georges is listed as "French." Next to their names, "HIAS" is handwritten, suggesting they received some form of assistance from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

gave him a job but there was a union.⁵⁷ He was coming at the end, so he had to wait. The union wouldn't let . . . he got a job but he couldn't take the job. He said somebody from the union who is before you was on the list. He was aggravated. He came back. We bought a grocery store and that's where we were working, in a grocery store.

Sara: What were your first impressions of Atlanta?

Janina: From Atlanta? Atlanta was okay. There was only one high rise—the Fulton National Bank.⁵⁸ There was only one high rise here. I thought for to raise a child, it was much better. Even when my husband was thinking about moving to New York, in case he get a job in his profession, I still said, “If I have to go to New York, I'd rather go back to Paris.” I didn't want to live in New York. So we bought a grocery store in the colored section.

Sara: Where was your first home in Atlanta?

Janina: My first home was next to the grocery store in the colored section.

Sara: In what street?

Janina: Ira Street. I-R-A. You know what Ira Street is? It's not far from McDaniel [Street]. I don't know . . . Ira and Windsor. The section Ira and Windsor [Street].⁵⁹ We had on corner of Ira and I don't know what the other . . . Anyway, a lot of the places were taking for the MARTA . . . for something . . . they were taking a lot of places.⁶⁰ My husband was shot over there during the hold up. After he was shot, we sold the place. We got another place—another problem—on Simpson Road.⁶¹ You know where Simpson Road is? He was shot there, too. I had a hold up. I was lying on the floor with a gun to my side, too. After all that, we sold the one on Simpson. My

⁵⁷ The International Fur and Leather Workers Union was a labor union that represented workers in the fur and leather trades. The union merged with the Amalgamated Butcher and Meat Cutters of North America in 1955.

⁵⁸ The Fulton National Bank Building was a 21-story office building located at 55 Marietta Street in Atlanta, Georgia. After its completion in 1958, it was the tallest building in Atlanta until 1961. The bank is no longer in existence but the building still stands in Atlanta.

⁵⁹ Ira Street, McDaniel Street, and Windsor Street are in an area of Atlanta, Georgia known as “Mechanicsville.” Mechanicsville is situated just south of downtown and one of the city's oldest neighborhoods. Once a vibrant area, Mechanicsville was home to middle and working class families. Towards the end of the twentieth century, the area declined thanks to urban renewal, migration to the suburbs, and the construction of interstates and a stadium.

⁶⁰ MARTA is the common term for the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, which was created in 1965. During the 1970s, MARTA began acquiring land in and around the city of Atlanta, Georgia for construction of a rapid rail system. Today, MARTA operates a rail system with feeder bus operation and park-and-ride facilities throughout the metropolitan Atlanta area. Presumably she means that when MARTA was being built that houses and property were being bought so the lines could be laid down.

⁶¹ Simpson Road runs west of downtown Atlanta. In 2008, it was renamed Joseph E. Boone Boulevard in honor of Atlanta civil rights activist and organizer, Joseph E. Boone. The road runs through a neighborhood known as Bankhead, a high crime and poverty-stricken area that has received some notoriety from well-known rap artists from the area.

husband went to work in a liquor store. I bought a store on Piedmont [Avenue],⁶² next to [. . . and Gabriel . . . 47:01]. It used to be [B . . . Market 47:03]. I named it Morningside Food. My husband wasn't working. There was nothing for him to do. He was working at the liquor place. I had a butcher. I had concession in my place so I didn't have to be bothered. The store was mostly delivery service. I had a deliveryman, a truck, and a clerk and a few telephones. My sister-in-law was at one register. I was at the other. There was not much traffic coming in or out. Most was delivery from Ansley Park,⁶³ people who had maids and didn't want to send the maids shopping. They were placing telephone orders and I was delivering. My driver was delivering. Then a lot of people started running in the suburbs, during the integration times. A lot of my customers were running. When it came to renew the lease, I didn't want to renew the lease. I was there from 1971 to 1976. I was over there five-and-a-half years.

Sara: What was the name of your first store?

Janina: Ira Street Market. I have a picture some place of the store. I'll have to find the picture of the store, of the boy who was working for us. At that time, when we had our own store, we had our own meat department. My husband had to butcher. He was trying to learn whatever was needed. We had a house next to the store. The house, the store . . . that was a white section before. The section was changing. The owner was . . . I don't know if you know the name . . . Peterman [sp]. His son was a dentist. He has two places. One some place in Conyers.⁶⁴ He was 75 then. He was selling that place and we bought it. Why we want? Because some of my husband's family already had stores in . . . I don't remember . . . Magnolia Street or some place in colored [sections]. They came from Germany before us. You know the name Dziejewski? That's my husband family. The oldest brother Dziejewski . . . Karl [sp] . . . my husband's sister was married to him. There were three brothers Dziejewski. Felix . . . his wife is still living. She remarried after he died. The youngest, Herman, and Marie Dziejewski live on Lenox Circle. Herman died two or three years ago. Maria still lives on Lenox Circle. So that was my husband's family.

Sara: When did you decide to go into the grocery [business]?

⁶² Piedmont Road is a main thoroughfare to the northeast of downtown Atlanta. It connects two of Atlanta's wealthier neighborhoods, Buckhead and historic Ansley Park.

⁶³ Ansley Park is an early twentieth-century residential district in Atlanta, Georgia. It is located just north of downtown Atlanta and west of Piedmont Park. The neighborhood continues to be popular with middle to upper class residents. Ansley Park has been designated as a Historic District and is on the National Registry of Historic Places.

⁶⁴ Conyers, Georgia is a suburban town located 24 miles east of Atlanta, Georgia.

Janina: We decided when my husband didn't want to go work for like \$3 or \$5 or minimum wage at some place or whatever, doing something here. We didn't know the language. We didn't speak English. I could not get any job at minimum wage. Maria and Herman Dziewinski had a grocery store on Magnolia Street. They were doing really good in their business. They advised us to do the same thing. We started looking for a grocery business. We bought a grocery business. We stayed ten years over there.

Sara: How did you do?

Janina: How did we do? We were living. We bought a house. We paid for my son's education at Emory [University—Atlanta, Georgia].⁶⁵ He never had a loan. He never had to get a loan. His studies were . . . when they finish [college or university studies], other children have to start with paying off the [student] loan. He never had a loan because we were paying [for] his studies.

Sara: In those days, aside from your work, what other activities did you have?

Janina: What other activities? There was not much. I don't know. We were going to the community center. There were classes, different classes. I started first [with] Israeli folk dancing with Vivian Miller [sp]. You remember Vivian and Paul Miller? They divorced and each one remarried somebody else. She was having the Israeli folk dance classes at the community center on Peachtree [Street].⁶⁶ So we were going to the community center. They offered some classes. My husband had his family, so they were meeting. They were playing bridge. We were playing cards. The kids were small, so we had other people, which had children the same age. We were going to Lake Spivey,⁶⁷ to Lake Lanier,⁶⁸ and to other places on weekends.

Sara: How about a synagogue? Did you join one?

Janina: Yes. We were . . . that's a story. My husband's sister, Sasha [sp] Dziewinski [52:21], the oldest Dziewinski wife, was my husband's sister. They were Orthodox. They send from Germany their daughter to *yeshiva* in London. But then she came back. After a few months, she quit. When they came from Germany, they stayed three months with us here. She is the same age as my son. She is three months older than my son. Erna Dziewinski Martino. You know her? Her husband is a lawyer. Anyway, they stayed with us. She was wearing long sleeves and

⁶⁵ Emory University is a private research university in a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia known as Druid Hills. The University is recognized internationally as an outstanding liberal arts college and a leader in health care. It has many graduate and professional schools, including schools of law, theology, and medicine.

⁶⁶ The Atlanta Jewish Community Center was located at 1745 Peachtree Street in Atlanta, Georgia.

⁶⁷ Lake Spivey is a 465 acre man-made lake located approximately 20 miles or 32 kilometers southeast of Atlanta, Georgia. Built in 1957, it is one of Georgia's largest privately owned lakes.

⁶⁸ Lake Lanier is a large man-made lake (38,000 acres or 59 square miles) in northern Georgia, created in 1956.

fighting with my son that he's in with her mother, that she's not enough kosher, that's no good, that's no good. After few weeks, she threw away that long sleeve business. She started walking around the house in bathing suit. I said, "Erna, there is a limit. You don't have to wear long sleeves, but you don't walk around the house in a bathing suit."

<interview pauses, then resumes>

Sara: I had asked you if you joined a synagogue.

Janina: We joined . . . my husband sister's belonged to Beth Jacob.⁶⁹ He wanted to be with her. When he was alive, he was at Beth Jacob. He was going with his sister and we were going there. In the beginning, when we came to the [United] States, my son was ten years old. He needed to be *bar mitzvahed*.⁷⁰ We were in the grocery store. To take him to Sunday school was not so good for us. We had a young lady who was preparing him for the *bar mitzvah*. He had his *bar mitzvah* at Anshi S'fard,⁷¹ but we really didn't belong there. Rabbi [Nathan] Katz⁷² was there at that time. I think Rabbi Katz was there. That was years ago. He was 13 and he's 55 now. He's twice divorced. He's not married now. He's got four children by his first wife. The oldest is 30. The youngest is 22. He's got two boys and two girls. After my husband died, I don't belong anywhere.

Sara: In what other ways have you made a living, aside from the grocery store business?

Janina: There's no other way. That was the only way. We tried to invest in real estate a little here or there. Most or all the Dziewinskis were in real estate. We were in some real estate ventures, too. Grocery and some real estate.

Sara: What other community involvement have you had? What other things have you done within the Jewish and the larger community?

Janina: What kind of things? What?

Sara: Have you participated in any volunteer activities?

⁶⁹ Beth Jacob is an Orthodox synagogue on Lavista Road in Atlanta founded in 1942 by former members of Ahavath Achim who were looking for a more Orthodox congregation. Beth Jacob is now Atlanta's largest Orthodox congregation. The first location was a converted house on Boulevard.

⁷⁰ Hebrew for 'son of commandment.' A rite of passage for Jewish boys aged 13 years and one day. At that time, a Jewish boy is considered a responsible adult for most religious purposes. He is now duty bound to keep the commandments, he puts on *tefillin*, and may be counted to the *minyan* quorum for public worship. He celebrates the *bar mitzvah* by being called up to the reading of the *Torah* in the synagogue, usually on the next available Sabbath after his Hebrew birthday.

⁷¹ Congregation Anshi S'fard is an Orthodox synagogue located in Atlanta, Georgia. It was founded in 1911 to provide a home for Hasidic worship and fellowship for Jews from Poland, Galicia and the Ukraine who had settled in Atlanta. It is the oldest Orthodox synagogue in Atlanta.

⁷² Rabbi Nathan Katz was the rabbi of Congregation Anshi S'fard from the 1950's until his death in 1998.

Janina: No. As long as I was working in a grocery, I didn't have much time to participate because we were working in a grocery. When I came home, I had to cook. Then my son was going to school. He was home until he finished his medical school. He married six months before he finished medical school and he moved in with us. I was taking care. He was in school. His wife was working. I was cooking and I was taking care of everybody. After he left home, that's quite a while. We went out . . . I was in last grocery in 1976. I was out in 1976 from Piedmont.

Sara: When you look back at your first, early years in Atlanta . . .

Janina: First? I came to Atlanta in 1957. How much? Forty-five years.

Sara: When you look back at your initial years in Atlanta, what memories do you have about the way you were received by the Jewish community and the rest of the community?

Janina: I don't know. We never had any financial assistance from the Jewish community. We came 12 years after the war. They thought we already made enough to support ourselves. We never had any financial support from the Jewish community. We had Jewish friends. I would participate in the holidays and whatever, visiting our friends and associating with them. Most of them were just people who owned groceries like we did. You know the family Small? Sidney Small? She [Martha Small] passed away. There were a lot. Nancy Sauls. Did you interview Nancy Sauls? But you know of her? They had a grocery store. Her son was two years younger than mine. They were very close friends. The oldest son was physicist, a very talented young boy. My son . . . they were very close friends. They were [unintelligible 58:40]. As long as the kids were home and growing, we were keeping in touch. But after the kids were gone, everybody went their own way.

<interview pauses, then resumes>

Ruth: I wanted to go back to the time right after the war. How did you find out where your father was?

Janina: I didn't. I found out because he came home to his home in Chrzanow [Poland].

Ruth: How did you arrange to see each other?

Janina: I travelled. We took a bus. From Krakow it is like 40 kilometers.

Ruth: What was it like to see him again after you'd been through so much?

Janina: It was hard. It was not easy. He was working for a company as an architect in Chrzanow. After that, he moved to Katowice [Poland].⁷³ He tried to have his own company. The communist government put such big taxes on private enterprise that he had to close down his office and work for the government. He built a theater and children's home in Katowice, all for the government. He was paid by the government. He had a time when [he had] to finish the job. If he didn't finish . . . One time they put him in paper as magnificent person doing a good job. But then if he didn't finish a job in time, they put him in prison. They thought he was sabotaging the thing. Then he retired, of course. He died when I was in the States. What year was it? He died in 1959.

Ruth: So just a few years after you had gotten to America?

Janina: I got to America in 1957, but, in the meantime, I was ten years in France. So, I was not in Poland. He was in Poland. I left Poland in July of 1946.

Ruth: So you didn't see each other after that?

Janina: No.

Ruth: Have you ever been back to Poland?

Janina: I have been back three times, yes. For one thing, I left Poland illegally. As long as the Communists were there, I had to apply for a Polish visa. I was always afraid to apply for the Polish visa. In 1976, when I applied for a Polish visa, I couldn't tell the truth that I left Poland illegally. I told them that I was deported during the war and never came back to Poland. I got the Polish visa. The first time after the war, it was 30 years after I left Poland. My sister was laughing. She said, "You expect another 30 years before you come back?" The Communists were still there. It was very unpleasant, all the big portraits. I didn't know all the personalities that were hanging on the walls and everything in Russian. My step-mother had a live-in maid. When they were rationed for bathroom tissue. She was sending maid to stand . . . One day, they were selling like half pound of hamburger or something. My stepmother was baking a cake for a butcher to give her a better piece of meat. When you went to a grocery store or the butcher shop, the shelves were empty. Whoever was giving him some extra, you could buy a better thing. The first time, there was Communists there.

⁷³ Katowice is a city in southern Poland, known for its heavy industry.

The second time, I was in Poland when I went on a trip to Scandinavia⁷⁴ and Russia. That was in 1991. A long time after that. On the way back, I went to Scandinavia. Then we went to Finland, to Helsinki.⁷⁵ Then we travelled by bus to Vyborg [Russia].⁷⁶ From Vyborg to Novgorod,⁷⁷ Smolensk,⁷⁸ and Moscow [Russia].⁷⁹ From Moscow we went east to Minsk [Belarus].⁸⁰ That's when the coup happened in Russia.⁸¹ It was in August 1991. We were sleeping in Minsk. When we came, our tour director was a Swedish guy. When we came to Russia, they assigned us another guide from the government, which was supposed to stay from the day we enter until the day we leave Russia. That was not Russia. That was then . . . whatever . . . Soviet Republic. So we were in Minsk. In the morning, we were sitting. We were heading for Brest-Litovsk [Belarus], which was before the war a Polish name . . . Brześć Litewski.⁸² We were heading toward the Polish-Russian border. Our Russian guide was crying. The Swedish guy and her were very good friends. They made many tours together. She was crying. I say, "Why in the world is she crying? Is she going to miss us so much, or what?" She was crying. When we crossed the Polish border, they said the coup happened in Moscow. The next tour that was coming in, they were sent away. They didn't know how long it last. It lasted only three days. We went to the Forum Hotel in Warsaw. The tour, which was supposed to enter Russia, had to go back. We met them at the Forum that day. That was second time I was in Poland. But I couldn't see my sister. I just called her on the phone.

Ruth: What did it feel like for you to be back in Poland? Because in your family . . .

⁷⁴ Scandinavia is a region of northern Europe that geographically consists of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. Finland and Iceland are culturally included as Scandinavian countries also.

⁷⁵ Helsinki is the capital and largest city of Finland.

⁷⁶ Vyborg is a port city in northwestern Russia, situated at the head of Vyborg Bay, near the border of Finland.

⁷⁷ Novgorod is one of the oldest cities in Russia. It is located in northwestern Russia.

⁷⁸ Smolensk is a Russian city located 360 kilometers west of Moscow, Russia, on the main route to Warsaw.

⁷⁹ Moscow is the capital city and most populous in Russia.

⁸⁰ Minsk is the capital city of Belarus, situated 720 kilometers west of Moscow.

⁸¹ The 1991 coup, known as the "August Putsch" or "August Coup", was a *coup d'état* attempt to take control of the country from Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev. The coup leaders were hardline members of the Soviet Union's Communist party who were opposed to Gorbachev's reform program and the new union treaty that he had negotiated which decentralized much of the central government's power to the republics. Although the coup collapsed in only two days, it was an effective campaign of civil resistance that significantly impacted the stability of the Soviet Union. The event is widely considered to have contributed to both the demise of the Communist party and the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

⁸² Both names refer to present-day Brest, Belarus. Brest is a border town in the southwest corner of Belarus near Poland. Prior to World War II, the city was Polish, with a large Jewish population. After World War II, it became part of the Soviet Union. Almost all of the city's Jewish population was killed in the Holocaust and most of the Polish population left after the war. Today, the city has a largely Russian population and the main religion is Orthodox Christianity.

Janina: The first time when I came to Poland, the Russian were there. When I was sleeping, I say, “Why in the world I came here? What if they wouldn’t let me go back?” My sister and I was laughing. She say, “Are you crazy? They don’t need old woman.” I say, “How can you live with all the things?” She says, “I don’t even see it.” Her second husband was not Jewish, you see. She had a first husband [who was] Jewish. He was Communist. She had a son with him. He’s in New York now. The second husband was not Jewish. She had a daughter with him. The daughter is a Neurologist in Poland. She’s married to orthopedic surgeon. She’s head in Neurology in Ostrava [sp: 1:05:44], that’s a small city in Silesia.⁸³

Ruth: What I meant to ask, or more specifically, your experience during the war . . . I was wondering whether it had an impact on how you see Poland and Poles as compared to people who were in camp. I wonder whether you ever . . .

Janina: For one thing, we were betrayed by one of the Polish girls from the convent. For sugar and vodka, [she] denounced the Jewish people in the convent. The other thing, Rosa Dziewinski and her husband . . . I didn’t know them then. I wasn’t married then, I was still in the convent. They were already in Krakow and they were working with the Russian government in Krakow. The girl who denounced us, I should have [gone] to the Polish and Russian authorities saying, “Look, she . . .” I never did it. They would have taken her. I never did denounce the girl who betrayed us.

Ruth: Why?

Janina: That was . . . Why? I ask myself why. I say she’ll be taken care of. I never went to the authorities to say this one and this one did that to us. Not only to my mother but all the other people who were arrested with her. I never did that. Always the Poles were antisemitic. I wouldn’t want to live there if they paid me and it’d be free and I didn’t have to do anything.

Ruth: Did you feel like that when you went to France, because I know that France had a lot of antisemitism even right after the war?⁸⁴

Janina: I didn’t feel as antisemitic in France. The French were skeptic[al] always of foreigners, regardless if they were Jews or not Jews. They were hard to approach and to become

⁸³ Silesia is a historical region of Central Europe located mostly in southwestern present-day Poland, Czech Republic and Germany. Ostrava is city in the Czech Republic, located close to the Polish border.

⁸⁴ During World War II, the Vichy government in France had been complicit in the deportation of Jews and many French citizens collaborated with the Nazis. The French population, economy & government struggled to recover from the toll of two World Wars. The influx of European and North African refugees in the years following World War II were often confronted with sentiments of antisemitism and xenophobia.

friends. But once they become your friends, they were good friends. They had such a lot of North Africans who came. France was occupying the North African countries, Algeria and all that. They have so many North Africans there and the Spanish people and Italians who came to look for work there.⁸⁵ Many of them were illegal, too. They were not much they could do about these foreigners. They didn't like foreigners. Otherwise, I loved to be in France. The conditions were very hard. We had a two-bedroom apartment [with] no bathroom. [The] bathroom [was] between two floors. I was on the third. Between third and second floor, in the middle was a bathroom, which you couldn't sit down. It was just a hole. The bathroom was between the two floors to be used by two floors of apartments. Four apartments were using one bathroom. My child was small. I had to carry the thing down. We didn't have hot water. I had to boil water to wash up. We were going to public baths. We didn't have bathtub or shower. We had just the sink. That was in the kitchen. I didn't have any stove. When I wanted to bake something, I had to make it and take it to the bakery to bake. I had just the plates to cook on it. Can you imagine to be living ten years like that? No laundry, no washing machine, with a small child. [We had] to go to the public laundry.

Ruth: You mentioned before we started taping that your husband was a survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau⁸⁶ and Buchenwald.⁸⁷

Janina: Right.

Ruth: How was it for him to adjust to life after his camp experience?

Janina: You see . . . I was married. I didn't know much. I was not far. The convent I was in was close to the ghetto in Krakow. I was very close the ghetto. I heard the shooting when they

⁸⁵ In the post-Second World War era, France recruited foreign workers and immigrants to increase its overall population and for economic purposes. Many of the foreign workers were recruited from nearby countries, especially Italy, for demographic purposes and North Africans and other non-Europeans for temporary employment. Immigration to France was further increased during the wars of liberation and decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s.

⁸⁶ Auschwitz-Birkenau was a complex of camps built by the Nazis in Poland: the Main Camp (Auschwitz I), Auschwitz-Birkenau and Monowitz (Auschwitz III). Many smaller sub-camps were attached to the complex, which drew their labor from the Main Camp and Auschwitz-Birkenau. Originally, Auschwitz-Birkenau was supposed to be a huge pool of prisoners to be used for slave labor but sometime in 1942 it was decided that it was the perfect place for the 'Final Solution'—the extermination of the Jews. The morgues attached to the crematoria, which had been built to handle the expected high mortality in the camp, were adapted into gas chambers.

⁸⁷ Buchenwald was a German concentration camp in Germany. Originally it held political prisoners, criminals, Communists, "asocials" etc. Over time, the camp saw increasing amounts of Jewish prisoners, who were used as slave labor, and it became a production site in its own right. In addition to "extermination through work", the camp was known for its cruel punishment system and medical experiments.

liquidated the ghetto and all that.⁸⁸ My husband was liberated by Americans in Feldafing,⁸⁹ I think, in Bavaria. He came to Poland to look for whoever was left from his family. When I met him and when we got married, we were mostly thinking about how to organize ourselves to live without anybody knowing and denouncing us. We didn't want to be arrested because we tried to leave the Polish—we didn't like the Polish government or the Russian. He was working. He was a hard worker. He was working in Krakow in his profession. Then we spent three months traveling in a DP camp. Then we came to France and he started working again in his profession. His time was spent between home and work and riding the subway, the metro. You know, it was not very easy.

Ruth: What was life like in the DP camp? Which one were you in again?

Janina: I was in Eggenfelden.

Ruth: What was it like there?

Janina: It was not like camp, a closed camp. It was a big hotel. The people were assigned rooms. There was a dining room some other place. We all went to eat there and came back to our room.

Ruth: What kinds of people were there? Did they talk about their experiences? Did your husband talk about his experience?

Janina: That's the thing. My husband and the concentration camp people were talking a lot about those things. I never talked about my experience. So when my son saw the tape, he said, "How come you never told me about it?" His father was talking about it. Maybe because he had his sister and his brother, they were talking about it. His sister and the second Dziejewski . . . Karl Dziejewski, they were in two separate camps. They lost two children. After the war, they met and they had Erna. She was 40 years old when Erna was born. They were talking about their experiences between themselves and we were listening. But I was never talking about my experiences.

Ruth: Why?

Janina: I don't know why. I never talk about it.

⁸⁸ The Krakow ghetto was liquidated March 13-16, 1943. Approximately 2,000 Jews in the ghetto were killed immediately. Approximately 2,000 Jews were transferred to Plaszow and another 3,000 were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Of the 3,000 sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau, around 2,450 were murdered in the gas chambers.

⁸⁹ Feldafing was the first all-Jewish displaced persons camp and hosted a large and important community of survivors. The camp opened in May of 1945. Originally a summer camp for Hitler Youth, Feldafing was located in Bavaria, 20 miles southwest of Munich in the American zone of occupation.

Ruth: Was it because it was different from their experiences? You had a very different . . .

Janina: I was different. I was not . . . theirs was much harder than mine maybe, but I was risking my life every day just like they did. Maybe they were beaten during the work and I didn't have all that, but I was . . . the *Gestapo* was coming to look for people who weren't registered at the convent. When they were coming, I was running. I was sleeping under . . . they had a thing what you carry dead people. So I went to that place. I was sleeping under the thing where they carry the dead people when they come to check out the convent. Many times we had to run. Before I went to the convent, when I was in the maid's house, I was sleeping in a goat house. She had six or seven children. She was afraid for me to sleep in her house. If they find me, they would kill the whole family. Like that, she could say she didn't know I was in the goat house. I was sleeping under the steps. There was a night watchman who was working for my grandfather. He was in Krakow before I went to the convent. He was living there. They were afraid for me. After certain hour, they close the gates. She told me to go upstairs and sleep close to the attic. So I was staying overnight, sleeping in the attic. When he went to work in the morning, I went to her home and slept in his bed. There's many things . . . I don't even remember what we were eating, what I was eating.

Ruth: You didn't want to talk to your son at all about it?

Janina: I never talk about it.

Ruth: When did you start talking about it?

Janina: When he saw the tape.

Ruth: What did you tell him at that point?

Janina: So he saw the tape, he asked me questions. I answered his questions. Not only that, you see, sometimes at the folk dance . . . when we were folk dancing, there was a guy. Jim Maynard [sp]. Did you know him? Maybe he was later. He was a professor at DeVry [University].⁹⁰ During the break, when we had the break, drinking juice or something, we were talking about experiences. There were some funny things, which are no good for the public. When I was in the convent and working with the crazy people here and over there, the mother superior thought that I would make a very good nun . . . that I should become a nun. The monks from across the street were coming to the convent to bring their collars and their things to wash.

⁹⁰ DeVry University is a college with more than 85 locations in major metropolitan areas across the United States, including Atlanta, Georgia, that offers degrees in a variety of fields.

We had a sister who was repairing shoes. They were bringing their shoes. One of the monks liked me. He was always bringing me a little gift and talking with me. We didn't have washing facilities like bathtub, so he said, "Why don't you come to the hospital and I let you in the bathroom over there." You can have a bath over there. I said, "Okay." That was in wintertime. He was assistant in operating room between two rooms of sick people after surgeries. He had a booth in between, looking in the two [rooms]. There were 16 on each side. He was the one who was in that room. He said, "Why don't you?" I went over there and he let me in the shower. I got to shower. After the shower, he said, "Don't go out." It was January. It was freezing cold in Poland. "Stay here, you'll catch cold." he offered me a drink. We were talking. Then I tried to leave. He closed the door and grabbed and kissed me. I was shocked. I thought he was doing that for Jesus. <laughter> That's not for people to . . .

After the war ended and I had that apartment rented . . . not rented . . . assigned by the people where I work for the office. We became friends. We were going out. He said he going to marry me. I didn't mean to marry him. For one thing, he was a very good friend, very nice and very kind. It was not like here that you go to bed with, where the girls go jump to bed with them. That was not even . . . it wouldn't even cross somebody's mind. That was not even on the mind. He didn't have a lot to wear, just his black robe with the collar. He was crazy about pictures. We were walking in Krakow in the park. Then we were walking in the street. There was a photo shop. He said, "Come with me." He says, "I want to have picture with my sister." We were taking pictures and all that. Then, I didn't see him for two or three weeks. I met my husband. He came to visit me and I had a pipe in ash tray. He said, "Since when do you smoke a pipe?" I say, "No, I got engaged. I'm getting married." He was really shocked. He said, "I hope your husband wouldn't mind I come to see you." I tell him, "Sure, he won't mind." So I introduced him. My husband gave him clothes. He didn't have what to wear. He said he will quit . . . the monastery. He quit. He got a job in a hospital as an assistant in an operating room. My husband gave him clothes . . . jackets and shirts and everything. When I was going on vacation—the office was sending us for vacation in Zakopane [Poland]⁹¹ in the mountains—he was at the station with candy and flowers. He was very kind. It was not like here, that people go. . . . Then I got married.

⁹¹ Zakopane is a town in southern Poland at the foot of the Tatra Mountains. It is a popular wintertime destination for mountain climbing and skiing.

He came to visit us. He was writing to me in Paris. Then he got married. He was sending me pictures. My husband saw that he was a very good friend.

So I was telling that to Jim Maynard, the folk dancer, that story, and we were laughing because that was a funny story during the war. He said, “My students don’t know anything about other cultures. You have to come to DeVry and talk to them.” I said, “I am not a speaker. I cannot talk.” He said, “Just speak to them like you speak to me.” Of course not about [unintelligible 1:19:43]. I didn’t want to go. He told the dean. The dean wrote me letters. So I went to DeVry. Most of these students were black students. Other professors from other departments came. He was working on some project—electric car or something like that—the one . . . Jim Maynard. Rabbi [Mark] Kunis⁹² was invited the same day. I had 30 minutes. Rabbi Kunis had 30 minutes. I was speaking and they were asking me questions and I was answering it. He told me to speak about my experiences since the war and before the war started, what happened. The students asked me questions. They couldn’t understand how the Germans knew that I was Jewish. They couldn’t understand it because I was white. So, they didn’t know how and they were asking. Then Rabbi Kunis was speaking. They sent me a thank you letter for that.

Ruth: What was that like to speak about it in public for the first time?

Janina: About my experience? I spoke mostly of the funny stories. I never spoke of the hardships and whatever we had. We were sleeping in a room with epileptic. At night, she was having the epileptic attacks. We had another who, when the Germans came, I told you that they liquidated the psychiatric wards. One of the girls was, she had, I think, *postpartum* [depression] something. The milk went to her brains. She was carrying a doll. She thought that was a baby. She was going begging in the streets. She was carrying that doll like a baby. We called it Maria, that doll. There was another crazy. Somebody accused her of something. She put all her clothes in the middle of the courtyard and burned them. Nobody paid attention. The nun didn’t say anything. Nobody said anything. One thought she was Hitler’s wife. She was sitting on the back porch. She was screaming all night and was telling that she was Hitler’s wife. I was very scared when one young girl came to the convent. They sent her back from Germany. She was telling, “I am Jewish. My father was a baker. I am Jewish.” Everybody thought she was crazy, but she was Jewish. She was taken to the German ammunition factories. She was working over there . . . not

⁹² Rabbi Mark Kunis is the head of Congregation Shaarei Shamayim in Atlanta. Rabbi Kunis has been a former President of the Atlanta Rabbinical Association, the founder of MORASHA, The Rabbinic Fellowship of the Union for Traditional Judaism and President of the Federation of Traditional Orthodox Rabbis.

as a Jewish girl. She got crazy over there. She came back and they thought she was crazy. She goes, "I am Jewish." She said, "My father was a baker." She was Jewish but nobody believed her because she was insane. I was so scared when she was saying that.

Ruth: As soon as you were liberated, how did you decide what you were going to do?

Janina: I decided I have to live on something, that I have to get a job. I went to the office to look for a job. There was the office, ZOK⁹³ they called it . . . Z-O-K in Polish . . . they make it short for the office which was taking care of the electrification of the country. The director was Jewish director. I had forged papers. I had a forged name. I told him I am on forged name. He said, "I would like you to stay on forged name. They will say that I am promoting Jewish in hiring Jewish people." He hired me and I was staying on my forged papers. I got married on my forged paper. I had to redo it here when I came to the [United] States with witnesses.

Ruth: Do you remember how you felt or can you describe what the day was like when you knew that you were free?

Janina: We woke up. We heard shooting all night from seventeenth to eighteenth of January. In the apartment of the girl who took me in, there was a hallway in between the rooms. All night we were staying in that hallway, not to be hit from the window or someplace. In the morning, when we woke, it was quiet. There was nobody there but the cadavers in the street . . . the dead horses and dead people in the street. Not Polish, they were Germans in uniform. There were German people lying all around. I was still in the convent . . . I was still in the apartment. I said, "I have to look for a job." I went to get a job. They hired me. They gave me the apartment, the room. They owned some buildings. Each apartment or each room had either a couple or a single person and a common kitchen. That's the way when I started my life after the war.

Ruth: Do you remember what you wanted for your life at that point, when you kind of had a second chance?

Janina: I wanted to go back to school. When I met my husband, I told him that. But then when we went away, when we went travelling and came to France and I had the baby, that was the end of it. There was no babysitters. In France, there's no such thing. If there were, I couldn't have probably afforded it. I wasn't working. My husband was working. Another thing, we had the French papers. At that time, my husband's work was seasonal work, like six months a year. We had to live a whole year on six month's salary. Under French law, the foreign DP people

⁹³ Zakład Odmetanowania Kopalń.

couldn't work other jobs but the job they put on their card, their profession. Then the Americans demanded [unintelligible: 1:26:20] that the French let people work during the off-season in something else, in whatever they can make money that they can live. That was it.

Ruth: I want to just skip ahead to when you arrived in America. Can you tell me what it was like to leave Europe and then to come here to this country?

Janina: To leave, it wasn't that hard. Where I was living ten years in France and I liked, now, my husband had a job in Germany. We went there. We didn't have our own apartment. We were just sub-leasing a place from a friend. I knew my husband was making very good money as a fur cutter in the company. At that time, he was making like \$300 a week. That was in 1956 and that was a lot of money then. So, everybody was saying, "Why in the world do you want to leave Germany?" But I didn't see any future for my son in Germany. To go back to France there was no future because there were no jobs. My husband's sister was living in Atlanta now. She sent us the papers so we decided to move. It was not that hard to leave Germany. I didn't have my roots there. We just left and came here and tried to fit in.

My son was speaking French. Even when we went for the year in Germany, he was in private French school there. Then we came here, so he went to other school. We were living on . . . my sister-in-law was living on St. Charles [Avenue].⁹⁴ We stayed with her. He was going to other school. The kids were laughing at him and the teacher was talking with him with a dictionary. Sometimes he called me and he said that he was sick. I'd come to pick him up. I'd say, "What's wrong?" He'd say, "Nothing, I'm bored. Whatever they're learning in math, I learned this a year ago." They have much higher standards in school in France and in French schools. After three months, he was perfect in English. He was an all "A" student all through public school and high school. He graduated *summa cum laude* from medical school.

Ruth: So you basically had to completely start anew in three different countries?

Janina: A new life. Right.

Ruth: Explain how you managed to do that.

Janina: When we first left Poland, when we came to Germany . . . we were only [there] three months before we left for France from the DP camp. We came to France and we stayed ten years there. My son was born there. Then when he was six years old, he went to public school. He spoke French and I learned French. I speak well French now. The living was hard because

⁹⁴ St. Charles Avenue is a street in northeast Atlanta, Georgia.

everything was Russian after the war. Milk was Russian [1:30:00] . . . everything was Russian for quite a few years. Life was very hard. Like I told you, I had no laundry and no stove and no hot water and no bathtub. Life wasn't easy.

Ruth: Then you did the same thing when you came to Atlanta? You started again with everything?

Janina: No. From France to now, here we had everything. We jumped into it. We already had hot water. We had our own bathroom and our own shower and bathtub. We had all the accommodations we didn't have there. When we went back to Germany for that year before we came to the States, we had already all of the modern accommodations in that year . . . after we left France, when my husband was working a year in Germany before we left to the [United] States.

Ruth: But then your grocery store was in an area that was, it sounds like it was fairly rough?

Janina: It was a very rough section. It was very rough. They were fighting mostly with knives. When they were cutting each other, they were running to hide in my store. It was scary sometimes. For ten years we were working in very tough conditions to make a living. Today, when I look back at it, I say I should have gone to work for Rich's⁹⁵ as a service lady or whatever. My husband should have go work for somebody instead of putting up with abuse because we were taking a lot of abuse from our customers. They were taking out on us all the injustices they were suffering. Then there was segregation and the colored and all that. You couldn't call them that now. You couldn't call them 'black.' You couldn't call them 'colored' then and then 'African-American' or whatever. It was changing over those years. Whatever frustration they had, they were taking it out on us. Now, we were here. We had a burglar alarm. Many times at night, my husband had to drive over there because the alarm was ringing. The police came. They were breaking into the store. You know how many times in ten years he had to go at night, in the middle of the night to drive over there? That was really hard life. They were thinking that we were getting ultra-rich out of them. We were making a living. Now they wanted to have, to do the same thing. They bought the groceries from Jews. They didn't stay long. They knew that the living was too hard and the gain was not that big. They sold it to the

⁹⁵ Rich's was a department store retail chain, headquartered in Atlanta that operated in the southern United States from 1867 until 2005. Many of the former Rich's stores today form the core of Macy's Central, an Atlanta-based division of Macy's, Inc., which formerly operated as Federated Department Stores, Inc.

Oriental. First it [was] the Jews there, then there were the blacks who thought they would get rich—they didn't. So then they sold the things and the Orientals are now in all the stores.

Then we get used to the American life. My son belonged to *Alliance Française*.⁹⁶ I didn't want him to forget French so I was speaking French with him. He was answering me in English. I was going with him to *Alliance Française* to the meetings. When he was 16, he said, "That's enough. I'm not going anymore." He quit going, so that was it. He still understands and speaks French a little. His vocabulary didn't grow because he was young. But when he goes to France . . . he was there this year. He travels a lot, too.

Ruth: I have a deeper kind of a question. That is, whether you have thought how your experience during the war affected you in your later life or now? How does it affect you now?

Janina: How it affects me now? One thing, I blocked out many things. I really blocked out many things unless I talk about it. There are many things that I have blocked out that I don't even think about. Otherwise, probably the life would be too sad. Like, when the war is over and I found out my mother is not there. I lost her three weeks before the liberation. She was taken to prison two days before Christmas 1944. The Russians came January 18, 1945. That was like three weeks. That just is hard to imagine what it was like. To go through all the things and six years of the war and to lose your life three weeks before liberation. How it affects me now, I don't know. Like I told you, I probably blocked out many things.

Sara: Do you think your experience during the war has an effect on the way you raised your son?

Janina: Maybe I was too protective. I don't know. I suppose I will allow I was too protective. I don't think it affected him too much. He's still talking. Now he found out. His father was talking about his war experiences. So he was affected. I was protective of him. Other ways, I tried not to burden him with my experiences. I don't really know what effect it has on him. He seems to be normal. I don't know. So, what else?

Sara: You have travelled quite a bit. What makes you have this desire to see the world?

⁹⁶ *Alliance Française d'Atlanta* is the French-American cultural center that has served Atlanta, Georgia since 1912. A language school opened in 1963.

Janina: I like to see new places all the time. I travel a lot. This year I am going to the Island of Malta⁹⁷ in end of May. Have you been there? It's between Sicily and North Africa . . . on the Mediterranean. I was booked last year. I was supposed to go the thirteenth of September [2001]. It was cancelled because what happened.⁹⁸ This time I am going with Grand Circle Travel through AARP.⁹⁹ They are very good. I went with them to Turkey a few years ago. I am going for two weeks to Malta.

Ruth: Speaking of September 11, do you have any thoughts about what it's like now to be a Jew in America? Is it the same? Is it different? Do you have any feelings about what is going on in Israel?¹⁰⁰

Janina: Jews probably will always be blamed for something. The Arabs try to blame Jews for everything, whatever happens. Otherwise, I'm not afraid to travel or anything. That wouldn't stop me.

Sara: How do you feel when you hear what is going on in Europe or what's going on in Israel?

Janina: In Israel?

Sara: In Israel. What does that involve in your . . . ?

Janina: That is just terrible what is going on in Israel. In Europe, it's maybe . . . whatever is going in Croatia and Yugoslavia,¹⁰¹ that was another Holocaust. They let people go in

⁹⁷ The island of Malta is the largest of the three major islands that constitute the country of Malta, in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea directly south of Italy and north of Libya. In 1964, the island gained its independence from the United Kingdom and is now a member of the European Union.

⁹⁸ The attacks of September 11, 2001, also known as the 9/11 attacks, were the deadliest terrorist attacks on American soil in United States history. 19 militants associated with an Islamic extremist group hijacked several commercial airplanes and attacked targets in New York City and Washington D.C. by crashing the planes into buildings. One failed attack resulted in a crash in rural Pennsylvania as well. The attacks caused extensive death and destruction and triggered an intensive US effort to combat terrorism in the Middle East and around the world.

⁹⁹ The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) is a nonprofit membership organization for people age 50 and over. AARP provides a wide range of unique benefits, special products, and services to its members, including special rates or discounts on travel packages.

¹⁰⁰ Years of frustration and the collapse of a summit intended to resolve Israeli–Palestinian tensions boiled over into violence in 2000, when Ariel Sharon, the leader of Israel's opposition had visited Temple Mount in East Jerusalem. The al-Aqsa mosque is housed on Temple Mount and the visit was seen as highly provocative by Muslims. Demonstrations turned violent. The resulting series of violent confrontations and attacks on both sides, known as the Second Intifada, or the Al-Aqsa Intifada after the mosque where violence erupted, did not subside until 2005. Both sides saw high numbers of both military and civilian casualties. The month just before this interview was recorded, was one of the bloodiest periods since the conflict had begun, with high numbers of casualties on both sides.

¹⁰¹ A series of political upheavals and conflicts in the early 1990's led to the breakup of Yugoslavia in southeastern Europe. The former Communist republic split apart into six separate republics. Nationalism and unresolved ethnic tensions exploded into a series of violent conflicts known as the Yugoslav Wars. The wars primarily affected Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. The Yugoslav Wars have been described as Europe's deadliest conflict since

concentration camps. The Europeans permitted the same thing to happen again. That is just unbelievable. In Israel, I don't know if I should have hope. It seems like the turmoil over there is forever. I can't see anything going better. Whatever stops for a while starts all over again.

Ruth: Is there anything that you would like to put on tape? Any message to your grandchildren or to your son?

Janina: I don't know. My grandchildren saw the tape, too. I want to show you. Can I show you the picture? The one I wanted you to copy?

Ruth: We can do it just as soon as we finish.

Janina: For my son, for my grandchildren, I don't know. My oldest granddaughter is very Jewish. Even my son's first wife was not Jewish but she married a Jewish man and she is active. She had a little baby. She'll raise him Jewish, too. She feels very Jewish. The other children, they know they are Jewish but the younger children are not as much affect by it. But she is very much affected by whatever happened during the war. Whatever I can tell them, I don't know.

Ruth: Is there anything that we haven't asked you about that you would like to comment on?

Janina: I can't think of anything. I don't know. I don't even remember if you . . . What else would you like to know?

Ruth: I think this is a wonderful tape and we are so appreciative to you.

Janina: Just don't put everything on it!

INTERVIEW ENDS

<End Disk 1>

World War II. They were also the first conflicts since the Holocaust to be formally judged as genocidal due to the war crimes involved, which included rape, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.