

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

MEMORIST: PAULA GRIS
INTERVIEWER: SARA GHITIS
LOCATION: ATLANTA, GEORGIA
DATE: OCTOBER 23, 2001

INTERVIEW BEGINS

<Disk 1 Begins>

Sara: Today is October 23, 2001. We are interviewing Paula Gris, P-A-U-L-A G-R-I-S. We are in Atlanta, Georgia. My name is Sara Ghitis. I am the interviewer.

Paula: I would like to dedicate this interview to my children and to my grandchildren.

Sara: Why are you doing this?

Paula: I think this is a record of their past, of their family's history, and I would like for them to know that. In addition to that, they are very much tied up with my survival, my reason for being.

Sara: We are going to start then. Could you please pronounce your name?

Paula: My name is Paula. My maiden name is Neuman, N-E-U-M-A-N. My married name is Gris, G-R-I-S.

Sara: Where were you born?

Paula: I was born in Czernowitz,¹ which was then Bukovina² and part of Romania, but it is now in Moldova or Ukraine. It's very vague.

Sara: What year was that?

Paula: March 11, 1938.

Sara: What is your earliest recollection of life in Czernowitz?

¹ Czernowitz [German; Romanian: Cernăuți; Ukrainian: Chernivitsi] is a city in the southwest Ukraine in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, in the historical region of Bukovina. It is along the Prut River, near the present-day Romanian border. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Czernowitz became a center of both Romanian and Ukrainian nationalist movements. In 1908, it was the site of the first Yiddish language conference, the Czernovitz Conference. When Austria-Hungary dissolved in 1918, the city and its surrounding area became part of the Kingdom of Romania. By 1930, nearly 30 percent of the population was Jewish. The remaining population was composed of Romanians, Germans, Ukrainians, and Poles. In December 1939, there were 49,587 Jews in the city.

² Bukovina is a historical region, variously described as in Central or Eastern Europe. The region is located on the northern slopes of the central Eastern Carpathians and the adjoining plains, today divided between Romania and Ukraine. Bukovina was annexed by Romania after World War I. Prior to that, it had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The population was almost solidly Ukrainian in the north and Romanian in the south, while in the towns there were also a number of Germans, Poles, and Jews.

Paula: My personal recollection is actually a memory of when I was about three years old, when my sister was born or the night my mother went into labor to deliver my sister. My father had already been taken away.³ This was August 1941. There were already curfews for Jews.⁴ That meant that people could not go out on the street after a certain hour—I believe it was six o'clock in the evening.

My mother was alone. She was particularly alone because she didn't grow up in Czernowitz. This was not her hometown. She had grown up in a small village—not a village; it was a town—but it was across the border in Poland, in Galicia.⁵ It was 40 kilometers away, but it was a different place. That was her hometown. She moved to Czernowitz when she married my father, which was probably 1936, 1937.

She did not have any long-standing relationships with the neighbors, with the people in town. She had friends who were my father's friends—just like any newlywed when you move to

³ Paula's father was likely deported to Siberia by the Soviets in June 1941. The Soviet army had occupied Czernowitz in June 1940. For the Jewish population, the occupation replaced racial persecution with the terrible experience of Communist social egalitarianism and Stalinist terror. In early June 1941, the Soviet authorities deported some 3,000 Jewish business owners and intellectuals to Siberia.

⁴ Romanian and German forces reoccupied Czernowitz on July 5, 1941. Approximately 2,000 Jews were killed in the first few weeks, the synagogue was burned down, and Jewish property was plundered. After the Romanian civil administration took control of the city in July 1941, a series of repressive measures was instituted, depriving Jews of civil and economic rights. Jews were ordered to wear the yellow star and were often round up for forced labor. Even before Romania fell into the orbit of Nazi Germany, Romanian authorities pursued a policy of harsh, persecutory antisemitism—particularly against Jews living in eastern borderlands, who were falsely associated with Soviet communism, and those living in Transylvania—the area where Paula's family lived, who were identified with past Hungarian rule. Transylvania is a historical region that was part of Hungary until World War I. Afterward it became part of Romania. In 1940, the area was returned to Hungary after arbitration in Vienna by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy as a reward for Hungary's alliance with Germany, bringing the area fully under the influence of Nazi Germany. Even before Transylvania fell into the orbit of Nazi Germany, Romanian authorities pursued a policy of harsh, persecutory antisemitism—particularly against Jews living in eastern borderlands, who were falsely associated with Soviet communism, and those living in Transylvania, who were identified with past Hungarian rule. Right-wing social revolutionary movements, like the fascist Iron Guard, found significant popular support and some official sympathy for their anti-Jewish demands. Violent antisemitic manifestations occurred in the interwar period and culminated in brutality between 1940 and 1944. Jews were gradually excluded from public life and became subject to a series of race laws Hungary passed between 1938 and 1941. The Hungarian racial laws were modeled on Germany's Nuremberg Laws. They reversed the equal citizenship status granted to Jews in Hungary in 1867. Among other provisions, the laws defined "Jews" in so-called racial terms, forbade intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews, and excluded Jews from full participation in various professions. The laws also barred employment of Jews in the civil service and restricted their opportunities in economic life. After Romania entered the war in 1941, atrocities against Jews became common. Prime Minister Ion Antonescu's regime played a major role in the Holocaust in Romania, and copied the Nazi policies of oppression and genocide of Jews and Gypsies. The yellow badge was imposed in several cities after August 1941 and Romanian Jews were subject to a wide range of harsh conditions, including forced labor, financial penalties, and discriminatory laws.

⁵ 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.

a new town. She didn't have long-standing, loyal people to call upon in her immediate surroundings. The war had already broken out in Poland, so she couldn't call upon her parents, her family.⁶ She was literally quite alone the night she went into labor.

She had arranged with a midwife to come to her house to help her deliver the baby, but because it was after curfew, the midwife could not come. She was faced with only one choice, which was to lock me into the apartment and she walked through the streets in labor to go to the home of the midwife. She was wearing a yellow star. She was being shouted at from various positions from the gendarmeries, by the guards all around who were enforcing the curfew.⁷ She just ignored them. A woman in labor doesn't have much choice but to just keep going.

That's her part of the story. My part of the story was that I was a little three-year-old girl left alone in an apartment—probably terrified, but I think the terror is probably frozen inside somewhere. What I remember is just waiting for that door to open and hoping that she would come back. I think that that's my own memory. I have many photographs and stories of what my mother told me of how life was before.

Sara: Do you remember your mother's return after delivery?

Paula: Vaguely. I can't say that I remember that as well as I remember that tension of not knowing if she would come back. I think that that tension was reinforced because when we were deported later to the concentration camp, my mother worked as a slave laborer. Every morning when she went away, that same experience repeated itself. She was always gone and it was a terribly dangerous situation.

Even as young as I was, I knew that she could not come back. She would not come back. It was always this conversation inside of me, "She's never going to come back. No, she will come back." That was kind of the first time but it was continued over a two-year period in

⁶ On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland from the north, south, and west. With more than 2,000 tanks and over 1,000 planes, German units quickly broke through Polish defenses along the Poland-German border and advanced on Warsaw in a massive encirclement attack. Under heavy shelling and bombing, Warsaw soon surrendered. As the Wehrmacht advanced, Polish forces withdrew to more established lines of defense to the east and then the southeast, where they awaited support from their allies, France and the United Kingdom. Little support came. When Soviet forces invaded Poland from the east on September 17, 1939, the Polish plan of defense was rendered obsolete. The outnumbered and overwhelmed Polish army was defeated within weeks of the invasion.

⁷ A gendarmerie (sometimes also gendarmes) is a military body charged with police duties among the civilian population. The term gendarme is derived from the medieval French expression *gens d'armes*, which translates to "armed people". During World War II, German authorities charged local forces of gendarmerie with carrying out the regime's anti-Jewish policies. The gendarmerie was charged with putting the Jews in ghettos. As Jews were forbidden from leaving the ghettos, gendarmerie guarded the perimeters. Gendarmes had a reputation for brutality. Individual gendarmes often tortured Jews and extorted personal valuables from them. The Romanian Gendarmerie [Jandarmeria Română] were involved in the deportation of Jews and Roma to Transnistria in 1941 and 1942.

the concentration camp—not a week, not a month, not a year, but a very long time. Every time she went away, there was that sense of . . . I guess it was a terror mingled with a terrible feeling of dependence. If she didn't come back, what would happen?

Sara: What happened with you while your mother was away working at the concentration camp?

Paula: I was in charge of taking care of my sister, my little baby sister. When we were deported, I was four years old. My sister was nine months old. My sister's life was in my hands. I was the . . . I guess you could call it a "latchkey kid."⁸ I was taking care of my little sister. We stayed in the barracks. I kept her . . . whatever . . . I don't remember what I used to keep her amused or . . . I remember just that we were together. There was this close body contact between us most of the time. First of all, there was really just not much to do. We didn't have toys. We didn't have a playground. We didn't have books. We didn't have puzzles. It was really just sort of a quiet existence between the two of us.

There was fantasy inside our heads—my head anyway. I don't know what was going on in Sylvia's head. There was a constant playing inside—fear that mother wouldn't come back, hope that somehow we would return to this fantasy world that was called "home," *aheym* [Yiddish: home], we'll go *aheym*. That's what happened. Then finally at night my mother would come home, she would come back to the barracks.

Sara: What were the conditions in the camp when you were there with your sister? What were the conditions for you? Were you hiding?

Paula: It was a barracks.⁹ It was stark. I think it was a wooden barrack, but I'm not sure. To a great extent, I had stopped registering. There were too many things to register and I had stopped

⁸ A latchkey kid, or latchkey child, is a child who returns from school to an empty home, or a child who is often left at home with little parental supervision, because their parent or parents are away at work. The term refers to children as young as 5 years old who provide self-care or to older children who supervise their younger siblings. The term refers to the latchkey of a door to a house. It is unclear when the term first became common, but it appears as early as the 1940s.

⁹ The Stone Quarry [Romanian: *Cariera de Piatra*] camp consisted of a few large dilapidated barracks and a few smaller houses and shacks in poor condition, usually without windows, doors and beds. The shortage of livable rooms caused overcrowding. An open ditch on the outskirts of the camp served as the lavatory. A road led downhill to a fountain and a small stream of water. Another road led to the Bug River. Local Ukrainian peasants assembled twice a week at an area on the camps' outskirts to sell or exchange produce for money and other valuables. With voluntary donations from well-off deportees, a canteen was created for the poor. A Jew named Lederman was put in charge of enforcing strict sanitation rules that were passed down from the camp authorities. The deportees washed their clothes in the Bug River without soap. Swimming was prohibited.

registering the smell, the noises, the cold. The overriding thing that I did register was the sense of anxiety, of fear—not fear that . . . It was like several levels of fear.

The conditions . . . I think there was a potbellied stove in the front of this barracks that sometimes was lit and sometimes . . . There were many people who lived there at night. Then in the morning they left to go work or whatever. I think that for periods of time during daytime hours my sister and I were basically sort of alone in this bunk that had a straw mattress. That was just our little corner.

Sara: What was the name of that town?

Paula: Transnistria.¹⁰ Transnistria was actually the name of an area of forced labor and extermination camps. The particular place where we were at was called *Cariera de Piatra* [Romanian: stone quarry].¹¹ It was a rock quarry area. My mother worked in the quarry with stones. I believe that she and the other laborers were building roads for the Germans. They intended eventually to use those roads for the invasion of Russia because we were on the road between . . . Where we were, we were actually on the front line. We were closer to Poland from where Babi Yar was.¹² There were these wide Ukrainian fields.

This particular area of Transnistria was Russian territory that was occupied by the Germans that was given over to the Romanians and the Ukrainians. [The Germans essentially said,] “Here. Here’s a bunch of refuse—Jews. Use them as you see fit. Don’t use them. Whatever.” The daily death toll there from disease, from beatings, from random cruelties was

¹⁰ Transnistria is a geographical designation that refers to the area in western Ukraine. It is bounded in the west by the Dniester River, in the east by the Bug River and in the south by the Black Sea. The term is derived from the Romanian name for the Dniester [Nistru] and was coined after German and Romanian troops occupied the area in World War II. Transnistria was a Romanian-administered territory, taken from the Soviet Union by Germany after June 1941. Odessa, a Black Sea port, was the administrative capital. Other than Odessa, the region was largely rural and generally impoverished. Romania was given Transnistria as compensation after the Germans took large chunks of Romania and gave it to Hungary, the Soviet Union and Bulgaria.

¹¹ Located in the northeastern part of Romanian-controlled Transnistria, the Stone Quarry [Romanian: *Cariera de Piatra*] camp is approximately 15 kilometers (9 miles) northwest of the village of Ladijin [Ukrainian: Ladyzhyn]. The German and Romanian armies occupied the area on July 24, 1941. Once a penal camp under the Soviet regime, the stone quarry was heavily damaged before the Red Army retreated in July 1941. Control over the stone quarry was formally transferred to the Romanian civil authority at the beginning of September 1941 and it became an open transit camp. Waves of deportees from Czernowitz and the other towns in Bukovina began arriving in June 1942.

¹² Babi Yar [Ukrainian: Babyn Yar] was a ravine on the northwestern edge of Kiev, Ukraine. On September 29-30, 1941, the SS and German police units and their auxiliaries, under guidance of members of *Einsatzgruppen* [German: mobile killing unit] C, shot 33,771 Jews in small groups in the ravine. This was one of the largest mass murders at an individual location during World War II. In the months following, thousands more Jews, as well as non-Jews including Roma (Gypsies), Communists, and Soviet prisoners of war were killed at Babi Yar. In all, it is estimated that some 100,000 people were murdered at Babi Yar.

very, very high.¹³ I've talked to people who were there—survivors who watched their parents die within six days after arrival from typhus, from something. There was no medication. There was no real care for human survival. There was a process of utilizing the energy, reducing the calorie count, and just letting people die. It was the cheapest way to kill off a large population.

Sara: What were the names of your parents?

Paula: My father was Simon, Shimshon Ber Neuman, N-E-U-M-A-N. My mother's name was Etká, Etel Strum, S-T-R-U-M.

Sara: You said your mother came from a town in Galicia.¹⁴ Do you know the name of the town?

Paula: Yes, she came from Sniatyn [Poland].¹⁵ Sniatyn was a border town. It was actually . . . had many . . . It was more sophisticated, I would think, than many small towns because it was a border town. There was a lot of commerce and interchange of populations. Also, it had undergone many dominions. It had been . . . People were multilingual. They travelled a lot and they engaged in commerce. My grandfather was a fur merchant for the region, travelled a lot. My mother had access also to places like Czernowitz, where there was much more energy in the city.

Sara: Do you know your grandparents names?

¹³ There were several camps in the area: Bogdanovka, Domanevka and Akhmetchekha. Those Jews in these camps who did not die of deprivation or sickness were often murdered *en masse* by shooting. Most of the Jews sent to Transnistria never returned. By the time the Soviet army reoccupied the area in the spring of 1944, it is estimated that 120,000 deportees had perished as a result of murder, hypothermia, starvation and epidemics in addition to the tens of thousands of the local Jews in Transnistria who were victims of the Romanian invasion. About 70,000 survived.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ Today (2020), Sniatyn is a town in western Ukraine along the Prut River. Prior to World War II, it was known as Sniatyn [Polish] and was part of east Galicia in Poland. It is located approximately 35 kilometers (22 miles) northeast of Chernivtsi, Ukraine (Czernowitz, Romania prior to the war). From October 1939 until the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, Russian forces occupied the town. By that time, there were around 4,200 Jews in the town. In July 1941, Romanian troops occupied the town. Together with local Ukrainians, they began to terrorize the Jewish population. Soon, Hungarian forces replaced the Romanians and introduced forced labor. At the end of August 1941, power was transferred to a German civil administration. The living conditions for the Jewish population quickly deteriorated further. During October and December 1941, hundreds were executed in the first outside town. At the end of March 1942, a ghetto was established. On April 2, 1942, all the Jews in the ghetto were ordered to assemble at the high school building. Only some 2,000 Jews complied with the order to assemble for deportation, while the rest went into hiding. A few who appeared were released as workers for the Wehrmacht, but trains soon took around 1,500 to the Belzec extermination camp. Many of those who had hidden were found following searches and murdered in or around Sniatyn. Jews from surrounding areas were then brought into the Sniatyn ghetto. In September 1942, just before Rosh Hashanah, the ghetto was liquidated, with the majority also sent to Belzec.

Paula: Yes, I do. My grandfather's name was David Lazar Strum. My grandmother's name was Faige [Fani] Salzman Strum.

Sara: Where were they from?

Paula: I think my grandmother was from the area, from a town called [unintelligible]. I don't know where my grandfather came from, but I think he was from the same general area.

Sara: What thoughts and feelings come back when you think about what your parents went through during the war years?

Paula: I've always had this feeling that my mother, who had had dreams of doing all kinds of things . . . My mother was a very strong, very modern woman. She had been a strong Zionist.¹⁶ She had dreamed of living in Israel. She spoke fluent Hebrew. She was really a very enlightened woman.

As I said earlier, when her life fell apart, she was fairly young. I think she was twenty-nine years old when she was sent to the ghetto and deported. Her destiny or what she would have wanted to make of her life was cut off at that point. Her mission became to rescue these two little children. In a sort of fantasy way, I always see her as having swum through a very turbulent sea to bring out—like Noah brought out in his ark—the little bit of life to regenerate a new generation. I always see my mother as having exchanged one destiny for another destiny. She just sort of [decided] this was what she wanted to do. Thank G-d she was able to do it.

Sara: There were a few other instances that show your mother's heroism and ingenuity working for the survival of her daughters.

Paula: My mother was a very resourceful person. I don't know where she learned to be so resourceful before she was even twenty-nine. When she left our apartment, our home in Czernowitz, she took with her whatever resources she had at her command.¹⁷ She took some

¹⁶ Zionism is a movement that supports a Jewish national state in the territory defined as the Land of Israel. Although Zionism existed before the nineteenth century, in the 1890's Theodor Herzl popularized it and gave it a new urgency, as he believed that Jewish life in Europe was threatened and a State of Israel was needed. The State of Israel was established in 1948 and Zionism today is expressed as support for the continued existence of Israel.

¹⁷ On October 11, 1941, the Jewish population was ordered to relocate before six o'clock that evening to an area in the eastern part of the city, known as the Jewish district, which was designated as a ghetto. They were permitted to take only what they could carry. The ghetto was encircled with barbed wire, wooden boards, and nets. Romanian gendarmes guarded the entry and exit points. Unsanitary conditions and a lack of available food added to the difficult conditions created by severe overcrowding. Up to 48,000 people inhabited a space that would normally accommodate a few thousand. Deportations commenced on October 13, 1941. By June 1942, more than 32,000 people had been sent to various camps and ghettos in Transnistria. Deportations commenced on October 13, 1941. By June 1942, more than 32,000 people had been sent to various camps and ghettos in Transnistria. By the time the Red Army recaptured the city in March 1944, two-thirds of Czernowitz's Jewish community had perished.

money. She took some jewelry. She took some things she could use for bribing. She took some photographs and things like that.

I think that in many ways, I didn't find out enough of all the different ways in which she used all of these resources, but there is one incident that I do know because she told me in connection with something or other. At one particular time when an *aktion* . . . Periodically *aktionen* came through these camps.¹⁸ The Germans were weeding out. It wasn't enough that people were dying by the day and by the minute and that they were being killed by the day and by the minute. Every once in a while they had to fill a quota so they came to pick up some more Jews.

My mother had heard through the rumor mill that an *aktion* would come and she kind of thought that this would not be a time when she would in any way be able to save us.¹⁹ She took us . . . I don't know how close our barracks was to this fence, but there was some kind of fence that fenced off this particular camp. I think it was in the fall of the year. In the fall of the year is a harvest time and there were peasants out on the other side. There was a peasant woman digging potatoes on the other side. I don't know whether she passed us under the fence or over the fence, but she gave us over to this peasant woman. She was stuck between two bad alternatives. The peasant woman could have done whatever she wants with us.

I don't remember it because I think I turned into stone at moments like that. The story goes that the peasant woman just sort of kicked some leaves over us and left us to be there. I think my sister and I had both learned freezing behaviors during our many times like that. The *aktion* passed and we were saved at that moment by my mother's audacious thinking and by some passerby, some person who happened to be standing there, who made a decision not to blow the whistle on us.

¹⁸ *Aktion* is the German term used for any non-military campaign to further Nazi ideals of race, but most often referring to the assembly, and deportation of Jews to concentration or death camps. In many cases, the Germans planned deportations and other operations so that they would coincide with the Jewish holidays.

¹⁹ On August 17, 1942, German SS officers and Lithuanian soldiers arrived with military trucks belonging to Organization Todt. Approximately 200 Jews were able to pay bribes and remain in their barracks. A small number of Jews took to the cornfields at the sound of the trucks arriving and managed to hide until they left. With these exceptions, most other Jews were handed over to the Germans. A selection took place in the middle of the camp's assembly area. The principal project for which Jewish forced labors were sought was the building of a segment of Highway IV, which connected western and southern Ukraine. The elderly in the group of Jews who were selected were soon shot while the rest were scattered among German-run camps, where they lived in very harsh conditions until they were eventually also shot as the camps closed down. The 450 Jews that remained in the Stone Quarry camp were transferred in September 1942 to other camps. A few days later, about 200 were returned to the Stone Quarry camp. Six hundred Ukrainian Jews and 300 from other camps soon joined them. By November 1942, the number of Jews in the camp reached 1,300.

Sara: There's another episode where you needed an operation as a young girl.

Paula: That's a theme, actually. Yes. Right after the war, medical . . . We had no access to medical attention during the time of the war, which meant from 1940 or 1941 until 1945 or 1946, when we got into the [displaced persons] camps²⁰ after the war on the American zone.²¹ Then suddenly they opened up clinics. I had had an umbilical hernia at birth, I guess. It was there. My mother decided that, in addition to us having checkups, she wanted this umbilical hernia repaired. She said because she didn't want it to²² impair my ability to bear children. That was a very powerful message for me. It was a powerful nonverbal message. This was right after the war and her primary concern was that I should be able to bear children.

Sara: How old were you?

Paula: I was eight. It was like one of these things that's a subliminal message that sticks in you. The message fought with many other things inside of me because I think that, particularly after the war . . . During the war, I think that a lot of time I lived in this fantasy world that somehow my father would come back, the war would be over, we would go back to the land of Eden. *Mesia* [Romanian: Messiah] would come. We would go back. Everything would be wonderful.

But after the war, things weren't really wonderful. We went from one place to another. People were coarse, and harsh, and mean with each other. I began to think . . . I couldn't understand why people struggle so hard for this life, for living . . . I guess I was very depressed. I must have been. I couldn't understand—especially in the DP camps—when people began to get

²⁰ When hostilities ended on May 8, 1945 in Europe, as many as 100,000 Jewish survivors found themselves among the 7,000,000 uprooted and homeless people classified as displaced persons (DPs). In a chaotic six-month period, 6,000,000 non-Jewish DPs, who had been deported to Germany as forced laborers for the Nazis, wandered through Germany and Eastern Europe toward their homelands. The liberated Jews, who were plagued by illness and exhaustion, emerged from concentration camps and hiding places to discover a world in which they had no place. Bereft of home and family, and reluctant to return to their pre-war homelands, these Jews were joined in a matter of months by more than 150,000 other Jews fleeing fierce antisemitism in Poland, Hungary, Romania and Russia. Allied forces established temporary facilities (DP Camps) across Germany, Austria, and Italy to house DPs.

²¹ 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. The American occupied zone was in the southern portion of Germany and included the cities of Munich, Frankfurt am Main, Stuttgart, Nürnberg, and the southern part of the city of Berlin. The British zone was in northeastern Germany and included the cities of Hannover, Bremen, and Hamburg.

²² Many infants are born with an umbilical hernia. Umbilical hernias can also be acquired in adulthood, more often in women. A common sign of an umbilical hernia is a protruding bellybutton. Many hernias close on their own by age one, and most by age five. Large hernias or hernias that don't close may need surgical repair. Left unrepaired, an umbilical hernia could potentially cause complications during pregnancy if it were to rupture as a result of the increased abdominal pressure.

married. Young women in their late teens and early twenties, if they could find somebody, they married. They had nobody, no family. They wanted to begin to rebuild. But as a little girl, I couldn't understand. Why did they want to bring children into a world like this?

There were these two opposite kind of things. There was this sense of despair that had come about inside of me, of wondering this big question, "What is it that people struggle so hard for?" And then there was this example that my mother had showed me of this fierce struggle to survive and to save two little children. My mother had other incidences like that in her life.

Every night, she would come back from slave labor and she would put my sister to her breast. I don't know if she had milk in her breasts but she nursed her all night long. That was sort of a comfort thing for my sister that sort of helped my sister to survive. We were kind of like little glued . . . The American Indians have these figures of a mother and little children all over them. They make these little clay figures. It used to be . . . I don't know. It's a tribal thing. When I was out in the West and I saw this, it reminded me of how my mother, and my sister, and I would go to bed at night in the barracks. My sister was huddled inside my mother's arms, at the breast, and I was sort of on her back, kind of on the other side. We got warmth from each other that way.

Sara: What about your father? What thoughts come to your mind when you think about your father?

Paula: I don't really have any personal recollections of my father. He was taken away when I was three. I have wonderful secondhand images of him because my mother was very much in love with him. She had told us stories at night. She would talk about *Tatic* [Romanian: Daddy]. I think she fired . . . She kept that little flame alive of the Messiah coming and my father was the Messiah. It was in her also—this hope that he would survive and he would come back.

I have some photographs of him. I have a photograph of him where I'm cradled in his arms. When I look at that picture I see that we were . . . At that moment when that picture was taken it was like the perfect moment. My mother is there, happy and smiling, and I'm cradled in his arms. He was a handsome, middle European, successful man.

But I don't know who his parents were. I think he was an only child, but I know very little about him. I don't know what his ideology was. I don't know what his vision was. I think he went to synagogue. He attended synagogue I think on the High Holy Days,²³ possibly

²³ The two High Holy Days are *Rosh Ha-Shanah* (Jewish New Year) and *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement).

Saturday morning also as part of the communal conventions, but I really don't know what his background was.

Sara: Do you know what happened to him?

Paula: Only sketchily. I know that he was taken away by the Russians early on, like in 1940. The Russians preceded the Germans into our town. He was imprisoned for a while, then he was taken away and he was an indentured servant soldier.²⁴ I don't know if he died at the hands of the Germans or at the hands of the Russians. I really don't know what happened to him.

I do know that towards the end of the war before we were liberated . . . We were liberated by the Russians, which was earlier than some of the liberations that took place by the Allies, [who] didn't come to Europe until probably a half a year or eight months later. Because we were right there on the Russian front, when the Russians began to advance and the Germans retreated, our camp was left *hefkerut* [Hebrew: abandoned; neglected], left empty.

Some time during that time, my mother still got a letter. I think it was 1943, maybe 1944 before liberation. She got one letter from him, or a card, or something. She read it to me or she told me about it later. It said, "Soon we will be reunited." There was that dream again. And, "We'll go back and we'll give Paulica piano lessons." I was going to have my piano lessons. I was [very] close to getting my piano lessons.

Sara: I want to go back to the time when you were in Transnistria in the camp as a little girl. Could you tell us more about it? How did you get there? Why were you allowed to stay in the barracks with adults?

Paula: As best that I know, this was not a camp where they had someone stand and say, "You, go to the right. You, go to the left." They didn't differentiate. It was a dumping ground.²⁵ They had emptied out the regions that they wanted to make *Judenrein* [German: free of Jews]. They put them on trains. The trains went across the Prut²⁶—Prut was one of the rivers that was on the

²⁴ When the Germans and Romanians attacked the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, many young Jewish males were drafted into the Red Army.

²⁵ As Transnistria was not a part of Romania proper, the Romanians used the area to dump Romanian Jews. In the summer and fall of 1941, Romanian authorities deported thousands of Jews to ghettos, labor and concentration camps in Transnistria. Most were walked or driven there across the Dniester River and just dumped without water, electricity, housing, clothing or food. Many died on the interminable marches. Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina were dumped there as well and left to die.

²⁶ The Prut is a 953-kilometer (592 miles) long river in Eastern Europe. In part of its course it forms Romania's border with Moldova and Ukraine.

border—and they dumped the people there essentially. There was no provision made for housing.

In that entire area, there had been preexisting Jewish *shtetl* all in that area.²⁷ There were little Jewish communities. They were caught up in this. Suddenly, where they lived became not only a concentration camp, but they—the existing Jewish population—had to somehow find room for more people, thousands of people. Little houses . . . They utilized everything—barracks, houses, barns—and they just dumped people. The mortality . . . I think that there was some rationing. In all these situations, before long, some kind of Jewish governmental organizations arose that tried to provide for the wellbeing of the people.²⁸

There was a man in Czernowitz who continued tirelessly to work on behalf of the Jews of Transnistria. His name was [Dr. Wilhelm] Filderman.²⁹ He was a very prominent Jew before

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ The Autonomous Refugee Aid Committee [Romanian: *Comisia Autonoma de Ajutorare*] was organized in Bucharest, Romania in January 1941 by leaders of the Union of Jewish Communities, Zionists, businessmen, and women known for their aid activities, in order to amass funds and supplies for pogrom victims. After the Germans invaded the Soviet Union in mid-1941 and the Romanian authorities began deporting Jews to the region of Transnistria, many new volunteers joined the committee. They provided aid to victims of other persecutions, including Jews transferred from small villages to large cities and Jews drafted into forced labor battalions. When the Romanians launched the mass extermination of the Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina in the summer of 1941, the committee tried to send aid to the Jews there, to no avail. After the Union of Jewish Communities was dissolved in December 1941, the committee got permission to send aid to the Jews interned in Transnistria. When those Jews were allowed to come home, the committee helped organize their return.

²⁹ Dr. Wilhelm Filderman (1882–1963) was the leader of Romanian Jewry from the early 1920's until 1948. A prominent lawyer, he served as Chairman of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania and Chairman of the Union of Romanian Jews. He was Chairman of the Joint Distribution Committee from 1920, a Deputy in the Romanian parliament representing the Union of Romanian Jews in the period between World War I and World War II, the Romanian non-Zionist representative of the Jewish Agency for Eretz Israel, and for a short time, the Chairman of the Bucharest Jewish Community. As part of his many public duties, he struggled hard to secure citizenship for the Jews of Romania after World War I and to combat antisemitism. Dr. Filderman continued his struggle even during the Iron Guard terror and Antonescu's fascist regime, 1940-1944, including dissolution of the traditional Jewish organizations by the German authorities and the establishment of a "Jewish Center" based on the German model in their place, 1942-1944. For these activities, and his resistance to the forced contribution of four billion lei that was levied on the Jews, Dr. Filderman was deported to Transnistria in March 1943. Through the intervention of the papal nuncio and Swiss and Swedish ambassadors, he returned after three months and began spreading word of the poor living conditions in Transnistria. Although Filderman no longer held an official position, Dr. Filderman maintained contact with senior officials and ministers, and even with Antonescu. His efforts were partly responsible for preventing the deportation of all the Jews of Romania to Poland, and prevented the deportation of the Jewish refugees who had escaped to Romania from other countries under Nazi occupation; thanks to his intervention, the decree imposing the wearing of the yellow badge was repealed in 1941, and deportees to Transnistria were repatriated. After the Soviet army conquered Romania in August 1944, Filderman returned to his previous positions, leading the struggle to reclaim Jewish property. Due to persecution by the Communists, Dr. Filderman had to leave Romania secretly in 1948. Until his death in 1963, he lived in Paris and devoted himself to writing his memoirs.

the war. [He] had access to the king and to everyone.³⁰ [He was a] highly respected person. He continued not just within Romania; but outside of Romania to campaign on behalf of the lost . . . Everyone knew how desperate the situation was in Transnistria. It was almost worse than in some of the extermination camps because there was nothing. The rationing was not only limited to rations of food but it was arbitrary. Some days you got, some days didn't get.

Sometime in 1943 I think, or early 1944, a delegation from the International [Committee of the] Red Cross came to Transnistria—the camp that we were in—to rescue children.³¹ It was evidently known that children were there and that they wanted to try and bring out³² . . . The history books that I've read on the subject say that international organizations paid very dearly. They had to pay a ransom to the people in charge. They came to our camp. They set up a little bit of a headquarters in a building of a small house.

The word was passed around the camp that children were being rescued. My mother came down with us. I remember. This is one of the memories I do have. She brought us down to send us away with these people, but my sister was too young to go. My sister at that point was still a toddler or whatever.

I remember there were nurses from the International Red Cross. They were kind of these bosomy, soft women. They had little goodie bags that they gave all the children that had toothbrushes in it, and toothpaste, and maybe some candy—things that we really had no access to, that were treasures. These were sort of like introductory, so that we would like them. They gave us these packages. I don't remember how many children and I don't remember faces but I know that we weren't the only children there.

³⁰ King Carol II ruled Romania from 1930 to 1940, when the Germans forced him into exile in favor of the leadership of Marshal Ion Antonescu.

³¹ The International Committee of the Red Cross ("Red Cross") is a humanitarian institution based in Geneva, Switzerland. During World War II, the Red Cross—although limited by the Germans—had access to and was a crucial source of information about civilians, prisoners of war, and concentration camp prisoners. With the support of Jewish organizations, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegates, Charles Kolb and Vladimir de Steiger, submitted various proposals to Romanian authorities that would have enabled Jews to immigrate to Palestine or Latin American countries. One proposed plan would have saved 7,000 children. While Romanian authorities supported some of the proposed plans, all of them came to nothing, as it was impossible to obtain the necessary permission. Nevertheless, representatives of the ICRC were given permission to visit Transnistria from December 11 through December 23, 1943, but they did not bring any children back with them.

³² In December 1943, the World Jewish Congress published a report on the findings of a Jewish Commission that had been permitted to visit some of the 101 localities where Jews had been resettled in Transnistria. They estimated there were about 8,000 Jewish orphans in hundreds of orphanages across Transnistria. Of those, at least 5,000 had lost both parents.

As young as I was—I think I must have been five or six then—I knew that if I left my sister would be lost. My mother couldn't say that to me. She knew she had to send one of us out. The decision became my decision. I said to my mother at that time, "Whatever will happen to you will happen to me." She said that. I can't imagine that I had such mature wisdom to say something like that, but the fact is that the other children left on some kind of a transport with the bosomy ladies and Sylvia and I remained.³³ I think it was not too many months before the end of the war. I think this was sort of like towards the end of 1943 or early 1944.

Later, after the war, my mother told me two things. She said that she was very ashamed to walk back through the camp with her two children because she felt that the eyes were looking at her. She felt criminal. She felt like she had prevented her children from going out. She felt judged by the other people that she made the decision. Later, she felt differently because those other children had gone off on a transport and it was probably months or years before they were reunited with whoever were their surviving parents, whereas my mother had us with her right away. We were able to go through that period together.

Sara: When you were in the barracks, would you say you were in hiding?

Paula: Semi-hiding.

Sara: Were you able to leave during the day?

Paula: Probably we could have gone if we didn't make ourselves too obvious, if we didn't run into too mean a person, too cruel or vindictive a person. It was safer not to go outside. Even though there might not have been an active dragnet to find us that day, the environment was hostile to life, hostile to children, hostile to Jews, hostile. I don't know how much exploring we did unless we needed to. I think that there was probably was a soup line. I can't remember that for sure—but I probably took that bucket, and went everyday and got the soup, brought it back, and ate it, and whatever necessary, going to the latrine . . . whatever necessary travel. But it was a period of two years—many months, many weeks, many days—of a very humdrum routine. There's no . . . It isn't very outstanding to remember. It just became a block of time of dark, repetitive behaviors.

Sara: We have not talked about what happened to your maternal grandparents.

³³ In early 1944, Romanian authorities agreed that orphans who had lost both parents could return from Transnistria. Representatives from the Autonomous Refugee Aid Committee were allowed to go to Transnistria to bring back the orphans. A total of 1,846 orphans returned to Romania on two transports in March 1944.

Paula: I actually met my maternal grandparents after the war. I was too young to have any kind of a relationship with them before or remember a relationship because they didn't live in the town that we lived in.

They were the fortunate ones from their town. Their town mostly was wiped out like so many towns. The Jews who remained in Sniatyn were herded over to the ravine outside of town. They had to dig their own graves and they were all murdered on the same day. They were thrown into the pit.

My grandparents were swept away before the German invasion by the Russians.³⁴ It's unclear to me because I never I discussed it with them whether they were taken as prisoners or they just followed the Russians when they retreated. They spent the war years in great hardship in Siberia.³⁵ They were in I think called [unintelligible] or whatever they called that they were in factories. They worked. They were forced laborers for Communism. But they survived. They had very little to eat. They were each separated from each other, so they didn't know of each other's existence.

After the war, I don't know how they came back. There were trains running back and forth that crossed . . . Trans-Siberian Railway.³⁶ They returned. My mother immediately after the war began looking for everybody—her sisters, her husband, her parents. She found her mother and her father separately. She reunited them and brought them back to us. She found her mother first. My grandmother came and lived with us. I learned to communicate with her in Yiddish.³⁷

³⁴ In 1940 (one year before the Germans commenced their program of extermination), Soviet ruler Joseph Stalin ordered the deportation of at least 200,000 Polish Jews—including thousands of Jewish refugees who had fled from German-occupied Poland—from Russian-occupied Eastern Poland. They were sent to Siberia, central Asia, and other locations deep in the interior of the Soviet Union. Many died in appalling conditions in Gulag labor camps in Siberia, where they were forced to work excessive hours in extreme cold and little food. While they endured horrible conditions, this paradoxically saved the lives of a few hundred thousand Polish Jews.

³⁵ Siberia is an extensive geographical region in Russia that extends eastward to become what is often referred to as 'North Asia.' It is a sparsely populated area with long, cold winters. Siberia has been a part of Russia since the seventeenth century. The majority of Soviet forced labor camps in the 1930's through 1950's were in remote areas of northeastern Siberia. The Siberian labor camps were used as a form of political repression and prisoners were often worked to death.

³⁶ The Trans-Siberian Railway is a network of railways connecting Moscow with the Russian Far East. With a length of 9,289 kilometers, from Moscow to Vladivostok, it is the longest railway line in the world.

³⁷ 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.

Later, my grandfather came. We were together a short period of time. Then they immigrated to America before us. Their quota number came up earlier than ours.³⁸

Sara: We are going to move forward to the end of the war. What images come to your mind when you think about liberation?

Paula: The image that comes to my mind is something that is talked about in the *Torah* about how redemption comes in the blink of an eye.³⁹ When we talk about the Passover story, we talk about the fact that the Jews had to leave in a hurry because G-d gave the order and everything happened just in the middle of the night.⁴⁰ For us . . . I didn't know the story then, but I remember it was . . . We were on the front line. Suddenly, the fortunes of war changed.⁴¹ Before my very eyes, I saw the Germans who had had complete control over our lives, suddenly their fortune changed in the blink of an eye. They began to be pursued by the Russians and they were running. The change of power impressed me very much. I think it gave me some kind of perspective, or cynicism, or something.

³⁸ The 1924 Immigration Act set annual quotas based on a prospective immigrant's country of birth, which were still in place at the end of World War II. After the war ended, President Harry S. Truman favored efforts to ease US immigration restrictions for Jewish displaced persons but existing laws had no provisions for displaced persons until Truman issued a directive on December 22, 1945, ordering the State Department to fill existing quotas and give first preference to displaced persons. Still, of the 40,000 visas issued under the program, only about 28,000 went to Jews and between 1946 and 1948, only 16,000 Jewish refugees entered the United States. In 1948, Congress passed legislation to admit more DPs to the United States. The 1948 Displaced Persons Act authorized the entry of 202,000 displaced persons over the next two years but within the quota system. When the act was extended for two more years in 1950, it increased displaced-person admissions to 415,000, but Jewish DPs only received 80,000 of these visas, making them only 16 percent of the immigrants admitted. The law stipulated that only DPs who had been in camps by the end of 1945 were eligible and gave preference to relatives of American citizens who could be guaranteed housing and employment.

³⁹ *Torah* [Hebrew: teaching] is a general term that covers all Jewish law including the vast mass of teachings recorded in the *Talmud* and other rabbinical works.

⁴⁰ Passover [Hebrew: *Pesach*] is the anniversary of Israel's liberation from Egyptian bondage. Although enslaved by the Pharaoh, the Israelites continued to survive and even increase in numbers. Dismayed, the Pharaoh declared that all sons born to Hebrew women must be killed, but Hebrew midwives defied the Pharaoh's decree. One mother, who had given birth to a son, placed him in a basket in the Nile River. The baby was found by none other than the Pharaoh's daughter, who scooped him up, named him Moses, and raised him as her own. When Moses had grown up, G-d spoke to Moses saying that he, along with his brother Aaron, would be the one to take the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses challenged the Pharaoh, demanding freedom for the Israelites. When the Pharaoh refused, G-d sent a series of plagues upon the Pharaoh and Egyptian people. There were 10 plagues in total: blood, frogs, lice, wild beasts, diseases, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, and the most severe of all, the death of every Egyptian first-born son. In order to protect the Israelite children from the Angel of Death, the Israelites marked their doors with lamb's blood, so that their houses would be passed over (hence the holiday name, "Passover"). Finally, Pharaoh surrendered and ordered the Israelites to leave Egypt. The Israelites were in such a hurry to leave Egypt that their bread had no time to rise. Pharaoh had also soon changed his mind and sent his armies after the Israelites. When the Israelites came to the Red Sea, they were trapped until G-d miraculously parted the sea. As soon as they passed through, the sea closed up, saving them from the Egyptians and beginning the Israelites' epic journey to the Promised Land.

⁴¹ The Red Army recaptured the area around the camp in March 1944.

I remember it. It was a dark, rainy night. We were in some kind of a shelter then. We weren't in the same barracks where we had been before. I don't know whether the Germans had moved us to another place, but suddenly the Germans were knocking on our door, seeking shelter in our poor hiding place. Then they had to continue to retreat and the Russians ran through our barracks with bayonets, and horses, and tanks, and all kinds of noises, and everything. Then everyone left us behind. We were left sort of . . . It sort of was an ambivalent free status because there was no fanfare, no hoorahs, no nothing.

Nobody knew where we were geographically, how to go about getting back we had all dreamed about going back. There was this gradual exodus by foot. People started to just walk along the road that everybody—that the Germans and the Russians—had just taken. Eventually we got rides on farmer's hay wagons and continued onwards, and onwards, and spent nights in the fields. We were refugees. We were survivor refugees like the last breathe of life in the many or the few people who were with us. Eventually we made our way back to Czernowitz.⁴²

Sara: What was that like?

Paula: It was un-dramatic. Nothing really dramatic happened to me. I kept thinking it would be dramatic, but it never matched what I had hoped it would be. It was un-dramatic. We went there.

Then my mother . . . It was very dramatic in one way that my mother went back to her hometown, Sniatyn, to see if anyone had survived. She met there with the unfortunate experience that so many Jews had when they went back to their home and their former neighbors, their former employers, their former friends said, "Oh, you're back? We thought you had died. And don't think this house, don't think this factory, don't think this business is yours. It's ours now." She was slapped around emotionally and psychologically there.

Worse than that, on the way to returning to returning—she had left us in Czernowitz with my grandmother on this excursion—on the way back from there, she hitchhiked on military vehicles or something. The vehicle went over a landmine, exploded, and she was knocked unconscious. She wound up in the hospital for about six weeks, five weeks, four weeks . . . a long time. She came back. My mother had enormous resilience. She came back on crutches. Here we were, she had left us for a day and she didn't come back for a very long time.

She came back on crutches and she was paralyzed on her right side from this concussion. She had a brain concussion. Eventually—probably not very long—and without

⁴² Czernowitz is 285 kilometers (177 miles) west of where the stone quarry camp was.

physical therapy or anything---only G-d's physical therapy—she regained use of her leg, and her arm, and everything actually except for the fact that she had a very small paralysis on her face. Her eye was somewhat squinted and she couldn't smile all the way. Her lips were affected so she had a sort of distorted smile. That remained with her for the rest of her life.

Shortly after she came back, she realized that the Russians were going to lock us in.⁴³ They were repossessing that area. She decided she didn't want to stay under the Russians. She had had experience with Russians before.⁴⁴ I think at that point she was able to get the help or encouragement from organizations that working in Romania from Israel to try to gather together the *Nitzvta Hashoah* [Hebrew: survivors of the Holocaust]—the survivors of the Shoah.⁴⁵ They had a regular sort of underground that was gathering people together from all over Europe. We wound up along with other people on trains going towards the American zones of Europe, where they had the DP camps, where the possibilities of immigration both to Israel and other countries was possible, whereas if we had stayed probably another few months in Romania, we might have had to remain there into the 1950s, or 1960s, or 1970s. I don't know how long.

Sara: Let us go back for a moment. When you returned to Czernowitz, did you find your house?

Paula: Yes, I think so. My mother reestablished Actually, she found a friend there, Suzy, who I think actually was a distant cousin and a friend, someone she had been very close to before the war. I'm not sure whether she was related by friendship or bloodline, but Suzy figured somehow in our return. It's very sketchy to me. I was zoned out to a great extent, but I think

⁴³ As World War II was drawing to a close, the Soviet Union had intervened forcefully on behalf of Romania. The armistice that was signed on September 12, 1944 made Romania subject to joint Allied control, but with the Soviet military already prominent, the Soviets became the de facto authority. Following the war, Soviet occupation facilitated the rise of the Communist Party as the main political party, leading to the forced abdication of the King and the establishment of a single-party people's republic in 1947. The Communist Party quickly proceeded to eliminate Western influence and any remaining political opposition within Romania, accelerating Soviet policies, which included the nationalization of private businesses. Individual businesses, farms and even many homes became state-owned properties with the former private owners rarely compensated. Over the next decade, communist leaders laid the foundations of a totalitarian regime. Romania remained under military and economic control of the Soviet Union until the late 1950s. Romania remained under the USSR's sphere of influence until its collapse in 1989 but also exercised its own authority, which gradually became a totalitarian regime.

⁴⁴ In the early stages of World War II, Romania tried to remain neutral, but foreign powers and events created heavy pressure on Romania. In June 1940, a Soviet ultimatum demanded territories in its northern border regions. In order to avoid war with the Soviet Union, the Romanian government and army retreated from Bukovina, Hertza, and Bessarabia. Soon after, Romania joined the Axis military campaign. The border areas were occupied by Russia until Romanian and German troops recaptured them in July 1941 during the Axis invasion of the Soviet Union.

⁴⁵ 'Shoah' is a Hebrew word meaning "destruction." It became the standard Hebrew term for the murder of European Jewry as early as the early 1940's and is often used in place of the more generalized term "Holocaust."

Suzy . . . I have a little silver set that was given to me on my first birthday—a cup, and a little egg cup, and a spoon, and a napkin ring, and it all had the name Paula engraved on it. I think that Suzy had had that during the war and gave it back to us.

Afterwards, Suzy remained in Czernowitz. We remained there just for a short period of time. I don't know if we lived in our former apartment. We lived in an apartment on an upper floor. I remember somewhat the house. It was furnished, but I don't know whose it was. I don't know. I remember my mother began to cook things like chicken soup and chicken in a big pot. I like boiled chicken very much. It tasted delicious. Little sketchy things like that [I remember], but I don't remember any kind of a sequential kind of history of what that was like.

Sara: You were saying that when the Communist regime entered, your mother decided it was time to leave. What happened after you left [Czernowitz]?

Paula: There were trains going. We travelled all through Eastern Europe on these trains that were refugee trains basically. We went through Czechoslovakia and Austria. We spent a night in a refugee shelter in a castle somewhere in Austria. I forget what the name of it was. We spent different nights in different places. We pulled into stations and bartered for cucumbers, for food. There was a shortage of food along this trip.

Eventually we came to the first of many DP camps, displaced persons camps. This was in probably 1946 or 1947, so we were in the early displaced persons camps where everyone was sort of together—the Jewish people who had survived concentration camps along with many other ethnic groups.⁴⁶ There was a lot of quarreling, a lot of dissention among the groups. As a child, I kept trying to hide myself from all of this hostility that kept following me wherever I went.

Sara: What was the name of the place?

⁴⁶ 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. Initially, the Allies herded Jewish DPs and non-Jewish DPs together, but conflicts arose. Most DP camps had been designated as either Jewish or non-Jewish by the end of 1945. 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.

Paula: I think the first place was Feldafing.⁴⁷ I think that was one of the first DP camps. We were in Foehrenwald.⁴⁸ We were in Feldafing. We were in—I can't remember right now—a whole series of DP camps. Some of them were better; some of them were worse. Eventually we got to DP camps that were Jewish and the Joint Distribution Committee had real outreach programs there.⁴⁹ They set up schools. There were schools for the children who had survived. They set up all kinds of orientation programs for the adults. The international relief organizations called UNRRA also had tried to help with international searches for people—People were searching constantly for survivors—and for filing for immigration.⁵⁰ All of this was going in the midst of still soup lines for food—you had to go line up—and inoculations, and medical. It was like the beginnings, the start up of society.

Sara: What were the names of some of the Jewish camps where you lived?

Paula: I think Foehrenwald was one of them. Right now I can't remember the names of the others. I have it written somewhere.

Sara: How long were you in the DP camps initially?

⁴⁷ Feldafing was the first all-Jewish displaced persons camp, and hosted a large and important community of survivors. It was originally a summer camp for Hitler Youth, and was located 20 miles southwest of Munich, Germany in the American zone of occupation. The camp was originally opened on May 1, 1945 to house 3,000 Hungarian Jews, and it housed many non-Jewish concentration camp survivors until July 1945. At that time, the United States Army moved the remaining Jewish survivors of Dachau into the camp. In autumn 1945, the first all-Jewish hospital in the German DP camps was founded at Feldafing. Educational and religious life flourished there. In addition to secular elementary and high schools, the camp's religious community founded several schools. It also had a rabbinical council that supported its religious office, and an extensive library. Children and adolescents in the camp organized *Kibbutzim* (Zionist communes). Newspapers were published. Theater groups and orchestras entertained camp residents.

⁴⁸ Foehrenwald was one of the largest DP camps. It was established in June 1945 in the American occupied zone in Germany, southwest of Munich. The buildings of the camp had previously been used to house IG Farben employees and some had held forced laborers. Foehrenwald originally served as a camp for non-Jewish displaced persons as well, but beginning in October 1945 only housed Jewish DPs. Within three months the number of Jews living in the camp rose from 3,000 to 5,300. Foehrenwald had a rich cultural, educational and social life. A school was opened for children as well as a vocational school run by ORT. A yeshiva with 150 students also operated in the camp. Theater and music groups functioned in the camp, and a weekly publication was put out entitled *Bamidbar* (In the Desert), which served as a forum for literary expression for the residents of the camp. Foehrenwald was the last remaining DP camp in Europe; it was closed in 1957.

⁴⁹ The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (commonly called "the Joint") is a worldwide Jewish relief organization headquartered in New York. It was established in 1914. After World War II, the Joint provided desperately needed supplies and necessities to survivors inside and outside of DP camps in Eastern Europe, Hungary, Poland and Romania.

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

Paula: We were in the DP camps 1946 or 1947 until the beginning of 1948. During that time—in 1947, I think—my mother had reestablished a correspondence with one of her aunts. My grandmother's sister had married before the war. She had gone to England before the war and married an Englishman. She lived in England—not mainland England, but on the Isle of Man, which is a small island between mainland England and Ireland.⁵¹ Of course, I would imagine that Tante [German: Aunt] Anna was thrilled like most relative were thrilled, to find a surviving niece, somebody who remained from her whole family because by that time, she knew that her parents and everybody had been wiped out.

Tante Anna and her husband, Joseph, who my mother didn't know, they made papers for us. They invited my mother to come. Because they signed and guaranteed that they would be the source of our support, we were able to get papers to immigrate to England, which was the reason why we were separated again from my mother's parents. They remained in Germany. They had already applied for immigration to America. Their immigration papers came through to America and we, in the meantime, travelled to England to meet our new life, our new destiny in England.

We travelled for a very long time because travel was not as smooth then. We went through Holland and we went to mainland England. Each place you had to stop and stay in a refugee center or whatever for a few days. Eventually we got to Douglas, Isle of Man, which was the capital of this small principality.⁵²

Unfortunately, by the time we got there, Tante Anna had died. She died fairly early. I think she was 60, or 59, or something. When we arrived, it was again a sort of disillusioning or disappointing experience, especially for my mother. She had no relationship with her uncle, who she didn't even know or perhaps she had met him once before the war.

Our papers stipulated very clearly that the conditions under which we could remain on the Isle of Man, in Douglas, or on mainland England was only if we continued to remain as housekeeper for Uncle Joe on the Isle of Man. That was clear. [My mother] had to register every month and go to the post office to get her visa stamped to indicate that she remained in that status. I have the document from England that shows if there's a stamp that says that this person is only permitted to be here under these conditions.

⁵¹ The Isle of Man is located in the Irish Sea between the islands of Great Britain and Ireland. It is a self-governing Crown dependency.

⁵² Douglas is the capital town of the Isle of Man, in the Irish Sea.

The conditions were not good for my mother. She realized that this was not a place to raise two Jewish girls. There was a very small Jewish community there, but it was . . . We were very foreign to these people. Even though England had suffered during the war and had experienced the war themselves, it was an entirely a different kind of experience—especially in this remote place—from the experiences that we had.

In 1948, my mother made this critical decision that we couldn't stay there. We couldn't go to England. She found out that if we applied for immigration to America—because of the quota system in America, we would have to wait as long as ten years. That's what she said. She made the decision that we would go back to the DP camps and start again from base one. We had arrived on the Isle of Man, I think, on April 14, 1948 and almost exactly a year later, we came back to the DP camps and again applied for immigration to America at that point.

I have to just say that, for me personally, the year on Isle of Man was a sort of awakening. Not sort of. It was a real awakening. I had the first sensory awaking where I actually began to respond to sensory stimuli around me. I was intoxicated by the smells, by the sounds, by the tastes, by the sunshine, by visual things. I only realized by contrast that I had not experienced all of that until then. It was like I was a frozen embryo until then and then suddenly I . . . When I remember my time on the Isle of Man, it had some challenging experiences for me as well, but in many ways it was an awakening. I was by then ten years old. It had some very positive affects on me. It was a pretty little place. It was very safe. You could go and come by [yourself] and not feel threatened by anybody.

I didn't feel very safe in school. That was the only thing. I went to a regular public school, which in England was called the "private school." I was, of course, very different from all the children. English children are extraordinarily exuberant and I was very depressed. They act out. Especially on the playground, they are so energetic, so . . . I don't know. It's like explosive.

There were two things that I remember. I went back many years later. I went back to the Isle of Man and I actually re-experienced . . . I went back to the same school. I saw those children and they were exactly the same way. I used to stand in the playground and just kind of edge up to the wall and want to become part of the wall because I couldn't . . . I felt at risk, I guess.

Sara: We were talking about you being in school in England and how difficult it was for you. Do you know what you looked like in those days?

Paula: I think I was sad. I was serious. I felt very alienated from the environment. I had none of the exuberance, the excitement, the child . . . the playfulness I saw all around me. It frightened me. To me, it seemed like dangerous behavior, I guess intuitively, because I always wanted to shrink away from it. There was a stark contrast, I think. I sensed it throughout the entire year I was there. As much as I enjoyed being on the Isle of Man in Douglas, I was like something from another planet. I was so different. Perhaps part of it was that I was not really at all childlike, that I had none of the childlike impulses. I think I probably looked very . . . I was Jewish looking. I was dark. I had dark, sad eyes. That always is a giveaway. I don't know if I was so much skinny as I was just . . .

Everything that I experienced from the very first day was just so extraordinary. I remember when we first came to Douglas, we went to a Woolworth's. I saw these counters and counters of little things—spools of thread, and little dolls, and little whistles, and all kinds of things and there were no guards around to watch. People just went up, and they went to the cash register to pay, and they paid. I was ten years old. I hadn't experienced the way children experience normal commerce. I remember that as an astonishing experience.

One of the things that was astonishing to me and that I had to deal with was that in school every morning there was Catechism.⁵³ That meant that the whole school was called together into the auditorium for a prayer service and it was a very specific religious prayer service. I don't think my mother ever came to school with me. I don't think my mother ever gave me specific instructions, but not only did I know that I wasn't to participate—and I stood very quietly—but I felt again that sense of alienation, that I was one among a group of people who practiced differently . . . There was this huge contrast. Every morning, I had to endure this little private moment of . . . period of silence while everyone else was singing their glories to the Church and to whatever.

Sara: How much of an opportunity had you had to interact with other children?

Paula: Not at all. I don't think that I did much of that there either. I was a loner. I don't remember having friends, or walking to or from school with somebody else other than my sister,

⁵³ A catechism is a collection of questions and memorized answers that are used to teach people, especially children, about the Christian religion.

or going over to anybody's house during that time. I'm sure they viewed me as strangely as I viewed them.

In the classroom, though, I was okay. It was challenging to me. I was learning the language. I knew an answer. I remember once I knew an answer that nobody else knew because I had travelled the world already. They had only lived in this little Douglas, Isle of Man. When the teacher asked about the capital of Czechoslovakia or something like that, I'd been there. I'd done that. I raised my little hand and I said a correct answer. That was so good for my self-esteem that I remember it to this day, fifty years later.

Sara: Do you remember when you first had a friend your own age?

Paula: Yes. Actually, I had one friend in DP camp who was a girl. She was older than me and much more socially comfortable than I was. My mother disapproved of her. She felt she was a bad influence on me, so it was not . . . She was someone I followed around after. But it wasn't until I came to New York and went to school in New York City that I began to reach out to people and have some friends.

Sara: You were saying that your mother made the decision to return to mainland Europe to a DP camp so you could come to the United States. Was Israel ever a place you considered going?

Paula: I know from hearing my mother express her own struggle with that that it was a difficult thing because ideologically she had been committed before the war to going to Israel. After the war, during that period when Jews were going to Israel as illegal immigrants, she was still ideologically very committed to that, but she was . . . The best I can say is she was physically and emotionally used up. She had two children. There was a war raging there. This was before the declaration of the state of Israel.⁵⁴

When we came back the second time, it was 1949, so it was right after the Declaration and when the Arabs had declared war upon Israel once again. She just didn't want to risk again going into a highly dangerous situation. I think she just wanted a little bit of *menucha* [Hebrew: rest, calm]. This was a very big conflict for her. She continued, of course, for the rest of her life to be a very strong supporter and follower of Israel.

⁵⁴ When the British Mandate over Palestine expired on May 14, 1948, the State of Israel declared its independence. It was recognized that night by the United States, and three days later by the Soviet Union. A day after the declaration of independence of the State of Israel, armies of five Arab countries, Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Lebanon, and Iraq, invaded Israel. This marked the beginning of the War of Independence. Despite the numerical superiority of the Arab armies, Israel defended itself and won, maintaining its independence.

Personally, I wish she had made another decision. I think that it would have been healthier for her to have gone to Israel at a time when so many other immigrants went, when they had the common experiences to share, and they were building a land. It would have suited her temperament, I think. But I'm projecting what I think would have been good for her and she was projecting what she thought was going to be good for us—meaning my sister and me.

Sara: You returned to the DP camp. What happened there?

Paula: What happened was we had to reregister as displaced persons. We had lost our status. We had lost that status of being displaced persons because we had already immigrated. We reopened our files. We applied again for immigration. I started to go back to that school that was established by the Joint Distribution Committee.

By 1949, I think that the Allies, in particular the United States, wanted very much to bring the episode of the DP camps to a close. I think that there were some changes being made in immigration laws in America because we were able . . . We left Gabersee, which was the last DP camp that we were in.⁵⁵ We left it in May 1951, so the wait time was not that long.

During that period of time, we lived in a little house. We didn't live in barracks. We lived in a town. Gabersee, I think, was a little German town. The DP camp was actually a section of that town. We lived in a little house with a little entry. It was as normal as normal can be. I learned Hebrew. I learned all about . . . The curriculum in these schools was very interesting because the focus was really Israel; it was to educate the children who had survived to be able to be integrated into Israeli society. We learned Hebrew. We learned Israeli geography. We learned *Tanakh*.⁵⁶ We learned history. We learned *Sifrut* [Hebrew: literature], which was Israeli or Jewish literature. The curriculum was not a world curriculum. We had *matematica* [Romanian: mathematics], which was the only thing that was generic.

Sara: In what language did you communicate in those days?

Paula: I probably communicated in German and Yiddish. I can't remember, but I think that those were my two languages. My mother tongue was German. I think that with my mother I

⁵⁵ Gabersee is a borough of the town Wasserburg am Inn in Bavaria in Germany. It is approximately 50 kilometers (31 miles) east of Munich. Gabersee was the site of a displaced persons (DP) camp in the Munich district in Germany. It was located in the American zone of occupation near Wasserburg. The DP camp opened on March 29, 1946, under the auspices of UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration). The Jewish population averaged 1,750 people in the years 1946–1949. Gabersee closed on June 30, 1950.

⁵⁶ *Tanakh* is the Hebrew Bible, a canonical collection of Jewish texts corresponding closely, but not identically, to the Protestant and Catholic Old Testament.

probably spoke mostly German until we came to America. When we came to America, I very quickly made the change over and began to speak English exclusively.

Sara: How did you call your mother? How did you address her?

Paula: Muttica.

Sara: How did she address you?

Paula: Paulica when she liked me. <laughs>

Sara: And when she didn't?

Paula: I guess it was just plain old Paula.

Sara: How about your sister?

Paula: My sister's name is Sylvia. She called her Shavila a lot. Shavila is her Hebrew name. It's the diminutive of her Hebrew name. Actually, my Hebrew name is Panina. My Yiddish name, which was the given name, was Perel Henye. Sometimes she called me Perela.

Sara: Who were you named after?

Paula: I don't know. It could have been my grandfather's mother or my grandmother's grandmother. I really don't know.

Sara: Could you tell us about your trip to America?

Paula: Yes. It was long. It was mostly spent in a very uncomfortable physical state. There were some interesting things though that I remember. I don't know whether these were hired staff, but every night there were these sing-along sessions on the boat. We would sing typical American songs like this, <sings> "I come from Alabama with my banjo on my knee." That was my first song and then I wind up living in the South. <laughs>

Sara: Where did you board the ship?

Paula: We boarded the ship in Bremerhafen [Germany].⁵⁷ It was called the *USS General Stewart*.⁵⁸ We arrived in New York Harbor on June 2, 1951. I don't have any real . . . It was not a real hallmark day. It was again a part of this pattern of always moving and always not knowing

⁵⁷ Bremerhafen [German: Bremenhafen] is a port city on Germany's North Sea coast. Between 1830 and 1974, the city was Germany's largest passenger port handling transatlantic traffic. Following World War II, it was a primary port of disembarkation for displaced persons immigrating to the United States.

⁵⁸ The *USS General M. B. Stewart* (AP-140) was a transport ship for the U.S. Navy in World War II. She was named in honor of U.S. Army General Merch Bradt Stewart. She was launched on October 15, 1944. She was transferred to the U.S. Army in 1946 and sailed between San Francisco, California and Japan with occupation troops. In March 1950, the ship was transferred back to the Navy. For the next five years, she was used periodically to carry troops to Japan and Korea but was regularly scheduled to sail between New York City and Bremerhafen, Germany, transporting thousands of European refugees to the United States under the International Refugee Organization. In 1958, she was placed in the National Defense Reserve Fleet, Hudson River, N.Y., where she remains.

what the next move will bring. I didn't have any great expectations and I didn't have that "ah-ha" moment that sometimes people describe when they arrive to America, and they saw the Statue of Liberty, and they saw the shores of America. I remember seeing the shores of America and I remember feeling just sort of blasé. I had been seasick for eight days so that didn't help. I was really feeling very low physically. But it just became part of the landscape of being a refugee. I didn't have many expectations at that point.

We came to New York. We were assisted by the New York Association of New Americans. They had provided us with . . . When we first came, for the first few days, we stayed in a little hotel downtown in Manhattan across the street from John Wanamaker's.⁵⁹ I remember that because it was one of the first images. When we went to the hotel, we settled into this little dark room in the hotel, and I went out to look around at what New York was like. There was all this activity. It was downtown maybe near the Garment Center or something.⁶⁰ It was downtown, and there were people walking all quickly, and lots of street activity.

There was this big sign across the street of this department store, John Wannamaker's, which no longer is in existence. Then there was a very big Coca Cola sign. I had seen Coca Cola signs in Munich [Germany]. I had seen Coca Cola signs in other places, so I said to myself, "Oh, they have Coca Cola here too." Those were the first visual observations of a young girl coming to a new country.

Sara: Was the organization that gave you assistance when you arrived a Jewish organization?

Paula: Yes, it was a Jewish organization. It was under HIAS, I think.⁶¹ It was called the New York Association for New Americans.⁶² They actually provided us with some monetary

⁵⁹ Wanamaker's Department Store was one of the first department stores in the United States. John Wanamaker (1838-1922) founded it in Philadelphia following the Civil War. At its zenith in the early twentieth century, Wanamaker's also had a store in New York City at Broadway and Ninth Street.

⁶⁰ The Garment District, also known as the Garment Center, the Fashion District, or the Fashion Center, is a neighborhood located in the borough of Manhattan in New York City. The dense concentrations of fashion-related uses give the neighborhood its name.

⁶¹ The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) was founded in 1881. Its original purpose was the help the constant flow of Jewish immigrants from Russian in relocating. During and after World War II, they had offices throughout Europe, South and Central America and the Far East. They worked to get Jews out of Europe and to any country that would have them by providing tickets and information about visas. After World War II, they assisted 167,000 Jews to leave DP camps and emigrate elsewhere.

⁶² The New York Association for New Americans (NYANA) was founded in 1949 to provide resettlement assistance to Jewish refugees. It was originally founded as a local branch of the Jewish United Service for New Americans to assist the large influxes of Holocaust survivors immigrating to the United States through New York City. In the 1950s, it served Jewish immigrants from Romania, Greece, Hungary, and Egypt, and in the 1960s, from Cuba, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. Today, NYANA has shifted its focus, now offering many services to the general immigrant population. It is estimated to have served 500,000 people during its existence.

assistance. They helped us to find a furnished room in the Bronx, where we lived for a few months. They provided [money] for my mother to take a training course in becoming a clerk typist. They offered other minimal assistance.

I suppose . . . One of the things that I've often thought of is what we most needed at that point probably was psychological assistance. That's not something that was forthcoming. I think that if we had been off the wall crazy or if we had perhaps requested it, it might have been forthcoming. But unlike today when, in the face of disaster, the first thing that people think of is, "Oh, these people are under trauma. They need some help to process this," the overriding message was, "You're her now. We suffered also. The war was a terrible place. Leave it all behind. Go on. Make up a life for yourself." I think that a lot of survivors who came to America and also survivors who came to Israel after the war in the 1940s and 1950s met with that same response.

Over the years, I've thought back more and more over that transition and how that transition might have been made more successful perhaps, especially for my mother. I think my mother at that point needed more help than just a clerk typist training course because at that point already she really was already fairly traumatized. I mean, a lot traumatized. She had no outlet for it other than to shower it upon my sister and I, who were both struggling at that point to find some kind of workable identity that could work here. We distanced ourselves. We tried not to listen. We weren't interested. It didn't serve our purposes to hear much about what happened, or the suffering, or the views of life that she had come to as a result of her experiences.

Sara: What effect has that had on you with respect to your children? You used the words, "showered us."

Paula: I tried not to shower my children. I wanted my children to be free enough of pessimism, which life had bestowed upon my mother and on myself as well, so that they could trust, so that they could live a life that was trusting and believing. Because of that . . . I told you earlier that I had been myself quite cynical and perplexed about the value of continuing life. I think that the thing that I needed was . . . I found within . . . Somehow I found that I needed to attach myself to the chain of Jewish experience that didn't just begin with the Shoah and end with the Shoah. I gravitated to things Jewish, things religious, things that gave me a perspective of the Jewish experience in the world. Through that, that gave me courage to raise children that would have something to hold on to as a solid grounding that wasn't just . . . To me, the message of the

Shoah was, if anything, a very discouraging message to give to my children to carry on, and for them to have children, and to only think that to be Jewish meant to be victimized and annihilated. You have to trust something. I had seen enough of humankind to not be able to be a believing humanist. Humanism had disappointed me more than anything else.

Sara: We were talking about your early years and the difficulties and challenges for your mother, your sister, and for you. Was language a barrier?

Paula: Only for a short time. Language really came quiet easily to me. I had learned many languages and forgotten many languages in the ten years that I was a wanderer in Europe. I was very motivated.

I was fortunate to have a very good teacher for my first year in public school in the United States. I was arbitrarily placed in the seventh grade. I was a little older for the seventh grade but I had not had any formal schooling experience. They put me in seventh grade. My teacher was a young woman, Miss Bird. She had never dealt with a refugee child before. We didn't have much communication. Oddly enough, I think the nicest thing she did for me was she left me alone. She didn't try too much to be an interventionist. I had learned to learn by observation more than by anything else because my eyes were the one organ that continued to operate. I observed what the children did. I listened. I adapted myself by having that time. I presume she did do a lot of helping but it was not in a not too noticed, not too obvious way. I have a sense of gratitude for her because, after that first year, I was good.

I really felt comfortable in the school setting. I began to have some relationships. I enjoyed learning. I enjoyed reading a lot. I had so much to catch up on. I used books and movies as my vehicle for learning what the bigger world was like.

Sara: What was the name of your school?

Paula: It had two names. It was P.S. [Public School] 44 and the David Farragut Junior High School.⁶³

Sara: Do you remember the address of the house where you lived in New York City?

Paula: It was on Clinton Avenue, but I can't remember the address because then we moved after awhile because of urban renovation or urban whatever they called it in New York. We

⁶³ P.S. 44 David C. Farragut school is a New York City District public school located on Prospect Avenue in the Bronx. It was named in honor of David Farragut (1801-1870), an accomplished U.S. naval officer. It was built sometime in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century and operated as a Junior High School until at least the 1960s. Today (2020) it serves as an elementary school for children from pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade.

moved to Crotona Park North.⁶⁴ That was the house that I lived in until I was married. On Clinton Avenue where we lived, we lived on the second floor and it was really a very nice apartment. It was within walking distance of the school that I went to.

Interestingly enough, my mother was contacted by some Jewish organizations in Brooklyn who asked her, they offered her a scholarship. If I wanted to go to a Beth Jacob school, I could go there and get a Jewish education.⁶⁵ She asked me because, once we came to America, I think that we experienced what a lot of immigrants experience, which is a sort of role reversal where parents start to lose their moral authority over their children. They're on weak ground. Until we came here, my mother knew exactly what she wanted for her girls, and what was appropriate, and what was not appropriate behavior. She didn't care what society said. She didn't care what someone else said. This was her direction. But once we came to America . . . I sense now and, of course, once I became a parent, I got a better insight into her dilemma, because whenever she said something, we said, "It's not done this way here." She asked me about whether I wanted to go to Beth Jacob. I of course wanted to become American very quickly. Travelling to Beth Jacob in Brooklyn didn't seem like the way to get where I wanted to be, so I said, "No." She acquiesced and I went to public school. Later on—many years later on—I had to make up all that learning that I didn't get early I had to do on my own the hard way.

Sara: What kind of connection did you establish with the Jewish community upon your arrival?

Paula: Very peripheral. We arrived to America in the 1950s. America was a very paternalistic society then. My mother was a single mom. There weren't many single moms around. To become part of a Jewish community, you had to have a dad. You had to have somebody who related to a synagogue, related to a *Landsmanshaft* [Yiddish term for societies formed by Jewish immigrants from the same villages, towns, and cities in Central and Eastern Europe] . . . It was a

⁶⁴ Crotona Park is a public park in the South Bronx section of the Bronx, New York City, covering 127.5 acres. Streets of the same name bound the park on its northern, eastern, southern, and western borders. It is divided into four portions by Claremont Parkway and Crotona Avenue, which run through it.

⁶⁵ Beth Jacob Schools are a network of parochial Jewish schools for girls first organized in Poland in 1917. By 1929 there were 147 such schools in Poland, and 20 schools in Lithuania, Latvia, and Austria. With the invasion of Austria, Poland, Lithuania and Latvia by the Nazis and subsequently by the Russians, the activities of the Beth Jacob schools were discontinued. At the end of World War II Beth Jacob schools were opened in Israel, England, Switzerland, Belgium, France, Uruguay, Argentina, and the United States. In the U.S., the Beth Jacob National Council was organized in 1943. By 1947, there were eight schools in the U.S. and by the late 1950s, two high schools were founded in New York City (one in Brooklyn and one in Manhattan). At the turn of the century, about 25 schools were in operation.

dad that you needed. We still didn't have that piece in our life. We had no dad, so we were sort of peripheral. My mother joined a synagogue in the neighborhood. We went there for High Holy Days. That's about it.

We went to camp through the Jewish Educational Alliance.⁶⁶ Sylvia and I went to Bear Mountain Camp, which was a Jewish camp.⁶⁷ My sister didn't have such a good experience. I had a wonderful experience there. Again, it was that ability to be a child in a setting that I had never experienced before. We put on a play. We had a color war. We walked in the streams. We walked barefoot. I just really liked that. I had a very happy experience. My sister didn't have such a happy experience because, unbeknownst to both of us, she was coming down with a serious illness. She had rheumatic fever.⁶⁸ During that interim incubation period, she was just feeling rotten and it all washed off her like water off a duck's back.

Sara: How would you describe the attitude of the Jewish community towards you and to the family?

Paula: It was a little condescending. It was a lot condescending. Again, a lot of my feelings are feelings that . . . You have to understand that my mother and I were like . . . attached. It was not by choice. It was just that we shared so much in life; we were not a mother and daughter as much as we were a team. Her feelings filtered through me a lot.

My mother had grown up being a daughter of a rich man in Poland. She was proud. She had status. When she came to America, she was a nobody. She had no husband. She was dependent upon a society to give her a handout. She was ashamed. She was really ashamed. To cover her shame, she compensated by just closing herself off a lot, too. I didn't understand that a lot early on, but I do understand it much better as I've thought about her in her situation and learned more about what she was like in her youth. She was the envy of everybody in her town when she was a young woman. I got that from people I met along the way who knew her in her youth. She was really like Ruth in the story of Ruth who came back after their sojourn in

⁶⁶ The Educational Alliance is a Jewish organization that began in the Lower Manhattan neighborhood of New York City in 1889. Originally, it was a settlement house for East European Jews immigrating to New York City. By the 1940s, it offered a variety of social service and recreational programs. Today (2020), it operates 15 sites that focus on education, health and wellness, arts and culture, and civic engagement, as well as a network of community centers.

⁶⁷ Bear Mountain State Park is a 5,205-acre state park located on the west bank of the Hudson River in New York. There are numerous summer camps throughout the area.

⁶⁸ Rheumatic Fever is a disease that can result from inadequately treated strep throat or scarlet fever. It causes inflammation, especially of the heart, blood vessels, and joints. Symptoms include fever and painful, tender joints. Treatment involves medication, sometimes for life.

Bethlehem.⁶⁹ She came back as a poor widow. That's how my mother came back to America. She didn't have . . . The attitude was sort of . . .

Nobody appreciated her heroics in those days. Even if they didn't take into account that she had grown up as an advantaged young woman, they didn't treat her like someone who was a hero. Now, the refugee has become a survivor and survivors have become used to being treated with a little bit of honor, with a little bit of respect.

She got the job as a clerk typist, which was a lowly kind of position. She was very sharp. She knew what she was doing. In a week, when she was in an office, she could tell everybody how to run the place, but they didn't want a woman with an accent to tell them how to run the place, so she didn't get a lot of job satisfaction either.

Actually, career wise, her best years were after Sylvia and I left the house. She was by then living in Brooklyn. She got a job in the Brooklyn Public Library and she began to read. She read so many books. She read on every subject. It fed her intellect, her interests. She had some friends who were interested in books, whom she used to meet at the botanical gardens and discuss things with. In that sense, before she died, she had a few years where she was more who she really was.

Sara: This was your mother. What about you? How did you experience the attitudes of the Jewish community towards you?

Paula: I really had very little connection to any Jewish community. We lived in a Jewish community in the Bronx and I knew a lot about Jewish practices because it was part of my mother's life's experience and upbringing. But until I met my husband and began to visit his family regularly, I wasn't part of anything that was a so-called Jewish community. I didn't belong to Jewish clubs. I went to the [Jewish Community Center] every once in a while . . . whatever the Bronx JCC [was called].⁷⁰ But I didn't really experience myself as part of a community.

⁶⁹ The Book of Ruth or "Scroll of Ruth" [Hebrew: *Megillat Ruth*] is the second of the Five *Megillot* [Hebrew: scrolls], which are parts of the *Ketuvim*, the third major section of the *Tanakh*. Ruth married into a Hebrew family living in Moab and is celebrated as a convert to Judaism who accepted the G-d of the Israelites as her G-d and the Israelite people as her own. After being widowed, Ruth returns to Bethlehem with Naomi, her Israelite mother-in-law. While working in the fields, Ruth gains the favor of a wealthy landowner, Boaz, whom she marries. The genealogy in the book explains how Ruth became the great-grandmother of David. Many who are Jews by Choice hold the book in esteem.

⁷⁰ A Jewish community center (JCC) is a general recreational, social, and fraternal organization serving Jewish communities in the United States and Canada, as well as in the former Soviet Union, Latin America, Europe, and Israel.

Sara: Who were your friends?

Paula: Actually, they were some of the girls who were in high school with me—Jewish girls, but not exclusively Jewish girls. I had a friend, Peggy Murphy, who was my good friend. Early in the Bronx, I had two friends—sisters, whose names I can't remember—and they were both child survivors. Or, maybe they weren't child survivors; possibly they were born in DP camps right after. They had accents. They lived a few blocks away. We had a relationship. We weren't really good friends. Maybe none of us knew how to be friends then. We knew how to [do] what we call in pre-school "parallel play." Later on in high school and actually even in junior high school, I had friends. I remember the president of our class was actually a young man of color. Then we called him a "negro." He was a very nice young man and we were good friends, so I began to enter the world of diversity.

Sara: How did you have fun in those days?

Paula: See? It still was a difficult thing for me. <laughs> I don't know. I went to the movies a lot. I think fun was synonymous with learning for me. Learning was what was uppermost in my hierarchy. I saw fun as a waste of time. I saw fun as sort of empty. I remember going to New Years Eve parties and feeling extraordinarily alienated. At those times when everyone was having so-called fun, I didn't know what that was all about. It seemed put on. It didn't seem real to me and very artificial. I just didn't get it. I didn't get the drinking. I didn't get the laughter. I didn't get the whole method that teenagers use. I was still barely nineteen or twenty. I got married when I was twenty. I was in my late teens, but I didn't get [it].

Sara: Just for the record, you said you went to a synagogue. Do you remember the name of that synagogue?

Paula: No, I don't.

Sara: Where was it located?

Paula: It was located in the Bronx within walking distance of where we lived. I don't think it was on Clinton Avenue but it was somewhere down the main street. I'd have to look at a map of the Bronx to remember what the main street was, but it was somewhere. It was in a house. There were five or six steps to go into the main entrance. During the High Holy Days, all the young people hung out on the steps.

Sara: Do you remember the name of the rabbi?

Paula: No.

Sara: Did you date?

Paula: Yes, I dated.

Sara: What do you remember about those times?

Paula: You were supposed to date because if a boy liked you that meant you were really special. I didn't think of myself then as being pretty, but I was kind of pretty. I was asked out on dates. The dates that I remember . . . I guess I started dating when I was sixteen. I took a job in the Catskills when I was sixteen. I answered an [advertisement] without ever having any training or anything. I wanted to get out of New York [City], so I got a job in the Catskills as a bookkeeper for a small hotel.⁷¹ I learned on the job with no one training me what to do. As part of the staff of this hotel, there were a lot of young people—counselors, and waiters, and waitresses, and so forth. I had a crush on a young boy, a red headed young man whose name was Chuck Dorflauffer. He was like my ideal. He was fun. He was cool. He was the cool guy. Then I dated a few others. It was funny. It was a case of me trying too hard to learn something I didn't know anything about. It was an interesting thing.

Sara: What did you do when you went out on dates?

Paula: We went to the movies. When I was dating my husband, we went to basketball games a lot. He liked basketball. It was a good thing to do. We went to a lot of basketball games. We went to movies, too. We went to things like going to Radio City Music Hall in New York City.⁷² We'd go down to Rockefeller Center, things like that.⁷³

[We would] go on the subway; go back on the subway. Guys I dated did not have cars. Guys I dated had to walk up five flights of stairs to pick me up because in those days, you didn't come down to meet the guy. One of the tests for him was to walk up. One of the tests for me was if I was worthy enough to walk up. There was a weeding out. A guy who heard you lived on the fifth floor without an elevator sometimes said, "I'll pass that one." <laughs> If they were willing to walk up five flights of stairs to meet my mother, to say what time they'll have me back, and

⁷¹ The Catskill Mountains, often referred to as the 'Catskills,' are a large area in the southeastern portion of that state of New York. The Catskills and its many large resorts are well known in American culture as a vacation destination in the mid-twentieth century.

⁷² Radio City Music Hall is an entertainment venue at 1260 Avenue of the Americas, within Rockefeller Center, in Midtown Manhattan, New York City. Nicknamed the Showplace of the Nation, it is the headquarters for the Rockettes, the precision dance company.

⁷³ Rockefeller Center is a large complex consisting of 19 commercial buildings covering 22 acres between 48th Street and 51st Street in Midtown Manhattan, New York City. Built between 1930 and 1939, it is the city's historic landmark for dining, shopping, and entertainment.

then we would walk down, go to the subway, go out on a date, he'd bring me back, walk up the five flights of stairs, leave me at the door, and go back down five flights of stairs.

Sara: How did you meet your husband?

Paula: We were working together. I was still in high school. I was maybe seventeen. It was the year maybe after I was a bookkeeper in the Catskills. We were working in a day camp together. I was a junior counselor and he was a counselor. I remember I noticed him when we first had our orientation meetings and he noticed me. We became a couple that summer and we dated.

Sara: Could you describe what you saw when you saw him for the first time?

Paula: I saw somebody who was sure of himself, somebody who was settled, who had a sense of who he was. I don't remember the dialogue in the staff meetings and orientations, but I think that something about his upbringing and his education came through. There was something in me that gravitated towards that.

I remember my high school friends—when I began seriously to date him—they grilled me. They said, “You know . . . You want to give up doing things on Saturday? You want to . . . You know, this is a life . . .” He was right out there. It was clear that if I was going to marry him that it was a life that was very committed to Jewish observance. Again, in the 1950s, that was a rarity.

When he finally . . . It took a long time before he brought me home and introduced me to his family. That was an issue between us because, in those days, that was the signal. Nowadays, people bring the guys home and the girls bring the guys and the girls home and it's just kind of like friendly. In the 1950s, if you were serious, before getting engaged that was like the signal. You dated, you dated, you dated, and then you had to be taken home. You didn't take a girl home until then.

When he finally took me home, I liked the smell in his house. That's what sold me. It was a real home. To me, at that time, it smelled like the kind of home that I had been sniffing for for seventeen years. It smelled clean. It looked clean. There was a mommy, there was a daddy, there was a grandma, there was a brother, and a sister. Everything on the surface just looked very ideal. They followed an order. They had a life. They were part of a community.

Sara: Was the difference in your levels of religious observance at that time a challenge for you or an obstacle at any time?

Paula: No, it was never an obstacle. I think Bill—my husband’s name is Bill—made the assumption that . . . I don’t remember that we had long discussions on the subject, but I think he made the assumption that if I buy him, I buy everything that’s part of him. His mother made the same assumption, but she went further. She said, “When you get married, you’ll do such and so,” and I was very willing to comply. It really wasn’t an obstacle. We definitely came from different levels of observance, but I was willing to learn, and I was willing to adapt at that point, and I was a pretty fast learner.

Sara: Did your husband, Bill Gris, ever tell you what he liked about you?

Paula: I think he liked about me that I was pretty, and that I was intelligent, and that I was adaptive. I think he was attracted to me. I don’t think these are things that he said, but I think he was attracted to me because I represented a history that he was only peripherally a part of. But we were young and there was just an attraction.

Sara: Was there an engagement party?

Paula: No . . . maybe there was. My husband was in the army. He was drafted into the army while we were dating. We got engaged sort of long distance. His mother got the ring. Then he came home for a furlough and we did have a sort of engagement party. Some of his relatives came and, by that time, I knew some of his friends.

Sara: What about the wedding?

Paula: The wedding actually was mostly orchestrated by my mother-in-law. My mother-in-law [Pauline Gris] and I went around. I depended on her. I don’t even want to say that she was so domineering. I knew nothing about a wedding. I had not been to a Jewish wedding until my own—I mean a traditional Jewish wedding, the kind that we experience now all the time. Everyone, even people who are very far removed from Judaism, have the opportunity to experience a Jewish wedding. I had never experienced the ritual of Jewish wedding before, so I depended upon my mother-in-law.

My mother-in-law was a *Rebbetzin* [Yiddish: wife of a rabbi]. My husband’s father [Rabbi Abraham H. Gris] was a congregational rabbi in the Bronx. This came natural to her. She was an expert in this field. Not only had she a notion of what a wedding should be like, she had a long line of social obligations. Having been the Rabbi and having lived in the community, they had been invited to many weddings. They had a long list of people whom they needed to invite.

If it had been up to my mother and me, we probably would have had a small chapel wedding somewhere and invited a small number of people. It became in a big wedding in a hall, with a *chuppah*,⁷⁴ and beautiful flowers, and a menu, and invitations, and all the soups to nuts in a downtown Manhattan hotel because I was marrying into the Gris family. They had many social obligations so lots of Rabbis came to our wedding. We had seven Rabbis officiating under the *chuppah* to marry us, and a *chazzan*,⁷⁵ and all kinds of pomp and circumstance, and thank G-d we did it.

Sara: Where did the wedding take place? At which hotel?

Paula: The hotel was called the Riverside Plaza.⁷⁶ It's not a hotel anymore. It's on Broadway and Seventy-second Street. It was catered by a kosher caterer, of course.⁷⁷ My mother-in-law and I went to scope out places. The two of us decided that this was the place.

Sara: Who gave you away?

Paula: My mother and I walked down the aisle. Bill walked down with his parents. My grandparents were at my wedding, so they preceded me. My sister and Bill's sister [Charlotte] were the Maids of Honor.

My sister . . . probably one of the few times in her entire life that she wore the kind of clothes that she wore to my wedding. My sister is a very artistic, very individualistic person and here she wore an identical dress to my sister-in-law. It had flounces and it had a *décolleté* [French: revealing; a strapless or low cut] neckline. She was wearing high heels, and full makeup, and her hair was all done. She did all that for me.

Sara: What was in your heart on the day of your wedding?

⁷⁴ A *chuppah* [Hebrew: canopy] is the canopy under which a Jewish wedding takes place.

⁷⁵ The *chazzan* (cantor) is the official in charge of music or chants and leads liturgical prayer and chanting in the synagogue.

⁷⁶ Located at 253 West 73rd Street in Manhattan, the Riverside Plaza Hotel was originally called the Level Club. The Freemasons built it in 1927. The ornate building was designed as a true-to-size rendering of King Solomon's Temple and features masonic emblems and symbols throughout. The Level Club was a clubhouse and hotel that included such state-of-the-art amenities as a fully equipped gym, handball courts, "azure" swimming pool, Turkish baths, a solarium, bowling alleys, a grill, a barber shop, a manicurist, a lounge, dining rooms, a ballroom, an auditorium, a banquet hall, and a roof garden. The Level Club closed during the Great Depression but re-opened in the mid-1930s as the Riverside Plaza Hotel, a weekly hotel for men. By the 1960s, it was operated as a kosher hotel. Then in the 1970s, it became a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center operated by Phoenix House. Phoenix House sold it in and it was turned into an upscale condominium building in 1984.

⁷⁷ Kosher/*Kashrut* is the set of Jewish dietary laws that dictate how food is prepared or served and which kinds of foods or animals can be eaten. Food that may be consumed according to *halakhah* (Jewish law) is termed 'kosher' in English. In a kosher kitchen and home, meat and dairy are kept separate, so a separate sets of dishes, cookware, and serving ware are needed.

Paula: I think that there was a mixture of things in my heart. It's like when we break the glass at the wedding. I was establishing a home for myself. That was very important for me. I think that was really a great need for me: to have someone to take care of me and to have a normal home. That was great happiness, but there was also this strange . . . On one hand, I felt very mature and very confident and at the other end, this was only seven years after I'd come to America. I had just barely learned the rules of normal living. It was a lot of going into something on faith—uncalculated, happy faith. Bill was still in the army, so we were leaving New York immediately to go down to San Antonio [Texas] to live entirely on our own, by ourselves in our little teeny, rented, furnished apartment.

Sara: What kind of a relationship did your mother have with Bill's parents?

Paula: It was cordial, but not close. They lived very far apart for New York standards. The Gris family lived in the Bronx. My mother was living in Brooklyn by then. It was a pretty long ride. They didn't see that much of each other. They probably called each other occasionally. There weren't that many years actually for them to develop a relationship because my father-in-law died. Pretty young in his life, he passed away. My mother died when she was 58. We hadn't been married that long when the whole structure of the Gris family fell apart also. There wasn't that much time for them to develop [a relationship]. They didn't share *brisot*,⁷⁸ and *bar mitzvahs*,⁷⁹ and weddings—shared experiences as [Hebrew word; sounds like “mahatunem”].

Sara: What about your feelings when you separated from your mother for the first time?

Paula: Guilt. A lot of guilt, but of course, it was for a short time. It was a mixed blessing. I was going to be free of being my mother's sole source of emotional, psychological support, but I also felt I was abandoning her. But I had intended . . . But. There's always the “but,” our psychological way that we deal with things. I was coming back. It was always our intention. Bill's tour was going to be over in about thirteen or fourteen months after we were married. We were going to come back. It was a goodbye, but it wasn't a goodbye forever.

⁷⁸ A *bris*, formally known as the ‘*brit milah*’ (Hebrew: Covenant of Circumcision) involves surgically removing the foreskin of the penis. Circumcision is performed only on males on the eighth day of the child's life. The *brit milah* is usually followed by a celebratory meal.

⁷⁹ A *bar mitzvah* [Hebrew: son of commandment] is 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.

She was still living in the Bronx when we got married, in the fifth floor walkup. While we were in San Antonio, again she was forced to move because of urban renewal. She then moved away. She kind of separated from everything familiar and went on to Brooklyn. In the meantime, Bill had had a job offer for Atlanta. We decided to come to Atlanta again saying, “It will only be for two years. We’ll go back.” My mother felt ambivalent about it, but like parents, she always was supportive. What we felt was the best thing for us [was] what she though was the best thing for us.

Sara: What was it like in San Antonio?

Paula: It was great. We loved it. We were newlyweds. We had a teeny little house. We had our first baby in San Antonio very shortly—like ten and a half months after we were married. We called her Joy. I called her Joy. It wasn’t such a deep, thought out thing. Now that I think about it backwards, I think that it’s symbolic in many ways that I called her Joy. It was more an Anglicization of a Hebrew name. In those days, not many people named their children Hebrew names per se. My daughter’s Hebrew name is Tzivya Rachel. It wasn’t a going name in those days here. I manipulated around and around to find a version of Tzivya, which is Tzvi, which means “deer.” “Dear” means “joy,” so I made out of Tzivya, Joy.

Sara: Who was she named after?

Paula: She was named after my husband’s paternal grandmother, who was killed in the Holocaust. [She] was killed in Abel, Lithuania along with many of the Jews of that *shtetl*.⁸⁰ She was named after my mother’s younger sister, who also perished. She was seventeen or eighteen when the war broke out. Her name was Ruchale. My daughter’s name is Tzivya after her great-grandmother and Rachel after her great-aunt.

Sara: How did you live Jewish in San Antonio?

Paula: We actually managed quite well. One of my gifts from a shower was a Jewish cookbook. I took that Jewish cookbook with me to San Antonio and learned everything there was to know about running a kosher home from that one grey-covered Jewish cookbook. I learned

⁸⁰ Obeliai [Lithuanian; Yiddish: Abel] is a small village [northeast of Lithuania near the Latvian border. In 1920, there were about 760 Jews living in the village, or about two-thirds of the total population. When the Germans invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, many of Obeliai’s Jewish residents attempted to flee to the east, but the Latvian borders were closed and most returned home. Lithuanian nationalist activists soon arrested and killed many of the Jewish residents, forcing the rest to perform hard labor. The occupying German forces and Lithuanians killed most of the surviving 112 Jewish men on August 15, 1941. Then on August 25, 1941, 627 women and 421 children were taken to a nearby village, where they were shot and buried in a mass grave.

how . . . It had a few pages on special foods for Yom Kippur, special foods for Rosh Hashanah, and so forth. I got my cooking instructions from there.

We lived very close to the synagogue, which was called Rodfei Sholom.⁸¹ It's still in existence, but it's not in the same neighborhood. We were friends . . . We weren't friends, but the Rabbi and *Rebbetzin* took us in because we were an observant young couple and we were in need of being taken in. We were frequently their guests for Friday night. We were frequently their guests during that year. We were in their home for *Pesach seder*.⁸² They were a couple with two or three children at that time—Rabbi Grossman and his wife.⁸³ They are now still the Rabbi and *Rebbetzin* in Memphis, Tennessee. They were sort of our source of support during that time.

There was a kosher butcher in San Antonio at that time. It was very limited in terms of kosher products. Everything was extremely limited compared to the way things are today. That's why that kosher cookbook figured in so heavily. I learned how to bake everything from scratch. I learned how to cook everything from scratch. I was twenty-one. You give me raw ingredients; I could make scrambled eggs beautifully. I could make apple pie beautifully. I could do anything that I practiced a lot.

I practiced on the soldiers. All the Jewish soldiers that were stationed at Fort Sam Houston⁸⁴ and at Lackland Air Force Base⁸⁵ knew our address because we were the only married

⁸¹ Rodfei Sholom is an Orthodox synagogue in San Antonio, Texas. It was founded in 1912. Rabbi Aryeh Scheinberg leads the congregation today (2020).

⁸² *Seder* [Hebrew: order] is a Jewish ritual feast that marks the beginning of the Jewish holiday of Passover. It is conducted on the evening of the fifteenth day of *Nisan* in the Hebrew calendar throughout the world. Some communities hold *seder* on both the first two nights of Passover. The *seder* incorporates prayers, candle lighting, and traditional foods symbolizing the slavery of the Jews and the exodus from Egypt. It is one of the most colorful and joyous occasions in Jewish life.

⁸³ Rabbi Rafael Grossman (1933-2018) was a noted American rabbi. His family came to the United States from Poland in the 1940's and settled in New Jersey. He began his career as a rabbi in Long Branch, New Jersey, where he also founded a day school. He then founded the first Orthodox overnight summer camp in the South, Camp Darom in Georgia, before moving to San Antonio, Texas, where he served as rabbi at Congregation Rodfei Sholom. He started the first Jewish day school in San Antonio, Texas, and a local region of NCSY, the Orthodox youth group. He then served the Baron Hirsch Congregation in Memphis, Tennessee for more than a quarter century. Rabbi Grossman was later the rabbi of the West Side Institutional Synagogue in New York City. During his career, he published two books and held a number of important positions, including the President of the Rabbinical Council of America, President of the Beth Din of America, Chair of the Rabbinical Council International, Chair of the Board of the Religious Zionists of America, Chair of the Rabbinical Cabinet of Israel Bonds, and a member of the Executive Board of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America (OU). He and his wife, Shirley, had four children.

⁸⁴ Fort Sam Houston was a U.S. Army post established in San Antonio, Texas in 1845. Since 2010, Fort Sam Houston is part of Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA), a merging of Fort Sam Houston, the Randolph Air Force Base, and Lackland Air Force Base. Today (2020), it is home to more than 27,000 Air Force, Army and civilian personnel.

couple who lived off base and kept kosher. They would come to our house Sunday morning and I would serve them all the same thing, so I got a lot of practice making scrambled eggs. I got a lot of practice making apple pies, making rolls, and whatever. Once in awhile we went to . . . wherever the soldiers gathered for bagels and lox⁸⁶ . . . Fartiq.

<Disk 1 Ends>

<Disk 2 Begins>

Sara: We were talking about the synagogue, Rodfei Sholom, in San Antonio in the break.

What were you telling me about it?

Paula: That was my first experience really in belonging and going regularly to a synagogue, experiencing Friday nights. I told you earlier that my earlier synagogue experiences were all marked by a sense of absence—absence of a father, absence of somebody who was on the other side of the *mechitza*, who completed the family, gave balance to us.⁸⁷ When we lived in San Antonio, we went to Rodfei Sholom. My husband was there and I was there. I didn't know very much about synagogue ritual but I began to learn. I learned from Shirley Grossman a lot of things about family observance that I hadn't picked up already from Bill's family. She was a big role model for me.

I was saying before that during that year in San Antonio, besides the fact that we entertained a lot of the soldiers, we also managed to take a honeymoon. We had left New York right after our wedding. We had *Sheva Brachot* the first night in New York and then we flew to San Antonio.⁸⁸

[We] had a wonderful experience right from the beginning. The small personnel of observant people—the Jewish chaplain at Fort Sam Houston was observant and there were a

⁸⁵ Lackland Air Force Base was established as an Air Force installation in San Antonio, Texas in 1941. Since 2010, Lackland AFB is part of Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA), a merging of Fort Sam Houston, the Randolph Air Force Base, and Lackland Air Force Base.

⁸⁶ Lox is salmon fillet that has been cured. In its most popular form, it is thinly sliced in thickness and, typically, served on a bagel, often with cream cheese, onion, tomato, cucumber and capers.

⁸⁷ In Orthodox synagogues men and women do not sit together and are separated by a *mechitza* [Hebrew: partition or division]. Men and women are generally not separated in most Conservative synagogues, although it is a permissible option. Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism, consistent with their view that traditional religious law is not mandatory in modern times, do not use *mechitzot* in their synagogues.

⁸⁸ A traditional part of the Jewish wedding ceremony is the chanting of *Sheva B'rachot*, or Seven Blessings. Taken from the pages of the *Talmud*, the blessings begin with the *kiddush* over wine and increase in intensity. It is no accident that there are seven blessings, given there are seven days of creation. It is a common custom for the blessings to be chanted by a *chazzan* or rabbi, if they preside over the wedding ceremony. During the week following the wedding, it has become common to have festive get-togethers in honor of the couple every day of that first week. Each of these events—usually an elegant dinner—is called a *Sheva Brachot*, referring to the seven blessings. Traditionally, family and close friends divvy up the honors of hosting them.

handful of other soldiers, GIs either in training or personnel,⁸⁹ who were observant—surprised us and gave us *Sheva Brachot*. When we arrived, I had never in my life expected it or experienced it. It was such a warm feeling to come to San Antonio like going to the desert, just with my husband, full trust that everything would turn out okay. We got there the first night and they had invited us. They had made egg salad and tuna salad—very simple and very nice.

It was such a warm welcome it really impressed upon me the responsibility to carry on that tradition. It was for many years afterwards. When we lived in Atlanta early on in the years when there wasn't a large Jewish community in Atlanta, I particularly liked volunteering to participate at *Sheva Brachot* because it had made such a difference in my life.

The other thing that was significant or memorable was that we took a delayed honeymoon. We flew to Mexico City [Mexico] for a honeymoon because we were so close and the flights were fairly cheap on Mexican airlines. We took Bill's sports carryon bag. We put a very long salami in there, two rye breads, and a very long knife. They let you take a knife on the plane in those days. <laughs> We checked into Hotel Rumfeld in downtown Mexico City.

Now, this was again an interesting clash of cultures. I came and this was my honeymoon. I was wearing my honeymoon best, which in the 1950s meant a beautiful little wool dress with a white collar, and white gloves, and a little hat. Mexico City was a very casual city. They looked at me like I was some kind of . . . like Jackie Kennedy has come to town or something, except I came with a salami and Jackie Kennedy would not come with a salami.⁹⁰ <laughs> We had fun. We toured Jewish and general Mexico City. We found a little restaurant in the business district in Mexico City that served a kosher hot meal in the middle of the day because they had like a *minyan* in the middle of the day also.⁹¹

Basically, we had a very good experience in San Antonio. It was because of that experience that we came to Atlanta. We had no intentions of not returning to New York immediately after Bill's military service, but he was offered a position. He had a [Masters degree

⁸⁹ GI is an abbreviation for "Government Issue" and commonly refers to a member or former member of the United States armed forces.

⁹⁰ Jacqueline Lee Bouvier Kennedy Onassis (1929-1994) was an American book editor and socialite who was First Lady of the United States during the presidency of her husband, John F. Kennedy. Jackie (as she was often referred to) was regarded then and afterward as an international icon of style and culture. She was a native of Southampton, New York and a graduate of George Washington University. After graduation she was a photographer for the Washington Times-Herald. Following the assassination of the president, she married Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis and after his death, she had a career as a publishing editor in New York City.

⁹¹ A *minyan* refers to the quorum of 10 Jewish adults required for certain religious obligations. According to many non-Orthodox streams of Judaism adult females count in the *minyan*.

in Social Work]—in Jewish communal social work—and he was offered a position in Atlanta. We were feeling adventurous at that point. We had a three-month-old baby. We had had a wonderful experience in San Antonio. We had learned that there was more to America than the five burroughs of New York. We said, “What the heck. We’ll go for two years. It’ll make a good line on Bill’s resume. It’ll be great.”

We came to Atlanta, but we came here first for an interview. Because it was a community center, we interviewed with people who are still now remembered. Barney Medintz was one of the people who entertained for us and interviewed for us.⁹² Some of the others—[Meyer] Balser was one of them—[were] all established people.⁹³ I was just twenty-one. I was very impressed with the fact that they took us to . . . It was interesting. When we expressed some concern about the Jewish life in Atlanta because we knew nothing about Atlanta, they said, “Don’t worry. Atlanta is the Jerusalem of the South.” Who doesn’t want to go to the Jerusalem of the South, right? We soon found out what “Jerusalem of the South” meant.

Atlanta had four or five synagogues, but the important part about 1950s Atlanta was the three social clubs. There was the Standard Club,⁹⁴ the Mayfair Club,⁹⁵ and the Progressive

⁹² Barney Medintz (1910-1960) was a Jewish leader both nationally and locally in Atlanta. He was one of the national leaders of the United Jewish Appeal and the Israel Bond Organization. He was also vice-president of the National Community Relations Advisory Council, vice-president of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds and a former member of the executive committee of the American Jewish Committee. Locally, he was president of the Atlanta Jewish Community Center and past president of the Atlanta Jewish Community Council and the Atlanta Bureau of Jewish Education. He was also president of the Southeast Regional Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds. Medintz graduated from Northwestern University at Evanston, Illinois where he was a star basketball player. He came to Atlanta after he graduated to become a recreation director at the Jewish Educational Alliance. Camp Barney Medintz, a Jewish camp in Cleveland, Georgia, is named in his honor.

⁹³ Atlanta native Meyer Balser (1908-2004) was a business and civic leader. He served as chairman of the Red Cross and Community Chest (predecessor to United Way) campaigns. He was twice named ‘Man of the Year’ of Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company where he was a leading insurance agent for many years. He received numerous accolades and awards for his leadership in Atlanta’s Jewish community including the Atlanta Jewish Community Center and the Atlanta Jewish Federation. The Meyer Balser Naturally Occurring Retirement Community at the William Breman Jewish Home, which offers programs and services to help seniors live independently in their own homes, is named in his honor. A book about his life by Vida Goldgar, *A Goal Worth Shooting For: The Biography of Meyer Balser*, was published in 1998.

⁹⁴ The Standard Club is a Jewish social club that started as the Concordia Association in 1867 in Downtown Atlanta. In 1905, it was reorganized as the ‘Standard Club’ and moved into the former mansion of William C. Sanders near the site of Georgia State Stadium (formerly Turner Field). In the late 1920’s the club moved to Ponce de Leon Avenue in Midtown Atlanta. Later, the club moved to what is now the Lenox Park business park and was located there until 1983. In the 1980’s, the club moved to its present location in Johns Creek in Atlanta’s northern suburbs.

⁹⁵ The Mayfair Club opened in 1938 at 1456 Spring Street in Midtown Atlanta. The two-story club was a focal point of Jewish life in the city for more than 25 years. The club was founded in 1930 and first met at the Biltmore Hotel. Eleanor Roosevelt, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, mayors Ivan Allen and William Berry Hartsfield, senators Herman Talmadge and Richard Russell, and Governor Carl Sanders visited the club. Fire destroyed the Mayfair Club on December 4, 1964.

Club.⁹⁶ That's where Jewish life really took place. That's where people danced. That's where people conducted their business activities. That's where they celebrated their lifecycle events. This was the center. Each of these clubs matched the social stratification of the Atlanta Jewish community. The more upscale Temple people who played golf, they belonged to the Standard Club. The people who were more egalitarian belonged to the Mayfair Club. The people who didn't fit in either one of the others belonged to the Progressive Club. That's sort of the setting that we came to in Atlanta.

There were very few apartment units in Atlanta, so everybody lived in an area near Shearith Israel.⁹⁷ The Rock Springs Apartments was this jumping off point for everybody to their first home.⁹⁸ Who knew of a first home? We were so happy we had an apartment. Not just Bill and I, but my mother and I, when we came to America and we stopped living in furnished rooms and got our first apartment, it was like a palace.

This is how we came to Atlanta. We came towards the end of 1959. It was shortly after the Jewish Community Center was built on Peachtree Street and in the same year that the Temple was bombed on Peachtree Street.⁹⁹ It was an interesting social time here. Martin Luther King, Jr.

⁹⁶ The Jewish Progressive Club was a Jewish social organization that was established in 1913 by Russian Jews who felt unwelcome at the Standard Club, where German Jews were predominant. At first the club was located in a rented house until a new club was built on Pryor Street including a swimming pool and a gym. In 1940 the club opened a larger facility at 1050 Techwood Drive in Midtown with three swimming pools, tennis and softball. In 1976 the club moved north to 1160 Moore's Mill Road near Interstate 75. The property was eventually sold as the club faced financial challenges and the Carl E. Sanders Family YMCA at Buckhead opened in 1996.

⁹⁷ Founded in 1904, Shearith Israel began as a congregation that met in the homes of congregants until 1906 when they began using a Methodist church on Hunter Street. After World War II, Rabbi Tobias Geffen moved the congregation to University Drive, where it became the first synagogue in DeKalb County. In the 1960's, they removed the barrier between the men and women's sections in the sanctuary, and officially became affiliated with the Conservative movement in 2002.

⁹⁸ Atlanta native Herbert Taylor (1895-1997), who operated a successful construction and real estate business, built the Rock Springs Apartment complex. Taylor and his wife Esther were active members of Atlanta's Jewish community and involved in many philanthropic activities. The Esther and Herbert Taylor Family Foundation supports The Esther and Herbert Taylor Oral History Collection at the Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum in Atlanta, which consists of a thousand oral histories that document Jewish life in Georgia and Alabama.

⁹⁹ The Temple on Peachtree Street in Atlanta, Georgia was bombed in the early morning hours of October 12, 1958. About 50 sticks of dynamite were planted near the building and tore a huge hole in the wall. No one was injured in the bombing as it was during the night. Rabbi Jacob Rothschild was an outspoken advocate of civil rights and integration and friend of Martin Luther King Jr. Five men associated with the National States' Rights Party, a white separatist group, were tried and acquitted in the bombing.

was still gathering force right here in Atlanta.¹⁰⁰ It was a very interesting period in Atlanta's racial and social history.

Sara: What job offer had your husband had?

Paula: As a Jewish communal social worker, he was invited to work for the Jewish Community Center as the Youth Activities Director.¹⁰¹ Shortly thereafter, he also became the director of the day camp, which is now Zaban Park,¹⁰² which was called AJECOMCE.¹⁰³

Sara: What about the fact that you were an observant couple? What were some of the situations that presented themselves for you? Was there an observant community here already?

Paula: When we came to Atlanta, we were the first non-professional observant couple to come to Atlanta. That means that there were observant people here before, but they were rabbis, cantors, teachers, and Hebrew school principals. No one expected or had any experience with people just being observant and earning their living doing something else. They particularly didn't have any experience with young people doing that.

Observance was associated with old people. Everybody in Atlanta claimed a grandparent that had been a *Torah Haham*, a very learned person, but it was always somebody in

¹⁰⁰ Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) is best known for his role as a leader in the Civil Rights Movement and the advancement of civil rights using nonviolent civil disobedience based on his Christian beliefs. A Baptist minister, King became a civil rights activist early in his career. He led the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott and helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1957, serving as its first president. With the SCLC, King led an unsuccessful struggle against segregation in Albany, Georgia, in 1962, and organized nonviolent protests in Birmingham, Alabama, that attracted national attention following television news coverage of the brutal police response. King also helped to organize the 1963 March on Washington, where he delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. On October 14, 1964, King received the Nobel Peace Prize for combating racial inequality through nonviolence. In 1965, he and the SCLC helped to organize the Selma to Montgomery marches and the following year, he took the movement north to Chicago to work on segregated housing. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. His death was followed by riots in many United States' cities. King was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day was established as a holiday in numerous cities and states beginning in 1971, and as a United States federal holiday in 1986.

¹⁰¹ Atlanta Jewish Community Center was officially founded in 1910, as the Jewish Educational Alliance. In the late 1940's it evolved into the Atlanta Jewish Community Center and moved to Peachtree Street. It stayed there until 1998, when the building was sold and the center moved to Dunwoody. In 2000, it was renamed the 'Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta.'

¹⁰² Zaban Park in Dunwoody is home to the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta. The area is named for philanthropist and community leader Erwin Zaban who gave and raised money for what was formerly undeveloped pastureland.

¹⁰³ In 1961, real estate moguls Max Kuniansky and Erwin Zaban purchased 40 acres of pastureland on Tilly Mill Road in Dunwoody, Georgia. They immediately opened a popular day camp known as AJECOMCE, which was operated by the Jewish Community Center. During the summer, children as young as five boarded a school bus at the Jewish Community Center in Midtown Atlanta early in the morning and then returned in the late afternoon. In the beginning, the camp consisted only of open-air shelters with cubbies for campers' towels and sack lunches and eventually a swimming pool. Activities included tetherball, kickball, and pony rides. The camp was renamed Camp Isidore Alterman in 1996.

the past.¹⁰⁴ By the time we came to Atlanta, the level of knowledge among many people had evaporated down to some very basic things. There were some older people who still knew how to learn, and how to conduct services, and how to read from the Torah, but I was met with . . . One of the older, well-established socialites in Atlanta said to me, “You mean you light candles every Friday night? I give you a world of credit!”¹⁰⁵ I thought, “What did I do? I mean, I’m just lighting candles.” There were people lighting Friday night candles, but again, a young person, a twenty-one year old person who dressed modern, who was just ordinary was an anomaly at that time doing what I was doing.

That carried out in other ways as well. It was a very small observant community. We were friends with many people who were not observant. We formed friendships with people on the basis of many other things other than observance, but we also had very close relationships with the clergy because we shared common needs and common interests in that regard.

Sara: Do some names come to mind? When you say you had close relationships with some of the clergy, who were they?

Paula: You have to remember that Rabbi Emanuel and Estelle Feldman were here already almost eight or nine years before, so they were a little bit older than we were.¹⁰⁶ Still, our relationship was different than our relationship would have been now. They had young children. Their children were older [than mine]. The people like Rabbi [Lawrence] and Mrs. [Sandra] Meltzer¹⁰⁷ came a little bit later, people like Rabbi Dr. [Sheldon] and Mrs. [Naomi] May,¹⁰⁸ Rabbi [Chaim] Feuerman¹⁰⁹ . . .

¹⁰⁴ *Haham* (Hebrew: ‘wise’) is a term in Judaism, meaning a wise or skillful man. It often refers to someone who is a great *Torah* scholar. The word is generally used to designate a cultured and learned person.

¹⁰⁵ Women traditionally do the lighting of the candles on Friday evening before sundown to usher in the Sabbath. After lighting the candles the woman waves her hands over them, covers her eyes and recites a blessing: “*Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to light Shabbat candles.*”

¹⁰⁶ Emanuel Feldman (b. 1927) is an Orthodox rabbi and Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Beth Jacob of Atlanta, Georgia. He was born to a family of Orthodox rabbis dating back more than seven generations. In 1952 Rabbi Feldman married Estelle Samber.

The couple moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where Rabbi Feldman assumed his position as rabbi of Congregation Beth Jacob. During his nearly 40 years at Beth Jacob, he nurtured the growth of Atlanta’s Orthodox community from a city with two small Orthodox synagogues to a community large enough to support Jewish day schools, *yeshivas*, girls’ schools and a *kollel*. He is a past vice-president of the Rabbinical Council of America and former editor of *Tradition: The Journal of Orthodox Jewish thought* published by the RCA. In 1991, his son, Rabbi Ilan Feldman, succeeded him.

¹⁰⁷ Rabbi Lawrence Meltzer (1937—2004) was originally from New York City, New York. He was a teacher at the Greenfield Hebrew Academy in Atlanta, Georgia for more than 20 years and a founding member of Young Israel of Toco Hills. He and his wife, Sandra, had three children.

This was an interesting thing. Rabbi Feuerman came to Atlanta in the early or mid-1960s to be the principal of the Hebrew Academy before it became the Greenfeld Hebrew Academy. His wife was a very gentile lady who had been brought up in England in a very aristocratic, observant environment. She wore a *sheitel*.¹¹⁰ She wore stockings in the heat of the summer.¹¹¹ She wore a proper dress. She was the first person who had come to Atlanta who was outwardly different, who dressed differently. People would come up to me in the grocery store because they knew that we shared that thing together. They would ask me questions <whispers>, “Isn’t she hot under that *sheitel*? Does she take it off at night when she goes to sleep? Is her head shaven? Doesn’t she ever wear sandals?” I became sort of her spokesperson because they were afraid to talk to her. They were too intimidated to speak with her. I was like her interpreter to the world.

Sara: How did you feel when people asked you such questions?

Paula: I felt a sense of responsibility to explain and to educate. That came with the territory. I realized very early that because I came here at this particular time, I represented something. I had no intention . . . That wasn’t my goal, to become a role model or pillar of the community. I didn’t have enough strong feet to stand on to be a pillar. But I realized I stood for something and therefore I had an opportunity and a responsibility to represent accurately, to explain, to teach.

My very first job in Atlanta was to teach a cooking class at the Jewish Community Center to teenagers, girls and boys, on Sunday afternoon. We did challah together and we did all kinds of holiday foods at the Community Center.

Sara: What synagogue did you go to when you first arrived?

¹⁰⁸ Rabbi Dr. Sheldon May was President of Yeshiva High School from 1989 through 1991. His wife Naomi was assistant head of school at The Torah Day School, which was founded in Atlanta in 1985.

¹⁰⁹ Rabbi Chaim Feuerman (1929-2017) was a professor of education at Yeshiva University from 1989 to 2017. He was a graduate of City College of New York (CCNY) and was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS). He was a U.S. Air Force Chaplain and Captain in the Air Force Reserves. Among his positions as head of Jewish day schools, he was director of the Atlanta Jewish Academy (AJA) from 1961 to 1967, during which time he initiated the study that led to accreditation of the AJA by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

¹¹⁰ A *sheitel* is the Yiddish word for a wig worn by some Orthodox Jewish married women in order to conform to the requirement of Jewish Law to cover their hair. In many traditional Orthodox Jewish communities, women wear head coverings such as hats, scarves and wigs after marriage.

¹¹¹ *Tzniut* [Hebrew: modesty] describes both the character trait of modesty and discretion, as well as a group of Jewish laws pertaining to conduct. In modern times, the term has become more frequently used with regard to the rules of dress for women within Judaism. The concept is most important within Orthodox Judaism, where many women cover their legs with stockings as part of their daily wardrobe.

Paula: We lived near Shearith Israel. Since we don't drive on Shabbat, we went to Shearith Israel. Beth Jacob was in a time of transition.¹¹² They had already purchased the land on La Vista Road but the building was not built yet. The existing building was on Boulevard down near Georgia Baptist Hospital.¹¹³ The community had basically already moved away from that neighborhood. The majority of people had moved eastward [and] northward.

This area where we are now, where we live now, where Beth Jacob is, [which] has managed to develop such a beautiful, rich community was very underdeveloped then, even in terms of housing. It was very rural. There was still a dairy in the neighborhood. Pet Dairies had a plant here.¹¹⁴ There were some houses being built already, but not too many. It wasn't as densely developed as it is now.

We lived near Shearith Israel. We attended Shearith Israel for services regularly. Occasionally, after Beth Jacob started to have services at the La Vista Women's Club . . . After we were here for awhile, they had sold the building on Boulevard and then while the building was being built on La Vista Road, they rented the La Vista Women's Club, which was adjacent to the property and they had services there. Once a month, I think, my husband would walk there to services. On *Rosh Ha-Shanah*¹¹⁵ and *Yom Kippur*,¹¹⁶ for a few years, we moved over here. We

¹¹² 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 congregation first met in a rented grocery store on Parkway Drive. It moved to a permanent location on Boulevard when it purchased and renovated a two-story apartment building. In 1956, it converted the Tabernacle Baptist Church on Boulevard to a synagogue. It built its current synagogue building on a five-acre lot on LaVista Road in 1961. Rabbi Joseph Safra was the congregation's first permanent rabbi in 1951, followed by Rabbi Emanuel Feldman from 1952 to 1991. Rabbi Ilan Feldman has been the congregation's rabbi since his father Emanuel's retirement in 1991.

¹¹³ Georgia Baptist Hospital was originally founded in 1910 as Tabernacle Infirmary. In 1913 it was sold to the Georgia Baptist Convention. In 1921, it moved to its present downtown Atlanta location at Boulevard and East Avenue, where it still operates today as Atlanta Medical Center.

¹¹⁴ The PET Dairy brand, which processes milk from dairies across the southeastern United States at its processing plant in Johnson, City, Tennessee is owned by Dean Foods. In 1925, Samuel E. Dean Sr. purchased the Pecatonica Marketing Company, an evaporated milk processing facility located in northwestern Illinois. By 1963, it was named the Dean Food Company. Today (2020), Dean Foods is one of the leading American food and beverage companies and the largest dairy company in the United States. Headquartered in Dallas, Texas, the company has 66 manufacturing facilities that produce and distribute 58 brands across all 50 states.

¹¹⁵ *Rosh Ha-Shanah* [Hebrew: head of the year; i.e. New Year festival] begins the cycle of High Holy Days. It introduces the Ten Days of Penitence, when Jews examine their souls and take stock of their actions. On the tenth day is *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. The tradition is that on *Rosh Ha-Shanah*, G-d sits in judgment on humanity. Then the fate of every living creature is inscribed in the Book of Life or Death. Prayer and repentance before the sealing of the books on Yom Kippur may revoke these decisions.

¹¹⁶ *Yom Kippur* [Hebrew: Day of Atonement] is the most sacred day of the Jewish year. *Yom Kippur* is a 25-hour fast day. Most of the day is spent in prayer, reciting *yizkor* for deceased relatives, confessing sins, requesting divine forgiveness, and listening to *Torah* readings and sermons. People greet each other with the wish that they may be sealed in the heavenly book for a good year ahead. The day ends with the blowing of the *shofar* (a ram's horn).

moved in with acquaintances, and spent the night here for *Rosh Ha-Shanah* and *Yom Kippur*, and did services at Beth Jacob until we bought this house.

Sara: What do you remember about the early days of your life at Beth Jacob?

Paula: It was a very small, enthusiastic community. Before us, there were the people who had established and kept the synagogue going during the 1930s and 1940s. I don't remember or I didn't know intimately many of those people. Again, we were immigrants and we tended to befriend other people who were relatively newcomers.

What happened early on in this community was none of these newcomers had family of their own here. They weren't established, rooted here. The Atlanta people were rooted. They were Southerners. So, we reached out to each other and formed pseudo-family relationships. A practice of hospitality and reaching out to strangers happened kind of spontaneously at Beth Jacob and became identified with the synagogue.

We got caught up. As I said earlier, we had thought that we were only going to stay for two years, but when you take a tangent in life, you never know where that road will lead to. We had taken that tangent and then we became involved. I have to say it was one of the better things that's happened to us in our lives, not only because it was a good life for us, but also because we had the opportunity to participate in the building of a community.

For me especially, who had witnessed the destruction of Jewish life and Jewish communities in Europe, to have the opportunity to be a part of building something . . . Atlanta has given me some really wonderful abilities to do constructive rebuilding or repairing of the links in the chain of tradition. I taught Jewish children at the Hebrew Academy for eighteen years. There's no greater joy than to teach Jewish children, young children, about Judaism, about G-d, about belief, about having trust in G-d's providence.

We were part of this building up of Beth Jacob. We, thank G-d, had five children who all went to the Hebrew Academy.¹¹⁷ Before that, they even went to the AJCC preschool. Then they went through the Hebrew Academy. Then they went to the Yeshiva High School.¹¹⁸ We

¹¹⁷ The Katherine and Jacob Greenfield Hebrew Academy was the first Jewish day school in Atlanta, and was founded in 1953. As of mid-2014 the Greenfield Hebrew Academy (grades pre-K through 8) and Yeshiva High School (grades 9-12) merged into one college preparatory day school now called the Atlanta Jewish Academy.

¹¹⁸ Atlanta's Yeshiva High School was a modern Orthodox high school founded in 1971, which offered a well rounded, *Torah*-based, college preparatory education to young Jewish men and women. As of mid-2014 the Greenfield Hebrew Academy (grades pre-K through 8) and Yeshiva High School (grades 9-12) merged into one college preparatory day school now called the 'Atlanta Jewish Academy.'

helped to establish the Yeshiva High School. My husband and I were founders of the Yeshiva High School. There's a good feeling about that.

Sara: You went back to school yourself.

Paula: I did. I had been working as an aide in the preschool at the Hebrew Academy. That happened quite by accident. I had no aspirations growing up—growing up whenever that was. I had no aspirations of being a teacher. In the 1950s when I came to America, growing up, every girl went into being a teacher, or a nurse, or a secretary. Somehow, that . . . I didn't like it. Then I became a wife and a mother.

I was perfectly happy being a wife and a mother, but the Hebrew Academy needed desperately an assistant because one of the preschool teachers was complaining that she had too many children and not enough help. Rabbi Feuerman—that same principal whose wife I was speaking about—asked me if I would just come in on an interim basis to help her out until he found somebody.

I discovered my calling, as they say. I really loved it. I loved being with the children. I discovered in myself something delightful. It was just great. I was a child again, but a teacher child. I had a wonderful experience for a few years.

Then, I decided that maybe I ought to become a professional at it and not just be the assistant to someone else. I went back to Georgia State University.¹¹⁹ I took one or two course a semester for a very long time. I tried to do my coursework while my children were in school and I tried to do my homework after they went to bed. In time, I graduated and I got a Bachelors of Science in Early Childhood Education.

I loved the process actually. Many people complain that going to school to be a teacher is a waste of time or they don't seem to enjoy . . . young people. They say education is wasted on the young. When I went back and studied about issues that I had confronted as an assistant teacher, I suddenly got the background, the fundamentals, and it really made sense to me. Maybe that's a good way to do—work first and then go back and learn about it.

¹¹⁹ Initially intended as a night school, Georgia State University was established in 1913 as the Georgia Institute of Technology's Evening School of Commerce. A reorganization of the university system of Georgia in the 1930's led to the school becoming the Atlanta Extension Center of the University System of Georgia and allowed night students to earn degrees from several colleges in the university System. During this time, the school was divided into two divisions: Georgia Evening College, and Atlanta Junior College. In 1947, the school became affiliated with the University of Georgia and was named the 'Atlanta Division of the University of Georgia.' The school was later removed from the University of Georgia in 1955 and became the Georgia State College of Business Administration. In 1961 the name was shortened to Georgia State College. It became Georgia State University in 1969.

Sara: You were a mother at the time when you were working and studying. How did you cope with it all? How did you manage to do so much?

Paula: I really don't know. When I think about it, I'm overwhelmed now by the things I did then just because . . . I think my life taught me just to charge ahead. I think that's one of the qualities, or skills, or whatever you might call it that just came to me.

I remember having some hesitation about going back to school the way I did, which was to go one course at a time or whatever. I was discussing it with a friend of mine—actually Rabbi [Michael] Broyde's mother,¹²⁰ who is now the rabbi of Young Israel.¹²¹ I said, "You know, by the time I graduate, I'll probably be about forty." She said to me, "You know, you'll be forty even if you don't graduate." That really kind of made sense to me. Why worry about the end product?

Then I really began to enjoy the courses. I had liked being in school when I went to school in New York. I had actually started college before I got married. I went for less than a year to Queens College¹²² and [City College of New York].¹²³ Then my education was interrupted. I was able to transfer in some of those early credits but it still took a very long time to get that [degree].

I just managed. I think I overlooked a lot of things that I probably should not have overlooked. I probably would have been more on top of my children's homework and other things. [I probably would have] gone on trips with the class. But I did that and I think they probably were proud of me too. We all had graduations in the same year. I graduated Georgia State the same year that Rebecca graduated the Hebrew Academy and Joy graduated college. I think that whole year we all graduated from some place.

Sara: Let us talk about your children. You talked about Joy. Who came after Joy?

¹²⁰ Michael Broyde (1964-) is a professor of law and the academic director of the Law and Religion Program at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. He was ordained as a rabbi in 1991 and served as the first rabbi of Young Israel of Toco Hills in Atlanta, Georgia.

¹²¹ Congregation Ohr HaTorah is a Modern Orthodox congregation in Atlanta, Georgia founded in 1994. Rabbi Adam Starr has led the congregation since 2008. Until 2019 when the congregation disaffiliated from the Young Israel movement, the synagogue was known as Young Israel of Toco Hills.

¹²² Queens College is one of the four-year colleges in the City University of New York system. It was established in 1937. Its 80-acre campus is located in the Kew Gardens Hills section of Queens in New York City.

¹²³ Founded in 1847, City College of New York was the first free public institution of higher education in the United States. It is a senior college of the City University of New York (CUNY) and is located in Manhattan

Paula: First, I have to say that Joy lives in Israel. She has taken my mother's Zionism and planted herself. She planted my mother's seeds in the soil of Israel. Then after Joy . . . Joy was born in San Antonio. Sam was born here in Atlanta. He's our first-born son.

Sara: What is his Hebrew name?

Paula: His Hebrew name is Shimshon Dov Ber. He's named after my father, whose name was Shimshon Dov. He's very handsome, as my father was. He's strong. He's a good son.

Sara: Who came after Sam?

Paula: After Sam was Rebecca. We had Joy and Sam very close together. There was like nineteen months apart. Then there was a [Hebrew word; sounds like "hafseca"]. We didn't have any children for six years. I only say that because by the time Rebecca came along, her brother and sister were considerably older and they adored her. She was a very funny little girl from the very beginning—very expressive. She had a brother and sister who really adored her. Sam started to teacher her to play basketball before she knew how to drink from a cup. She was a very early swimmer. She was a strong athlete.

Sara: Who was Rebecca named after?

Paula: Rebecca's [Hebrew] name was Leah Rivka. She was named after my husband's grandmother—who I knew, who lived with his family when he was growing up—and my mother's sister—who perished in the Shoah. Her name was Leah Rivka. Both my daughters are named after one of my mother's sisters. She's named after the sister and after my husband's grandmother.

Then we had two more boys. We had an Avi and we had a Benji. Avi now lives here in Atlanta. He also was a very strong athlete. As I mentioned earlier, he went through the Hebrew Academy and Yeshiva High School. He was the only one of our children who stayed near home during his college years. He went to University of Georgia. That was actually a very beneficial thing for us. In terms of education and in terms of other environments, everything has positive and negative sides. The fact that he was close to Atlanta and could come in frequently contributed to our having a close bond with him.

Sara: Who was he named after?

Paula: Avraham Zvi Eti. He was born right after my mother died. I was pregnant with him right after my mother died. Bill's father had also died not long before that. In fact, he's named after Bill's father. Avraham Zvi was the exact name of Bill's father. Then we added [Eti]

because my mother died in August and I was still in the year of mourning. I didn't want to wait, so we added Eti. My mother's name was Etka or Etel. We added Eti to his name in order to make that connection.

Sara: Then you had another son?

Paula: Yes, we have another son. He's my youngest son. He's Benjamin. In the traditional Biblical sense, he's my Binyamin, which means "the child of my old age."¹²⁴ He's named Benjamin after Bill's grandfather, who was the *shochet*¹²⁵ in New Haven, Connecticut and learned *mishnayot* with the men in New Haven, Connecticut.¹²⁶ I never knew him. He died also when he was very young, but Bill knew him and was very fond of him. Their history actually . . . They left a mark in New Haven. There are old timers who still remember Bill's grandfather in New Haven. We have a little desk in our house now here that was given to Bill's grandfather in recognition of his learning with the *mishnayot* with the community. In those days, they didn't just give you a plaque. They gave you something tangible. We have this beautiful little wooden desk here that is a reminder of his role.

Sara: As you were raising your children, what values were you trying to give to them?

Paula: Strength was one of them. I wanted them to have spiritual strength, Jewish strength, be proud . . . For me, it was important not just to rebuild as I said earlier or repair the chain of tradition, but there was a sense of defiance. They wanted to eradicate us. By being full practicing, believing Jews, it's an act of assertion. I wanted them to be able to openly, proudly be able to assert the Jewishness and for it hopefully to be something inward and important; not just something you wrapped yourself in the flag of it, but to feel strongly about it.

I can honestly say that my children are all passionate about Israel. They all feel passionately. They're educated and to various degrees they feel strongly about observance. I wanted them to be many things. We all want many things, but I wanted them to be strong, and to be critical thinkers, and not to buy into every fad, and to carry forward the strong heritage that

¹²⁴ In Jewish, Christian, and Islamic tradition, Benjamin was the last child born of Jacob's thirteen children (12 sons and 1 daughter), and the second and last son of Rachel. Before dying in childbirth, Rachel names the child Ben Oni, which means "son of my distress." Jacob, however, called the child Ben Yamin, which means "son of my right hand" or "son of the south" (he was the first child to be born in Israel).

¹²⁵ A *shochet* is an adult male Jew who is trained and accredited by a rabbinic authority in the Jewish dietary laws. Specifically, a *shochet* slaughters animals in a way prescribed by Jewish dietary laws to avoid pain to the animal as much as possible, and to safeguard the health of the consumer.

¹²⁶ The *Mishnah* is a part of the *Talmud*, which is the central text of Rabbinic Judaism. The *Talmud* is the basis for all codes of Jewish law.

didn't just begin with me, or my parents, or my grandparents; but goes back all the way two thousand years. That's what gave me strength. That's what allowed me to get past my sense of despair and realize that I, too, had a role to play.

Sara: What role did faith have in your life at this time?

Paula: Faith is a thing that you can't touch. It's ephemeral. It fluctuates. You have more or less faith at certain times. The role that *Halakha* plays is different.¹²⁷ The role of *Halakha* orders my life. Whether my faith is stronger one day or weaker one day, I live within the boundaries that dictate and direct my life and give it direction—a direction that I've chosen. It's hard to say. I'm not a *Tzadik*.¹²⁸ I have my moments of doubts. I have my moments of despair. But it's not what I deal with on an everyday basis. What I deal with on an everyday basis is that in three more days it's going to be Shabbat and do I want to invite people, and what will I cook, and where will I shop, and the practical aspects of living a Jewish life, and will I have time to read the Parshah before Shabbos comes or will it be something with good intentions that I never got to?¹²⁹

Sara: Talking about Shabbat, I know that you bake wonderful challah. Could you tell us what your Shabbat routine is like, starting with the preparations?

Paula: I'll be happy to tell you. I bake challah. I wouldn't say it's wonderful challah but it's the challah that I learned to bake early on and now I don't have to look at the recipe. I think there is a consciousness of Shabbos in an observant person around the whole cycle of the week. If I'm going to bake challah, I usually do it on Thursday night because it's a long procedure or Thursday if I'm going to be at home. I usually do my shopping on Thursday, or Thursday afternoon, or Wednesday afternoon depending on whether we have company and very often we do have company.

When we were younger, during that period of time where I was working, and raising a family, and going to school, one of the things I really can't figure out how I fit in was to have a full table of people at my house all the time. I don't do as much now. In those days, I had a family of eight at home—my mother-in-law came to live with us. Then, on top of that, we always had strangers at the table.

¹²⁷ *Halakha* (or *Halacha*) is Hebrew for 'way' or 'path.' It is the legal tradition of Judaism and the body of Jewish religious laws derived from the Written and Oral Torah.

¹²⁸ *Tzadik* [Hebrew: righteous] is a title given to people who are considered to be very righteous, specially a Hassidic spiritual leader.

¹²⁹ The *Parashat ha-Shavua* [Hebrew], popularly referred to as a *parashah* or *parshah* and also known as a *Sidra*, is a section of the *Torah* (Five Books of Moses) used in Jewish liturgy during a particular week. It is a custom among religious Jewish communities for a weekly *Torah* portion, to be read during Jewish prayer services.

The things that I try to do ahead are the challah, and the shopping, and if I'm going to do any kind of dessert baking that is time consuming. My husband in the last few years—it must be about eight or ten years—has taken over the responsibility of setting the table for Shabbos. He does that on Thursday night. He sets the table with the silverware, with the glasses, with the napkins, with whatever. We like that. It's nice to have the table set on Thursday night and Friday morning already something looks like it's in preparation for Shabbat.

If we have company, then of course I have to dig out some recipes and figure out a plan. Then I cook. I have to be finished before candle lighting because I don't cook after sundown when Shabbat begins. When I light candles, there is a real sense of release. It's like going from the oppression of "have to" to a different kind of environment.

I don't go to synagogue on Friday night. In our community, there are many women who go. I stay home and I arrange the last minute details for the meal. Bill goes and the children come home, or whoever the guests are. Friday night dinner begins with some introductory songs and Kiddush¹³⁰ and *Hamotzi*¹³¹ over challah.

We always have two challahs, either home baked or, in a pinch . . . I like to bake challah. I bake it because it's a pleasurable activity. It's a sensory experience. I've always enjoyed it. It makes Shabbos special. For some reason . . . We have very good bakeries now, but everybody always sits down and that first bite of challah, they say, "Mmmm." That sort of gives me the gratification.

Sara: What are the ingredients you use?

Paula: It's very simple. It's water, and flour, and eggs, and yeast, and sugar or honey, and salt. [It is] salt, and sugar, and eggs, and a very small amount of fat—either oil or margarine, but very little—and flour, and yeast, and water. It's just mixed together, and kneaded, and shaped, and baked. I put raisins in mine because we like raisins.

It's the beginning of a nice meal. Then sometimes we sing songs. My husband likes to give *haftarah*, which is a little bit of an insight into that week's Torah reading.¹³² We have a brief

¹³⁰ *Kiddush* [Hebrew: sanctification] is a blessing recited over wine or grape juice to sanctify the Sabbath and Jewish holidays. In many synagogues congregants gather for *Kiddush* reception after the Friday night or Saturday morning service to recite the blessing over wine or grape juice and have something to eat.

¹³¹ *Hamotzi* is the blessing recited before eating bread (challah) at the beginning of a meal on Shabbat.

¹³² The *haftarah* is a series of selections from the books of Nevi'im [Prophets] of the *Tanach* [Hebrew Bible] that is publicly read in synagogue as part of Jewish religious practice. The *haftarah* reading follows the *Torah* reading on each Sabbath and on Jewish festivals and fast days. On Sabbath days, The *haftarah* is selected because it relates to the day's Torah portion. On holidays and special Sabbaths, the *haftarah* is selected to coincide with the calendar.

discussion or presentation. Sometimes my son-in-law does it or sometimes Bill does it. Then we say *Hamazon* and that's it.¹³³ Then everybody leaves and we go to sleep or we clean up and we go to sleep.

Sara: Next day?

Paula: Next day, we either are invited out—there's a lot of socialization that goes on—but I usually go to synagogue. Shabbos morning, I like to go to synagogue. I usually go to Beth Jacob. I have a place that I've occupied for many years. Although Beth Jacob does not sell seats, and there are no family pews or anything, and anybody is welcome to sit anywhere, I have my home place. It feels good. I don't mind moving over when somebody wants to sit there or somebody is already sitting there, but it always feels right that I'm there. I hear better. I daven better.¹³⁴ I go to synagogue and then I stay around a little for Kaddish.

At Beth Jacob, because we are a community where everybody lives around this radius . . . People are busy all week long, so there's a lot of socialization that goes on. It's like a weekly town meeting or a weekly *Kaffeeklatsch* [German: *Kaffee* (coffee), *Klatsch* (gossip); informal conversation at a social gathering where coffee is served] that all the people who live in the neighborhood have. Nobody is in a hurry or many people are not in a hurry. We have people who are non-observant and who have to go to Lenox [Square],¹³⁵ or they have a nail appointment, or they have other important things to do [like] Little League¹³⁶ or other very important things to do, but we don't have anything but food waiting for us, so we hang around. It keeps getting later and later. I come home and I say to Bill, "You know it's one fifteen and we're just getting home?" We do a lot of connecting at the synagogue. We chat. We exchange the news of the day. We do all kinds of stuff like that.

It's unfortunate. As I'm speaking, I've got this image. For all these years, we never had to have a policeman outside the synagogue door. I remember visiting friends in France a number of years ago. I was astonished that they had two guards on motorcycles standing. It was after

¹³³ *Birkat Hamazon* [Hebrew: The Blessing of the Food], known in English as the Grace After Meals, which is recited seated, at the place where the meal was eaten.

¹³⁴ Davening is the act of reciting Jewish liturgical prayers during which the prayer sways or rocks lightly.

¹³⁵ Lenox Square is a mall in Atlanta's Buckhead community. It was built in 1959 and has undergone several major renovations.

¹³⁶ Founded in 1939, Little League Baseball and Softball is a nonprofit organization that organizes local youth baseball and softball leagues throughout the United States and the rest of the world.

some of those bombings in Greece and some of the hijackings.¹³⁷ In Paris, they had had some bombings.¹³⁸ My friend's synagogue was guarded by policeman. I thought that was so strange—a strange way to live.

Now, regretfully, we have the same thing. We have a policeman who guards the front of our synagogue every Friday night and Saturday and we've come to accept it as the normal. We've come to accept it as part of our normal landscape. That's a little bit unsettling. It's sad that we have to be like that, that we have come to this point.

Sara: What other thoughts do you have with the situation we are experiencing now with terrorism?

Paula: I have to say, first of all, that in the last fifty years since I came to America, I don't think there's been one day that I have not felt extraordinarily grateful for living in peace, for not being afraid. I say that without exaggeration. The awareness of the blessings of peace have been with me all the time, but in the back of my mind, I've always had the fear, "How long will this last? How long before it won't be?" The residue of my early experiences did not just vanish. There was always the sense that this is too good to last. That's one reaction.

The reaction is a fearful one because I had the privilege of raising my children in freedom, and in peace, and in relative security. That's what the word is. I had the privilege of raising my children in relative security day in and day out. It's true that life here in Atlanta changed. When I first came here, I could leave the doors open and my car doors unlocked. I could go to Lenox Square at a quarter to nine in the evening by myself to go pick up something and never think that someone would molest or disturb me. Things have changed, but the way things have changed in the last few years and especially this year, is beyond what I could have foreseen.

¹³⁷ It is unclear which specific terrorist attacks Paula is referring to. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s extremists carried out numerous attacks—from plane and cruise ship hijackings, to attacks on airports, synagogues, and simply places where Jews congregated—in Europe that targeted Jewish, Israeli and American individuals and sites. Multiple bombings occurred or originated in Greece during the 1970s and 1980s. In 1982 in Athens, Greece, bombs exploded outside a Jewish travel agency, an Israeli-owned company and two American banks. The 1970s also saw a large number of hijackings carried out by Palestinian terrorist groups.

¹³⁸ Particularly from the mid-1970s to mid-1980s in Paris, France a series of bombings and other attacks targeted various Jewish or Israeli individuals and sites. For example, a Paris synagogue was bombed in 1976. In 1980, another Paris synagogue was bombed and another attacked with machine guns. In 1982 in Paris, a rash of bombings and attacks targeted Israeli banks, Jewish business, and Israeli diplomats. In 1985, bombs were detonated at a Jewish film festival.

I have been thinking about that in various ways and the fact that, as a child, one of the things that most profoundly affected me was the powerlessness of the adults around me to protect me. During that entire time in the concentration camps and the time afterwards, but especially in the concentration camps and the ghettos, I knew that people could blow my mother away [so easily] and all the people around me—the adults—they had no power to protect me. That was a very insecure feeling. That was a very cynical feeling about life in general, about being able to trust anybody to provide what you need.

I relate that to children growing up now when suddenly their umbrella of security has been knocked over. Their umbrella of security is now full of holes. I don't know. It's true that their mommies and daddies are around, that their President says, "Please, let's go on and live life the way we should," that we still live in a country of law and order, and we have psychologists who are intervening all the time, but nonetheless, I think that there is that element of insecurity that creeps in. Children know at a certain level none of those people who are supposed to protect them can really protect them.

I come back to the fact that I think faith is a very necessary ingredient. I think that being strong in whom one is, in oneself, and believing that particularly . . . I speak for Jewish people. I speak for us. I think that believing that the Jewish people have a destiny to fulfill in the world is an important thing. It's the one thing that can provide some kind of buffer against insecurities that we have no control over.

Sara: How does the existence of Israel tie in with that?

Paula: It's very central because Israel gives us all a spine and a backbone, simply put. It's our homeland. We need it. But also, we have forgotten how much of our identity, how much of how we present ourselves to the world . . . Whether it's in America, or in England, or anywhere, or in Russia—look at what would have happened to the millions of Russian Jews if Israel had not existed . . . Israel is part of that.

We have this extraordinary privilege of having Israel, our Biblical ancestral homeland, for the first time in two thousand years. Every Jew alive today, whether they realize it or not, depends on the existence of Israel for their self-comfort. Even if they are very far away from even understanding it, there is somewhere in the back of their consciousness, at the most simple level, that it's a place of refuge. But in a much more complicated identity sort of way, it has given all of us in this . . . since 1948, a different attitude about who we are.

Sara: Is there something you would like to tell your loved ones before we close?

Paula: You mean you, and Ruth, and Rebecca, and my children, and my husband . . . and future generations? I hope they will always . . . I wish I could think of more original things to say to them, but I think that the three blessings of *Yivarechecha Adonai v'yishmerecha* [Hebrew: May G-d bless you and protect you], that G-d should watch over them and protect them.¹³⁹ I hope that will always be true. I hope G-d will always look with favor upon them and that people will look with favor upon them, that they will develop the kind of attitudes, and approaches to other people and to life that will make them likeable and well received in the world. What else can I say? I hope they'll have a good life. Thank you very much.

<Disk 2 Ends>

INTERVIEW ENDS

¹³⁹ The *Birkat Kohanim* [Hebrew: Priestly Blessing], sometimes also called the threefold blessing, is an ancient benediction that was recited by the priests in the holy temple in Jerusalem. The text of the blessing comes from book of Numbers in the Bible: May G-d bless you and protect you; May G-d show you favor and be gracious to you; May G-d show you kindness and grant you peace. Today, it is typically recited in synagogues during holidays, although many Jewish parents will also say it to their children on Friday evenings.

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