

THE WILLIAM BREMAN JEWISH HERITAGE MUSEUM

ESTHER AND HERBERT TAYLOR

JEWISH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF ATLANTA

MEMOIRIST: RELLA SLOMAN
INTERVIEWER: SARA GHITIS and RUTH EINSTEIN
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INTERVIEW BEGINS

<Begin Video 1>

GHITIS: Today is March 17, 2004.

SLOMAN: Sixteen.

EINSTEIN: Sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, right in there.

GHITIS: We're interviewing Mrs. Rella Sloman S-L-O-M-A-N. My name is Sara Ghitis. Could you please pronounce your name for me?

SLOMAN: Maiden name, or you want the real, the, what I am. Yeah. Rella Sloman.

GHITIS: And what is your [dog barks] name? Your maiden name?

SLOMAN: Saul. In Lithuania it was Solski, and now it's Saul here in United States.

GHITIS: And how do you spell it?

SLOMAN: S-A-U-L.

GHITIS: And how do you spell Solski?

SLOMAN: S-O-L-S-K-I.

GHITIS: Where were you born?

SLOMAN: Lithuania, Kovno¹.

GHITIS: When were you born?

SLOMAN: May the 22nd, 1928.

GHITIS: Your first name is Rella.

SLOMAN: Right.

GHITIS: Could you tell me a little about the name Rella?

SLOMAN: Yeah. My grandma, may she rest in peace.

GHITIS: Is there a Hebrew name?

SLOMAN: No. She had two names. She had Rochel Rella, and my papa, olevesholem [may he rest in peace] did not want two names, so he gave the way they called her, Rella.

GHITIS: What were the names of your parents?

¹ A city in Lithuania, also known as Kaunas, that was the capitol city leading up to WW2. It had a Jewish population of 35,000-40,000. The city was occupied by the Soviets in 1940, but after Germany pushed against the Soviet line, they retreated and left Kovno to be occupied by the Nazis. Einsatzgruppen began systematically murdering the Jews before a ghetto was erected.

SLOMAN: My papa's name was, in Lithuania, Zusel, but was Julian. My mama's name, Dina.

GHITIS: Solski.

SLOMAN: Right.

GHITIS: What memories do you have about life before the war?

SLOMAN: Very good ones. Very, very good ones. We were in good shape my family, and everybody said, the American uncles: "Come to America," "Come to Africa," and we never thought about it. When they came to see us, the picture that you see it, my grandpa showed them everything how we lived, and so can we live like that in America? Can we live like that? Both of them said: "No, no wonder that you don't want to move."

GHITIS: What kind of work did your father do?

SLOMAN: We had several things. My grandpa had a lot of farms. Also the factory. Everything was the family. Solski Brauder, the name was of the family. I had one aunt and her name was Brauder. That was my father's only sister. And five brothers, they were five brothers, and we lived in Kovno. The factory was forty kilometers from Kovno. The farms were twenty miles from Kovno. The milk, everything used to bring to us to the house from the farms. And the [unclear] they used to sell it, but for the family, you know, we all lived in one place. I don't know how to explain you "a haif." Did you ever hear that that expression, a haif? It was a big, big place in Kovno. It took two, it was on a, on the, on the corner. [Sounds like] Ugenyagusu and Yamuno. Gatvè; Gatvè is a street in Lithuanisch [German for Lithuanian]. And besides the family was also rented a few places for different things, like, I don't know how to explain. There was a [unclear] in the same place. How do you say a haif. A haif, you know, it closes every night.

GHITIS: Is it like a courtyard?

SLOMAN: That's it. I can't remember that. A courtyard. And that's where the whole family lived, Grandpa in the middle, and all the boys and my aunt on the side.

GHITIS: What about your family? It was your parents?

SLOMAN: And two brothers.

GHITIS: Can you give me everybody's names?

SLOMAN: Sure. My oldest brother was Charlie, that was Bezalel in Yiddish, and my little brother was Yankel Leib, which they killed him. My oldest brother survived because he was hidden by gentile people.

GHITIS: What else do you remember about those years?

SLOMAN: Very good years. Summertime. We had summer houses forty kilometers, like I said, from Kovno. We used to finish school and everybody used to travel back there. Papa used to come and everybody, the whole family. And we lived too good, let's put it that way.

GHITIS: How about Jewish life?

SLOMAN: My parents, my whole family, was Rebzinistim. You know what that is, don't you? Menachem Begin's² people. Ze'ev Jabotinsky³? They were all in our house. The mahon [NB: Jabotinsky Institute] you know what a mahon is? was on, next to our house, about two houses away.

GHITIS: You say they came to your house. Menachem Begin and Ze'ev Jabotinsky?

² Former Prime Minister of Israel, 1977-1983.

³ Zionist activist, orator, and writer. He founded the Betar Movement which was a Zionist youth movement that is today known as the Herut movement.

SLOMAN: Olevesholem.

GHITIS: What do you remember about their coming [cross talk]?

SLOMAN: I was at that time I remember about seven or six years old, but all my cousins that you saw on the picture were grown ladies. As a matter of fact two of them already finished gymnasium [German for high school]. My brother also finished gymnasium, and I just started, you know. And he came, he was accepted like a family, both of them, because when I came to Israel in 1973 before the war, I lived in the house...we bought a penthouse where Menachem Begin's mother, machutenesteh [mother-in-law] stayed. Her daughter was married to Menachem Begin's son Benny. Benny Ze'ev he was named. And I said to her: "You know, Sarah, if you see your mechutin [son-in-law], tell him hello from the Solskis." So she went and told him. Usually, she told me later, many a people said: "I knew Menachem Begin, I knew Ze'ev Jabotinsky," olevesholem, but he didn't remember. Her, he asked right away: "Wait a minute. What age is she? Is that the little girl that ran around when I was there?" And sure enough, they knew Masha, he knew me, and me. "Rellinka, she was a little girl." And that was true; he remembered. He came right away to see me. As a matter of fact, I have papers to show you that I was meeting him.

GHITIS: Was there ever talk about the possibility of going to Israel, then Palestine?

SLOMAN: My brother wanted to go very much, and one of my cousins, the oldest one, Minah, did go. And what happened, she was a teacher and she fell, and there was some rocks when you fall you get blutvergiftung, how do you say? You get blood poisoning. And there was a German woman who gave her blood, and my aunt, olevesholem, her name was also Dinah, went to see

her there and put her on the feet, and brought her, unfortunately, back home. And, of course, she was killed.

GHITIS: What about religion?

SLOMAN: Oh yeah. We were Orthodox⁴. Kosher⁵, going to Shul⁶ [synagogue]. My father was going only once, twice a year: Rosh Hashanah⁷, Yom Kippur⁸. And he liked the big shul, the Chorale shul, you know what that means? That was a beautiful Shul in Kovno. Hor shul, the name was Hor shul. Why was it Chorale shul? Because children were singing there beautifully. My grandpa was the gabbai⁹ of a Shul next, not far from us. And he was going every day, of

⁴ Orthodox Judaism is a traditional branch of Judaism that strictly follows the Written *Torah* and the Oral Law concerning prayer, dress, food, sex, family relations, social behavior, the Sabbath day, holidays and more.

⁵ Kosher/*Kashrut* is the set of Jewish dietary laws. Food that may be consumed according to *halakhah* (Jewish law) is termed 'kosher' in English. Kosher refers to Jewish laws that dictate how food is prepared or served and which kinds of foods or animals can be eaten. In a kosher kitchen and home, meat and dairy are kept separate, so a separate sets of dishes, cookware, and serving ware are needed. Food that is not in accordance with Jewish law is called 'treif.'

The word 'kosher' has become English vernacular, a colloquialism meaning proper, legitimate, genuine, fair, or acceptable. Kosher can also be used to describe ritual objects that are made in accordance with Jewish law and are fit for ritual use.

⁶ *Shul* is a Yiddish word for synagogue that is derived from a German word meaning "school," and emphasizes the synagogue's role as a place of study.

⁷ *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.

⁸ Hebrew for 'Day of Atonement.' 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).

⁹ Someone who assists in the reading of the *Torah*.

course Shabbos [Yiddish for Sabbath¹⁰]. My mama, I remember, only went also yontif¹¹ [on holidays], because women were not going on Shabbat in Lithuania. I don't remember anybody, women, going to shul.

GHITIS: Did your mother wear a wig?

SLOMAN: No. No. Nobody wore a wig. I don't remember anybody to wear a wig. No.

GHITIS: But you were Orthodox in your [cross talk]

SLOMAN: Orthodox, yeah.

GHITIS: Payess¹²? [sidelocks]

SLOMAN: We didn't see anybody with payess. No, we didn't. My grandpa had a [unclear — beard?], you know, a . . .

GHITIS: Where did you go to school?

SLOMAN: Schwabbe Gymnasium. Starting from the first grade the whole family was going to the Schwabbe Gymnasium. It was one of the best gymnasium. Anybody who went there spoke a good Hebrew, and I do speak a good Hebrew. When the Israelis came in Germany after the war

¹⁰ *Shabbat* (Hebrew) or *Shabbos* (Yiddish) is the Jewish day of rest and is observed on Saturdays. *Shabbat* observance entails refraining from work activities, often with great rigor, and engaging in restful activities to honor the day. *Shabbat* begins at sundown on Friday night and is ushered in by lighting candles and reciting a blessing. It is closed the following evening with the recitation of the *havdalah* blessing.

¹¹ *Yontif* is the Yiddish word; in Hebrew it is 'yom tov.' It is generic word for Jewish holidays. It includes all but the High Holy Days of *Rosh Ha-Shanah* and *Yom Kippur*.

¹² *Payess* [Hebrew: sidelocks or sidecurls] are worn by some men and boys in the Orthodox Jewish community based on a Biblical injunction against shaving the "corners" of one's head.

they didn't believe I'm not an Israeli. They said: "Why do you say you're not an Israeli? At sabra¹³."

I told them: "No, unfortunately, I wish I would have been sabra, I wouldn't have been in the, in such a horror." I was very ill.

GHITIS: What language did you speak at home?

SLOMAN: Russian and Yiddish. Mama told me when I was a little girl, she had another maid for me, for the child, Polish, and I spoke beautifully Polish. So, we need help after the war, the Polish girl came together and came to me back the Polish. And I spoke very good Polish. And everybody said: "In Lithuania you spoke?" Yes, we had some people that spoke Polish too.

GHITIS: What languages do you speak?

SLOMAN: Hebrew, of course very well, Yiddish very well, Russian pretty good, because I'm starting to forget; I don't use it anymore. I was in Israeli, I had a maid, a Russian maid, I spoke perfectly again. What else do I speak?

GHITIS: Lithuanian?

SLOMAN: No ma'am. Don't want to remember and don't remember. I washed my hair from Lithuania. They were the Nazis. The Germans didn't kill us; they killed us. And I never forgave them. Don't want to hear about them.

GHITIS: What do you remember about the early war years, how it started, how your life changed?

SLOMAN: The beginning we were in a basement, and we had a basement and everybody was sitting basement, and the bombs was flying, of course. And the Russian were going out and the German going in. And the Lithuanians says right away that all the Jews were Communist. They

¹³ *Sabra* [Hebrew] is an informal slang term that refers to any Israeli Jew born in Israel.

were the Communist when the Russian were. But they said all the Jews were communist. So, Communist, so we have to kill them, right? So that's how it started, I remember. Friday, it was a Friday, it was kind of two, three o'clock, maybe earlier, and all the men from our — what did you say the haif called? I forgot again.

GHITIS: Courtyard.

SLOMAN: The courtyard. Everybody from the courtyard, the men they took away. And as I understand, later when my papa and my uncles came back they said there was a lot of men, and they were digging ditches. Burial. They didn't know, but my brother saw a partisan—do you know the partisans, the ones that killed us, you know that, the Lithuanish partisan—and he was afraid from him, because he was working for us and he wasn't too sweet. He could see he's antisemite. But when he saw my brother, he said: "Take, Solski, take all you, anybody you can and I'll carry you out from here, because after you finish digging, they kill you, the first ones." And I remember it was raining when they came back, wet, and they came to there, and they said: "Oy, oy, I bet the rest of the people there they were killed." He took just those that was around him, and that was the family and the neighbors.

GHITIS: Did they come back?

SLOMAN: No. That's where my one uncle that was running to Russia and they caught him on the way. The one I told you that, Minah, was in Israel.

My nose is itching; can I touch myself?

She was pregnant, my cousin. She married the day the war, the Russian came in and she was pregnant, and they all were running to Russia, and they caught them and they killed them all.

GHITIS: Do you know what year it was when the men were taken away?

SLOMAN: Well, my family was with me in the ghetto till the end, like my father. My uncle was killed, my grandpa was killed. You know we had **aktias** [actions]. I don't know how to explain.

GHITIS: Aktionen.

SLOMAN: Yes, aktionen. They was a ten thousand people that they took in one day and never saw them again. That was my uncles, the picture you saw, ninety percent was there. My grandpa and my step-grandma, and my brothers started begging they shall let my grandpa, my uncles go, and they [unclear], because it was already dark. At first, they walked one right, one left, but when it got dark, they didn't look right, left, right, left and the family was going all together.

Somebody's in the yard — who is that? A schwarz¹⁴? [German for black]

GHITIS: I want to go back to the story you just told me about the men being taken away. You said they never returned.

SLOMAN: No. I said those who dig those ditches, my father, my brother, my uncles, they all came back that Friday evening, when it was raining, pouring. They came like, like you— know we were surprised because it was already dark, real dark, and they said what that Partisan told them, to take those shovels on their shoulders and he'll carry them. He was holding those guns like he was going to kill them and my brother was very surprised because he wasn't... he didn't even want him to look at him, because he was thinking he's an antisemite, he doesn't like, you know, what looks like my Jew, you know?

GHITIS: Do you remember how you went to the ghetto?

¹⁴ The German word for black, it's used here to describe a black person. Typical sort of derogatory when used in that way.

SLOMAN: Oh yeah. Never forget it. We had to go somewhere else, you know. So a friend of ours, my brother's friends, they were together in school and college, they had some man in **Slobotke** that wanted their apartment, or house, whatever, and they wanted to take us with them, and we did. We moved in that house both families, our family, Wharton's, they were the name Wharton. And we with horses and buggies, what you could, clothes and furniture. Of course, you couldn't take all of it. Then they took away five hundred men, five hundred and fifty men, and between those five hundred and fifty men was my uncle, one of my uncle, and they killed them right away. Young people. My uncle must have been in the thirties. They, of course, killed them. All of them. That was the first one, before the ghetto was closed even. Was still open.

GHITIS: So you remember moving into the ghetto?

SLOMAN: Of course. Of course. I used to go and stay in lines for food. I used to go. They used to send me to go see if they're catching men or if they doing something, because I was a child still. I was eleven and a half, twelve years old. I used to go. And I really didn't look Jewish at all. I looked like a Russian girl. But, my father didn't want me to go away from the ghetto. Because my brother wanted to take my little brother, so my mother didn't want to give him because he was just eight years old, and I didn't understand why my father didn't want it, but I overheard one time he said: "I'd rather have her dead than has v'halilah [heaven forbid] they should shend her." You know what "shending" means? Abuse.

GHITIS: What made you able to leave the ghetto?

SLOMAN: I didn't leave the ghetto.

GHITIS: No, no, how could you have left the ghetto?

SLOMAN: My brother became a policeman, who get together with those guys that watch the ghetto, and that was Partisans. He would have taken my little brother in a sack and come back and would have taken me. I don't know. He didn't say because my papa didn't want to hear about it. So it was finished. And my mother didn't want to hear about a child to take away. I remember when my father came from work and didn't find his child, my little brother. [phrase in Yiddish] "Leibele! You gave away Leibele!" And he sits down, and you know walking up, it was two steps, and he looked at one point, like he loses his mind. You have the feeling that he's losing his mind. That's the way he was, he was besides himself. What can I tell you?

GHITIS: Do you know how long you stayed in the ghetto?

SLOMAN: Yes, I do.

We came in 1941, June. I don't know. I'm not sure. My mother used to remember all the. And we walked out in July, I think, in 1944. They took us out from. We had a [sounds like] malina. You know what a malina was? A basement that opened up liked a piece, like you know, to get in and get out. And we got water and we got food, and we got... Thirty-five people went down there. And we were sitting. We knew that they were taking those away. One day, two days, the third day the candle wouldn't stay light, lighting. So I remember in school, teva [nature], teva, you know, we learned what can happen when you don't have oxygen and all that business. So I start crying, start crying: "Daddy, let's get out from here. We'll choke to death." And while I was hollering, the German came in the house. Of course, they start looking where the calls come, what's happening. And they opened the—there was a rug on it, and they took off the rug and they took off the rug and they beat everybody, especially the men. They hit with some sticks, they were the German. Raus, raus, raus, [German for out, out, out] and everybody got to go on a big place where they used to make those selections. And my father's words, I'll

never forget: "Mein Kind [Yiddish phrase] You killed us. [Yiddish phrase] Help yourself who can." And he ran away, back in the same place, we find out later. And went down there and somebody closed them up, that was in big blocks. Two big blocks. Two malinen. Malinen were those places where they hide, was surviving. Two, only two, because they had three weeks, they couldn't break through the Russian, the front, and they had plenty of time to kill. So my father said to that man: "My wife's, everybody's killed. [Yiddish phrase, something about 'my daughter']". He said to that man. So here [Yiddish phrase meaning the daughter lived along with the mama]. And my father was choked there, because my brother, soon as they opened up, he took a boat because there was a [sounds like yeman] [NB: reservoir] a water, a big water, and he run in ghetto, and he knew where we were living, and I'll tell you how. A dentist lady moved in, and they had those big chairs where you know, [phrase] and it was standing in front of the door. And my brother saw that and start digging. And he digged and digged and digged. He didn't find no life. I found out he choked, for sure, to death. The whole ghetto was just ruined. In ruins.

My nerves are [unclear].

GHITIS: Where did you go from the ghetto?

SLOMAN: Stutthof¹⁵. They took us in, they took us where you take cattles and horses, and you know, little window, and it was two buckets in each thing. Can you imagine? A lot of people.

We couldn't sit down even. We were standing. And three days and we came to Stutthof. And in

¹⁵ Stutthof was established in 1939 near Danzig (present-day Gdansk, Poland), on the Baltic Sea. There were a series of sub-camps attached to the main camp, which acted as a reserve for slave labor for the others. Conditions in the camp were brutal and more than 60,000 people died there.

Stutthof, they took us out and put us again in a big place, and we saw the chimney is smoking, and we saw a lot of shoes. A lot of shoes, a big in the middle. And they said to go in, and nobody went out. So everybody was just trying [phrase in Hebrew] maybe something [a miracle] will happen. And everybody was moving, moving away. What, they came in the night and we had to go in, and they told us to undress. Naked. And there was a table in the middle. And they were checking us. And they used to laugh when they saw girls that hadn't had nothing to do with nobody. And they walked to her and laughed. We washed ourselves. They told us to wash. They gave us those striped jackets and pants, and we were alive. We walked out and we are alive. In blocks.

In each block was four beds, you know, and I said to my mama: "Mama, we got to go to the highest bed." And three to a bed. Was like single beds, you know? And one girl, that she didn't survive unfortunately, were lying [unclear] so it was a good idea, because when you used to go in to heat somebody, the first is [unclear] and then exactly it was the food, right in our window. We could see through the window. And my cousin, may she rest in peace, twenty-five years she was married to my cousin, Solski also, the same name, and she must have gotten two soups or whatever. He put her down on a chair. He was hitting her twenty-four hours till she fell and died. In our face.

GHITIS: Were they punishing her for something?

SLOMAN: Yeah. As I said, she must have gotten either two soups or extra bread, something happened. They didn't know her. Was a terrible [Hebrew word] in that Stutthof. Max. A Pollack with funny eyes. You know, he looked like that. And he was so mean, you cannot imagine. When he got somebody, that was the end.

GHITIS: When you were undressed and made to change into the uniform, who was in charge?

SLOMAN: German. All German.

GHITIS: Men or women?

SLOMAN: Men, men, young, young, I don't think it was Nazis or it was the Wehrmacht. I think it was the Wehrmacht, because it was the green boys, not the black ones. Later we had the black ones, you know, with, you know— that was the Wehrmacht¹⁶. Young, young, very young, they were laughing.

GHITIS: How about your hair?

SLOMAN: No. Luckily, didn't cut my hair.

GHITIS: Numbers?

SLOMAN: Yeah, but not in the hands, but on the top in the clothes. They gave white, painted on numbers, and we had to sew it. How we got the needle and the thing I don't remember. I swear to you, I don't remember.

GHITIS: What was your life like [cross talk]?

SLOMAN: Horrible. We didn't work. We had to stay three times a day on appel [roll call]. [unclear] And you know, some weren't standing straight. If they were knocking. And twice a day they gave us to eat. In the morning it was [sounds like] tsukoya coffee, and in the evening, soup. Some kind of soup. We did get margarine. The first time in our life, and it was so good. We didn't know what it was, but one of the girls saw it and said: "That's butter." But it was margarine.

GHITIS: How about your mother?

¹⁶ The armed forces of the Nazis.

SLOMAN: Oh, she was wonderful. If not of my mother I wouldn't have survived.

GHITIS: How old was your mother?

SLOMAN: My mother was young. When she walked out, she was forty-five.

GHITIS: And how old were you?

SLOMAN: Twelve, in the three years, fourteen-and-a-half, almost fifteen.

GHITIS: How long did you stay in Stutthof?

SLOMAN: Three weeks. That was the **Erholungslag**[??][German phrase]. They prepared others to go to work. They took us on boats, little boats, and again something happened that you have to know about. Anybody who would get the number, got a soup. The middle of the day. And they never gave soup. So, right away, Stutthof, got my number, got my soup. I didn't realize that my mother is not behind me; She's a little farther from me, and she had another number. I had 412-something, I don't remember. Well, my mother had 42. And they weren't supposed to know it's a mother and a daughter, because they weren't interested we should be together. So, I used to cry and my mama used to cry. We didn't know if we're go on in the same boat and didn't want nobody to see. They should not.

They gave us some clothes, by the way. They took away those, and they threw some clothes. Lucky me. I got an extra skirt. And you weren't supposed to have more than one dress. My dress was a black one, [unclear] little holes, little holes, and that was that was disastrous, because lice used to go in and that was disastrous. My mama used to, we were making ditches for the army, and I used to be down in the ditch and my mama used to take the clothes and clean it and, naked.

GHITIS: You were making ditches when you were where?

SLOMAN: When they sent us with the boats to Torun [Poland]¹⁷. I think it was Torun. The place where we were ditching those ditches. [cross talk]

GHITIS: And this was where?

SLOMAN: Torun. In Polish. That's all I remember, Torun.

GHITIS: Was this?

SLOMAN: It was on [unclear] there was...you know, when you go on a camping you put it up. What do you call that?

GHITIS: A tent.

SLOMAN: Tents. Twelve in a tent. It was six mothers and six daughters. And if one wanted to turn around, everybody had to turn around, because it was that close. It was terrible. When you come from work and it was raining, we had to put the clothes underneath to dry it out. I had a blanket. My mother had a blanket. My mother had a short coat she got when they were throwing, so she used to take that blanket in the daytime and cover up, you know, her body. And I used to do that too, because if not, you couldn't find it later. I remember like today. Five o'clock in the morning. It was cold. I didn't have no shoes. I got some kind of sandals from wood either from Holland or from something, with a wire. You had a close it up with a wire. It was open, and was terrible cold, and I begged my mama—They used to make selections—"Let's go, Mama. Just to be warm one time. I don't care if it kills me, Stutthof, but let's go back to Stutthof."

My mama: ["Nein, mein Kind, nein." in Yiddish 'No, my child, no. God will help us']

¹⁷ City in Northern Poland.

"Where is God, Mama? Why is he doing it to us? What have we done? What did I do?"

"Oh, see? You're asking questions. God doesn't like when you ask questions." That's how she believed, that we'll survive.

That last time there was a selection, and what they used to do, we knew that we're going to death because if somebody had some shoes, they gave, took it away and gave it to those who left. So we knew something is going on. There was the third time or the fourth time, a guard beat on me. I said: "Mama, I can't take it anymore. Let's go back to Stutthof. I want to warm up one time in my life."

"Oy, gut mein Kind[Yiddish phrase]"

We came. The Schnabel [a beaked nose] the man from our concentration camp, for that place where we worked was, Schnabel. Why did we call him Schnabel? Names we didn't know. He used to call: "You big schnabel!" "die grosse.... [the big..]" Yeah, the German, schnabel. So we called him the "Schnabel." And then.

GHITIS: Excuse me. What does the word "Schnabel" mean?

SLOMAN: Big nose. Schnabel. And the other one was a fat guy and his name was Kosky [sp]. I'll never forget that one. Seven years [seiben jahre ich war gewarte] [Yiddish phrase]. And he used to have a, a thing, you know, a long one, like for animals. And he used to hit anybody who got it, it was terrible. And a murderer. But look guys, if you need to live. It came Christmas time and him and the Schnabel were gone on vacation, and a nice old man, in the black he was. They were already then in SS¹⁸, you know, in black with the hats, you know, and [unclear]. He was

¹⁸ The *SS* or *Schutzstaffel* was a major paramilitary organization under Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. It began at the end of 1920 as a small, permanent guard unit known as the "*Saal-Schutz*" made up of Nazi Party volunteers to provide security for party meetings in Munich. Later, in 1925, Heinrich Himmler joined the unit, which had by then been reformed and renamed the "*Schutz-Staffel*." Under Himmler's leadership, it grew from a small paramilitary formation to one of the largest and most powerful organizations in the Third Reich. Under Himmler's command, it was responsible for many of the crimes against humanity during World War II. After World War II,

nice. His name was [sounds like] Polschein. I cannot forget him. I'll never forget that man. He hollered sometimes because he had to, but he didn't touch nobody. You could feel he's a, sort of like a mensch [a human being]. When they went away, they took us in a mill. Big, great big mill, because the planes were already running around, and we wanted to be killed from the planes. We were better off to get killed from the planes, but they didn't throw nothing on us. We lived. And that Polschein had to take us to walk a big, big walk What shall I tell you? A—wait, what do you say? It's water on the bottom and—

GHITIS: A—

SLOMAN: —A brick!

GHITIS: A bridge.

SLOMAN: A bridge! We walked four days. Before we were to go to walk, I dreamed. Never dreamed in my life, just one time. I dreamed that Polschein, that good guy, is on a white horse, and the horse is on two legs, and we are in a ditch. And he said: "Go, go go!" And it cut out, and I said: "Mama. I had that dream."

She said: "What, mein Kind [my child]?" and everything was good by her. If it would be a bad dream, she still would say good. It's a good. When she hear that dream she said: "[Yiddish phrase]" And I cried, and sure enough, he left us in a ditch where Polish women were there and there was those— not from material, the way we walked, but from [[**flannier**?] foreign word].

What do you call **flannier**?

GHITIS: Flannel?

like the Nazi Party, it was declared a criminal organization by the International Military Tribunal and banned in Germany.

SLOMAN: Yeah. No, [repeats word]. Wood. What do you call, you know that light wood made, made for— There must have been Polish people because when we walked in there the lice was impossible. They were eating us. A Jewish guy from Moscow—we were the first concentration camp¹⁹ freed—and he was standing like that with the horse. I didn't go out, but my mama, I couldn't walk already, was just like I told on the dream. He start shooting in the top because he

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The term 'concentration camp' refers to a camp in which people are detained or confined, usually under harsh conditions and without regard to legal norms of arrest and imprisonment that are acceptable in a constitutional democracy. In Nazi Germany between 1933 and 1945, concentration camps (*Konzentrationslager*; briefly 'KL' or 'KZ') were an integral feature of the regime. The Nazis differentiated between concentration camps, which were used to contain slave laborers and prisoners of the Nazi state, and extermination camps, whose primary purpose was the systematic killing of prisoners.

Shortly after coming to power in 1933, the Nazis began to set up a series of concentration camps across Germany. Those were mostly local initiatives: facilities that the SA, SS, and police established on an ad hoc basis, where they would detain and abuse real and imagined enemies of the regime. By 1934, there were over 100 of these early camps in operation.

When the Nazi regime came to power, they systematically persecuted both Jewish and non-Jewish Germans perceived to be opponents of the regime. Political opponents (Communists, Social Democrats, liberals) were some of the first victims housed in "temporary" detention centers like Lichtenburg. Jews, homosexuals, Freemasons, Jehovah's Witnesses, clergy who opposed the Nazis, and any others whose behavior—real or perceived—could be interpreted as being in opposition to Nazi political and racial ideologies were also persecuted and incarcerated. The Nazi regime refused to tolerate criticism, dissent, or nonconformity from the German people. Non-Jewish German political activists were treated harshly but other political opponents remained potentially valuable members of the German race. The goal behind their internment in and subsequent release from concentration camps was often a kind of reeducation that would see them fall into line with the regime's political and racial ideologies.

Between 1933 and 1939, tens of thousands of Germans were sentenced by the criminal courts. If authorities were confident of a conviction in court, the prisoner was turned over to the justice system for trial. If the outcome of criminal proceedings were unsatisfactory, the acquitted citizen or the citizen who was sentenced to a suspended sentence would still be taken into "protective detention" and incarcerated in a concentration camp.

The first concentration camps were established in 1933. Various authorities set up the makeshift "camps" in empty warehouses, factories, and other locations. Camps were established in Oranienburg, north of Berlin; Esterwegen, near Hamburg; Dachau, northwest of Munich; and Lichtenburg, in Saxony. By the end of July 1933, almost 27,000 people were housed in these camps. Most of the prisoners were political opponents of the Nazi regime. By the end of 1934, most of these early camps were disbanded and replaced by a centrally organized concentration camp system under the exclusive jurisdiction of the SS.

didn't know who they are, you know. And he start crying "Yidden, Yidden [Jews, Jews] [rest of Yiddish phrase]" That was the first lager [camp]. Nobody was yet alive. He told us to go back.

"Go back from here!"

But in the middle, I forgot to tell you something. We walked and we met English people. They were also by the German. What do you call it?

GHITIS: POWs²⁰?

SLOMAN: That's right. But English, from England. Gorgeous ones, beautiful dressed. With excellent shoes. We takes a shawls. And when they saw us, they start throw — the shoes and the shawls, and some of them took off even the jackets. You know, the chenille. And I couldn't walk already, so one, I'll never forget him, ran to me with a jar of strawberries and pushed it in my [makes motion off frame]. And that saved our life. In the night we used to lick, mama a lick and me a lick. Otherwise I wouldn't survive because I was deathly ill. I was three years in a sanitarium. [crosstalk] Gauting²¹. Tuberculosis.

GHITIS: So that was liberation.

SLOMAN: That was a liberated, yea. In Landsberg [Germany]. In Landsberg, they find out that I'm very ill. My mama, may she rest in peace, she was a wonderful lady. Everybody's dancing and everybody's singing: "Look, mein kind, why you not going there?" I have God knows how much fever already. I was deathly ill. But she didn't want to see that, you know? Well, when the

²⁰ Prisoners of war.

²¹ A sanatorium in Bavaria region of Germany. Many concentration camp survivors were sent there for treatment after liberation.

doctor put that thing down, right away he grabbed on to my mama to get out, and right away they got a, you know, what do you call the sick people?

GHITIS: Typhoid²²? Typhus²³?

SLOMAN: No. Tuberculosis²⁴. And right away to Gauting the sanitarium. I was there for three years.

GHITIS: Where was it?

SLOMAN: Munich [Germany]. Three miles from Munich. Three kilometers.

GHITIS: So—

SLOMAN: No, excuse me it was farther, because you had to take the train to go, and then walk three miles, three kilometers, so it was far.

GHITIS: Was your mother with you?

SLOMAN: Mother was left in Landsberg still, but because I was open, anybody could catch it, you know that, so they didn't let her yet come.

GHITIS: Who was in charge of the sanitorium?

SLOMAN: German. It was two Jewish doctors. One was a funny thing. My husband— I met him there—was from his little city. He was a doctor and he survived. And another one, his name was Kaplan — I remember, a tall guy — he was Jewish too. The rest of them, they were all German. Oh, and you know, they wore, you know like, you know with the white.

²² A disease that is caused by contaminated food or water.

²³ Fever spread by bacteria from lice, chiggers, and other similar bugs.

²⁴ A disease that typically attacks the lungs.

GHITIS: Aprons?

SLOMAN: Not just aprons, the whole thing, the whole schmeer. You know, they wore what do you call those?

GHITIS: Masks.

SLOMAN: Not masks. No, no, no. They were nurses that like, we had... nurses that were very religious.

GHITIS: Nuns.

SLOMAN: Nuns! Nuns! How do you like that? Nuns, my dear, nuns. And I remember they wanted to take me in another place, and I was already there with some girls and I was already a little better, I had no fever, so I used to say to the girls: "You talk to her and I'll make fever." And I could stay still there.

GHITIS: How did you meet your husband?

SLOMAN: He was there. He had besides he had a little tuberculosis, he had water, and he had **Gelbsaucht** [German word]. Do you know what that is? You're yellow. Very yellow. Yellongitis.

GHITIS: Hepatitis²⁵.

SLOMAN: Oh. And he was there, and he saw me from far away.

GHITIS: Where did he come from?

²⁵ A disease that causes inflammation of the liver.

SLOMAN: From Auschwitz²⁶, Dachau²⁷. He was everywhere. You name it and he was. He had a number. He was five years all over.

Bless you, you sneezed.

He lost his mother and his whole family in one day. His mother said to an uncle and to him: "Go over the bridge and stay out, because the German came, they probably need some workers and they'll take you away." Who could think that they'll take the whole little city, nebach [Yiddish for poor thing] and...

GHITIS: What was his name?

SLOMAN: Beryleh. Bernie. Bernard. His name was in Yiddish Beryl. Wonderful guy.

EINSTEIN: What city does he come from?

²⁶ Auschwitz-Birkenau was a network of camps built and operated by Germany just outside the Polish town of Oswiecim (renamed 'Auschwitz' by the Germans) in Polish areas annexed by Germany during World War II. It is estimated that the SS and police deported at a minimum 1.3 million people (approximately 1.1 million of which were Jews) to the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex between 1940 and 1945. Camp authorities murdered 1.1 million of these prisoners.

²⁷

Established on March 22, 1933, Dachau was the first concentration camp established by the Nazi regime. It was located in southern Germany near the town of Dachau, about 10 miles northwest of Munich. Dachau became a model for other concentration camps and was used as a training center for SS guards. Originally, it was a camp for criminals, political prisoners, and other opponents of the Nazi regime. In 1938, in the aftermath of *Kristallnacht*, the Jewish population rose to 10,000, although most were eventually released after agreeing to emigrate from Germany. Over 188,000 prisoners passed through Dachau between 1933 and 1945.

Prisoners at Dachau were used as forced laborers and thousands were literally worked to death. Between 1940 and 1945, at least 28,000 died there as a result of the harsh, overcrowded conditions, medical experiments, and executions. There was a crematorium at Dachau, but the sick or weakened prisoners who were murdered were sent to the Hartheim "euthanasia" killing center near Linz, Austria. Toward the end of the war, around 7,000 mostly Jewish prisoners were sent on a death march from Dachau to Tegernsee far to the south.

When American troops liberated the camp on April 29, 1945, they found thousands of dead and dying prisoners as well as more than 30 railroad cars filled with decomposing bodies that had been brought to Dachau and abandoned.

SLOMAN: Goniadz, Poland. From Poland. He was born there — did you know, olevesholem, Bernard Halperin? Does anybody know that name Halperin?

EINSTEIN: I know the name, but...

SLOMAN: He was with him in one school, olevesholem. He died from cancer I remember, young, 56.

GHITIS: So, you were at this place, and he was at this place—

SLOMAN: Yeah, and he saw me. Just saw me from far away. I looked—No, a matter of fact, some young girl she was still alive, Gott zu danken [German for thank God] came to see him from that city. He was there. And he needed a place for her to sleep. I was in a big, big room. What shall I tell you? When they opened the door, I was more afraid that they going to cut me or something. They had to come to that room before they know where to put you. And she was sleeping next to me, and nothing happened to her, Gott zu danken.

Do you see she's still alive? She's older than me.

But she came to see my husband and he looked [Yiddish phrase]. At that time it really was terrible, but later I went for x-rays or something, he saw me and fell in love right away.

GHITIS: What happened?

SLOMAN: What happened?

GHITIS: You fall in love and—?

SLOMAN: Fall in love and I was sick, and I had to go to Switzerland. My family sent me to Switzerland. That's what saved my life.

GHITIS: How did they find the money to do that?

SLOMAN: My family? Very rich people. South Africa and Atlanta. They sent me. Right away, when doctor said: “she needs to save her life.” It was right away.

GHITIS: So you went to Switzerland—

SLOMAN: —and he was left in Germany. I was sick. I wasn't in love, I was sick. Careful, you know.

I became eighteen years old, I remember, had a friend who sent me a card. Hi [chai?]. I do remember that. I'll show you, I have a little card from my friend, olevesholem, she passed away in Israel. Vergiss mich nicht [German for don't forget me]. She sent me that thing. I shall not forget her and I haven't. I was to her funeral, nebach.

GHITIS: Your mother?

SLOMAN: My mother was left in Germany, of course.

GHITIS: How long did you stay in Switzerland?

SLOMAN: Two years.

EINSTEIN: Where in Switzerland?

SLOMAN: Davos²⁸ [Switzerland]. In the hill. I used to sleep in the daytime, in fur, outside. They knew how to deal. I got pneumothorax²⁹. I don't know if you know what that is. [to interviewer] You do know? Needles like that [shows length of needles with fingers] into my ribs and my left side. I had that for five years.

²⁸ A town in the Swiss Alps.

²⁹ A collapsed lung.

GHITIS: Did you stay in touch with the man who became your husband during your time in Switzerland?

SLOMAN: No Nothing. My mama liked a Lithuanisch [Lithuanian] guy, the one who sent me chai [symbol of life]. He was from Lithuania, from Kovno, and my mama, but he was short, and I didn't like short people. My mother kept on saying, "No, Louis." Louis Brouder. So I told my mama to marry him, so she lived [unclear].

When I came back from Switzerland, I was supposed to go buy some meat. It wasn't easy to get meat in Germany, Munich. In meantime, I used to go in to movie, I tell my mama the meat not ready yet, stories. And one day I go and he [her future husband] comes in the front of me. He said: "I was thinking you are in Switzerland."

I said: "No, no I already came back."

"Where do you live?"

So I said: "on Gissele."

"Gissele, what number?"

So my husband, olevesholem, was very quiet person, a shemevdik, how do you say that?

GHITIS: Shy.

SLOMAN: Very shy. Listen, he was shot through his face, and one of his face was beautiful—you didn't see I'll show you in a minute—and the other one was a piece of bone. He was going with a train, like I said, and he was sitting on a bucket. He turned over the bucket and was sitting on it. People were running away or something, they were shooting. That thing went by and the other one got killed, with the same bullet. He said he didn't know if he's alive or he's dead. But that thing was a [unclear] because he didn't have no medicine, no nothing. The paper from moll, when he walked in, moll, you know, from cement. [NB: This sentence is in fact what

it sounds like although it doesn't make sense.] He used to hide, because if they would have seen that, they would have sent him right away in fire. Matter of fact, Mengele³⁰, three times he went through Mengele. And what he used to do? He used to wait until a lot of people were on the good side and he used to give a loyfn, and he couldn't find it. Everything we need to live.

Bashert [fate]!

GHITIS: Loyfn is run.

SLOMAN: Run. That's right. Running in the good, where everybody's ok.

Then he wasn't the type to run to work in Auschwitz and Dachau. In Auschwitz, there was in Auschwitz, when his uncle was well, he was ok, my Bernie was with sores all over, he was terrible. And — Liebl was his uncle's name — and he wanted to rest, and he said, "Liebl, Liebl, let's go to work." So Liebl didn't know what he's talking about. He was the one who usually didn't want to go to work. And Leibl ran after him, and Bernie was the last line, the rest of them had to go back. And when he came back from work, all of those were burned. Everybody said: "Du lebst und Liebl nicht? [German - You live and Liebel doesn't?]" Because he, he was no ok, if he is not ok. Some [unclear] you know, like a hundred people they needed, and the rest of them they killed. He was a young, good looking man, his uncle.

GHITIS? So you met again in Germany. In what city were you?

SLOMAN: Munich.

GHITIS: What happened then?

³⁰ Most likely, 'Mengele' here refers to Dr. Mengele, who was a physician at Auschwitz that became known by the moniker 'Angel of Death'. He first oversaw medical experiments in Auschwitz's 'Gypsy Camp' at Birkenau before its liquidation. It is claimed that he had a large hand in the selection process that determined who would be sent to the gas chambers and who would be assigned to work details upon their arrival to the camp. He was specifically interested in medial experiments with twins and often searched through new arrivals for twins during selection.

SLOMAN: He asked me if he can come to see me and I said yeah. And I told him where I lived and he called me Rellie, for some reason. My mama opens the door and he says, "Rellie!"

My mama was funny. She said: "There is no Rellie. They don't know Rella."

So right away I understood, and he said "[Yiddish phrase]." And he came to my house.

And that's how we start going out.

EINSTEIN: Did you say he was a doctor?

SLOMAN: No.

EINSTEIN: I'm sorry.

SLOMAN: No, Bernie, no. Bernie was learning fixing radios, things like that.

GHITIS: Tell me about the wedding.

SLOMAN: The wedding. Bernie was in a room where was a man, his name was Halperin, I think. A older man who had a German girl, woman, and he lived with her. She was a Nazi because somebody told what—look needed a place to live, so he had a room there. And that woman had china and—don't talk about it—the nicest things. He insists the guy from the city, that we should have the wedding in Munich by him in her house. It was a good looking rabbi came, two, three rabbis. I have pictures from that too, if you want to see it, I'll give them to show.

GHITIS: Who else was at the wedding?

SLOMAN: My mom. My brother didn't like me to get married. He walked out from that place, from three years crazy. "You didn't let me save my little brother [unclear]." He used to tell my

mama that. Can you imagine how she felt? ["Yiddish phrase] You couldn't live without them." "But you're living, Mama." Can you imagine? So he was really, what shall I tell you, he really need to be under psychiatry, but then, who knew about it and what? He used to cry, a good looking, handsome man used to stand up and start crying, and he didn't want me to get married. He liked Bernie, and he said to him: "Don't marry her. She'll have her mother, and they'll kill you, they'll eat you up." And he wouldn't come to the wedding. And he didn't. He was not normal. And how do I know he was not normal? Because he got married with a very good looking woman. Not too smart, but good looking, really. She was singing beautifully in New York. He was in Atlanta, but Atlanta was too small for meshugener [Yiddish for crazy people], so he went to a cousin in New York. He was here for the Feldman's, was my cousins too, and he worked for them, and he went to New York. And he married that good looking woman. My mama was in the wedding. He had two sons.

Every animal can be mean to anybody, but not to his child. And he was very mean to his two sons. Very mean. So I knew that he's not normal. Do you know what I mean? What can I tell you? [Yiddish phrase including meshugeneh, or crazy], you know? She was in love with him, so she married him. He divorced her, ran away to Israel, then he came back. Passed away in Florida. A heart attack.

GHITIS: What happened after you were married.

SLOMAN: There was a little room, very, very little. So that little room was a maid's room, you know like the Germans had big houses and was living there two, three families and that little room was for me and Bernie. And the papers came to go. And for me not.

GHITIS: To go where?

SLOMAN: To America. And for me not. So he said hes not going alone. I have to go with him, So we start all over, the papers to do again.

GHITIS: Did you consider Israel?

SLOMAN: Yes, but Bernie had an uncle, olevesholem, also, very nice man, and he was in a **kibbutz**. He was in Poland in a kibbutz and he came, and he was working, you know, it was bad times. He wrote him [Bernie] a letter, find out that he's alive with an uncle here in New York, and they find out, and he said: "You lived through plenty. Things are not good, nothing to eat, and if I understand, you hungered plenty in your life. You'll come back later. "

GHITIS: What year was this?

SLOMAN: When we went to—? 1950. We left Munich in 1950 and came here, in [19]51 in Atlanta, in January.

GHITIS: So how did you finally get papers to come to America?

SLOMAN: Yeah. [unclear] Truman opened the doors, that's what happened. Yeah. Truman opened the doors.

GHITIS: Your husband had an uncle?

SLOMAN: In New York. He worked, he worked for a lawyer. Nothing much, you know what I mean. Two daughters. He had two daughters, and then the uncle in Israel.

GHITIS: How did you travel?

SLOMAN: By boat. Captain Ballou was that boat. It was winter, December, and that boat was— don't talk about it. My husband was deadly ill. It was good that I worked as a nurse on that boat, so in the night I used to take soup, tea, otherwise I don't think he would have survived. He looked terrible.

GHITIS: Did you have training as a nurse?

SLOMAN: Not really. When I was in Switzerland they trained us, you know what I mean? It was hours that they trained us. It was a nice doctor there. I was in a private place, I wasn't [unclear], my family paid for it.

GHITIS: Tell me about your arrival in New York.

SLOMAN: Was wonderful. It was so funny. It was a guy with us that traveled and he said: "Don't say [Yiddish]."

So we look at him. "So how shall we say?" "

"[Yiddish]" And that was very hard to get used to it. Because people didn't understand the time, you know what I mean, because we didn't understand how to say. And everybody laughed.

GHITIS: It's saying 1:30

SLOMAN: That's right

GHITIS: Instead of saying 1:30

SLOMAN: Yeah

GHITIS: Or 2:30

SLOMAN: Or 2:30. [Yiddish] in Yiddish. We didn't know English. [Yiddish] was 1:30. Or, wait a minute, [Yiddish] was 2:30, and we were saying [Yiddish], or something like it, you know. So we couldn't concentrate. It was very hard.

A friend of mine was reading in the newspaper—oh I forgot to tell you something very important. My cousin Harold Yudelson was in France in the army, and he was something more than just a plain. And his father, Sol Yudelson, was reading in the paper that three of the Solskis

were alive, and he called right away his son. And told him: "No matter how much it's going to cost, go and find them." And, to this day I don't know how he find us. With a jeep, he came to Gauting, in the sanitarium where I was. That was the first time I got dressed. And he brought us that and that, some things, you know, and he was so sweet. He smiled constantly.

GHITIS: What was his name?

SLOMAN: Harold Yudelson. He's just became 80 years. I was in his birthday. Do you know about it? Harold Yudelson. Very nice man. The whole family.

GHITIS: What did you do in Germany? You were there for five years.

SLOMAN: I was three years in Gauting.

GHITIS: That's the sanitorium in Switzerland?

SLOMAN: No, that was in Gauting, in Munich. Next to Munich.

GHITIS: That was the sanatorium?

SLOMAN: That was the sanatorium.

I wasn't five years, I was three years. Then I was two years in Switzerland. All [unclear]

GHITIS: So, you're right in the United States.

EINSTEIN: Can I ask one question before you ask yours? What was it like for you to be in Germany?

SLOMAN: Terrible. We applied for Canada. We applied for Australia. Funny thing about it, all the papers came in one time for my husband says: "we're going to America."

EINSTEIN: Did you have any anger towards the Germans?

SLOMAN: Oh yeah. I still have it. [unclear- maybe 'even now']. I'll never forgive them. The Lithuanian – the Ukrainians are the worst. Ukrainians are the worst ones. My little brother was taken away from the Ukrainians. All the things [unclear- maybe 'where they made'] were the Ukrainians, the Lithuanians, the Latin, and the Estonia, if you know what that means. Those were the bad states. I'll never forgive them. Unforgivable.

EINSTEIN: How do you live with that anger for so many years?

SLOMAN: I live and I raised three children. Does Saul look like he from me the anger? Okay. And Steven for sure not; Steven was a doll, just like his father. And Julian be well, he's wonderful too. So see, you don't give that back. You can live two lives. It looks like it, huh? And I lived wonderful with my husband. What a husband I had. I cannot even think to find a man like that, ever, ever. He was a sweetheart, was good to my mom. Was he good to my mom. He was so happy to have a family. He was so lonesome all those year, that he was so happy to have...

I used to sometimes cry to my mom – I never grow up, you know. I had already one child, second child, third child, and still was a little girl and she: "No, no, no, not that, not that." So sometimes I used to say to my husband: "You know, Bernie, if you would be different, my momma wouldn't be that way."

He said: "Ah, now you're angry."

Two hours later, you say: "Now what did you say to my mom?" And he was right.

One time I said something to my mom that I cannot forgive myself. I had one child, I had a second child, and she kept on saying: "I'm going to find my son. I'm going to find my little

boy. I know he had some things here on his hands and I'll recognize." And she used to cry, day and night, and momma lived always with me. It's not easy, you know, always crying. One day I said to her: "Momma, tell me, how many people from three children have two left?" Her eyes, I'll never forget. When you cut your finger, no matter which one you cut, it's never the same. Well, I know I should not have say that.

[long pause]

[crosstalk]

GHITIS: We were talking about your early years when you first arrived.

SLOMAN: In here [the United States].

GHITIS: What were some of the challenges you had ahead of you?

SLOMAN: Well, my family was very nice to us. Very, very nice. The first thing my husband, my he rest in peace, was doing hats for the Germans, so he knew sewing a little. My cousin, oleveshalom, [Hal's?] father, went to use us, right away they took him. Right away. And they loved him.

Listen, \$35 a week, we were three people. It wasn't easy. One week I had to pay rent and it was \$35, but it was okay.

GHITIS: Where were you at that time? You said-

SLOMAN: Boulevard. On Boulevard.

GHITIS: You arrived in New York?

SLOMAN: Three weeks.

GHITIS: And then?

SLOMAN: Atlanta.

GHITIS: How did you decide to come to Atlanta?

SLOMAN: I didn't decide. My mishpokhe [Yiddish for family] decided for me.

My cousin in New York was a very wealthy man. He sells salt, all medicines [unclear-sounds like 'having was he']. In the Depression³¹, he lost \$8 million, so you know he was a very wealthy man. He waited for me when I came and he took me out in restaurants and that and he took me in the place where they used to make beautiful clothes and "you need that and you need to put that and I called Saul and Saul will wait for you all." And right away they put us on a plane and we went. He told me to put on that and I put on something else. So my cousin saw what was up, but he did know, he had a hunch that that's me and Bernie.

Me and Bernie came before and my brother and momma came later. We were living on Washington Street, if you know that. There was a house, my cousin's brother was staying there, he was a bachelor. But I didn't want to live there. I wanted to go where all the young people are. So we find an apartment [unclear]. Find out Bernard is alive. He came to [unclear] from Boulevard to Washington street.

GHITIS: How about the language?

³¹ The Great Depression was a severe worldwide economic depression in the decade preceding World War II. The time of the Great Depression varied across nations, but in most countries it started in about 1929 and lasted until the late 1930's or early 1940's. It was the longest, most widespread, and deepest depression of the twentieth century.

[a dull thud]

SLOMAN: What was that?

[long pause]

SLOMAN: The language wasn't easy. Was not easy at all and I wasn't supposed to have any children, that's what they said. In Switzerland they didn't talk so much about that, but in Germany they talked a lot about that.

GHITIS: What was the explanation for that?

SLOMAN: I'm not healthy enough, not well enough. Well, I saw one girl goes with a baby and another girl goes with a baby. Bernie told me— I told him, he knew that—he said: “You're gonna be my child. That's okay, we don't need no children. That's alright.”

But, like I said, I saw that one with a baby and that one with a baby, I said: “You know what? I want a baby. First of all, you lost your whole family and we need the names.” And sure enough, I took it on myself and all of the sudden –

Dr. [Wellcoff?] was my doctor. Dr. Wellcoff's wife is a cousin of mine. My cousin was married to her brother, a doctor, [Finkelstein?]. Anyhow, I told Dr. Wellcoff the whole story, that I was sick and they felt I should not have any children. Next door to him was a Dr. [Havi?], a very expensive doctor; my husband made \$35, he usually charged \$45. You know, I used to give \$5, I used to give \$6—What should I do? I couldn't give more!

He [Dr. Havi] had a son, later I found it out, that he was in the sanitarium in Rome, GA, a doctor, fellowship. He said that I'm sick and I have to go there. My cousin [Jenny Kahn?], I don't know if you know [Menetz Sigal?] was her mother, and they took me there in Rome, GA.

I was there a week. I was in the fifth month pregnant. They gave me [unclear] and I couldn't eat that. It was **Yontef**, It was Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. I asked the nurse if she would take me to the telephone. I called up my husband and said: "If you're not coming Sunday" – it was Saturday night, was Rosh Hashanah Saturday— "If you're not coming Sunday to take me, you don't have to come anymore, I'm not going to be here." So my husband right away called my mishpokhe [unclear] and came to Rome, GA. Signed everything in an hour that they're taking me.

What I didn't like that doctor took me into examination, he wants me to go check my baby. I'm not sick here [points to stomach], I'm sick here [points to chest]. So, I didn't like that already. I had sense not to let him touch my baby. See, I would've lost her.

GHITIS: What was your problem?

SLOMAN: Lungs. I had...

GHITIS: Scar?

SLOMAN: —Scar right here [points to right shoulder]. Listen, I didn't have [unclear- sounds like young], didn't have nothing to eat. To the end, my teeth were shaking in concentration camp. So my mamma—there was a Pollak that used to show us what we had to do, and she said: "I'll give you my bread, bring me onions." So he brought her onions and she told me: "Mein Kind eat that onions with the half loaf of bread." Twice, three times. And thank god, I didn't

loose my teeth. I would've lost my teeth. It was close, already, to the end. Thank god, I have all my teeth. The Solsky's have beautiful teeth. Saul has it and Julien has it. Steven didn't; Steven had Bernie's, oleveshalom.

Anyhow, where was I?

GHITIS: So, you were pregnant?

SLOMAN: And I came back.

GHITIS: You came back.

SLOMAN: And I came back. And Dr. Wellcoff said he was very sorry but he can't take me in the office and cannot take me in the hospital to have the baby. My cousins came right away to Rome: "Rella, don't cry, don't worry, we'll do it in the house. I'll bring a doctor. We'll do it in the house."

Do you remember a lady with the name [unclear]? That lady I'll never forget. She wasn't a lady, she was a malekh. She found out—

GHITIS: —An angel.

SLOMAN: An angel. She found out that I'm sick. She knocked on the door. My mamma answered it for me; I was in the room. She said: "I hear your daughter is sick."

And my mamma said: "Yes. She's very sick."

So she said: "I have a doctor: C.C. Aven. He is from the city, not just the doctor privately, but the city."

I'll never forget that man too. That man. Tall and handsome, old. He cried, when she told him what happened. And he picked up the phone in present and said—and of course I didn't know what he was saying—"Abby, where did you see that Mrs. Sloman is sick." He made her x-ray, by the way. I don't know what he said to him. He said: "Mrs. Sloman is NOT sick and Mrs. Sloman has been sick but is not sick. It's not open and why couldn't she go to the, like you said, go to the hospital?" And he was—what a doctor. I always send him a Christmas card, always. I've never forgotten him. He's dead because he was lots older than me. I was only 22 years—not even 22 years. So he's dead. But I cannot forget that, that Mrs. [unclear], that doll, that wonderful lady. Can you imagine? And I had a wonderful boy, my old—

GHITIS: At what hospital?

SLOMAN: In [unclear]. And I had a wonderful boy. 9 lbs was something. Only my cousin said: "We're not gonna make [unclear]."

And I said: "We don't need a [unclear- sounds like 'something in my belly?']. My husband was lazy."

So they made a big bris³² and everyone brought everything for the baby. The chairs and the...whatever! And then I had another baby because my son was okay. And then I had a third one, Gott zu danken [German for thank god]. My husband wanted some more but I said no.

GHITIS: How were you received by the community here?

³² 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.

SLOMAN: My mamma died with a broken heart. You ask how. My mamma in Germany used to say: “I’ll come to Atlanta and my family, all three left, they will be so happy.”

You know [Daughter Rosenbloom?], nebach. She has Alzheimer or something. Her mother was with my mamma friends. Mamma used to tell her, you know, what happened to **Juden mishpokhe** [Yiddish for Jewish family]. She said: “Oh, it’s such a beautiful day today, you know. The sun is shining so nice.”

So my mamma used to say: “Sie will viele nicht hern! She doesn’t even want to hear about it! She doesn’t even want to know about it!”

I said: “Mamma, I told you. How can anybody imagine what happened? Tell me.”

My mamma never lived to see people shall be so nice and know what happened. That they killed us.

I’ll never forget, my cousin, Isreal Yudelson, that’s Saul’s brother. When I came, we used to see night’s talk. “Tell me, Rella, how do you [unclear] with these sons. Everybody was afraid for them. Their little [unclear]—everybody! They were first of all very strict people and second of all very rich! And how did they let themselves take like that and burn them and kill them?”

What could I answer? Nothing. Tears came out from me. I didn’t say nothing.

Another thing, you think we had it so good here? We didn’t have meat. We had chicken, we could buy as much as we want. But meat we couldn’t and sugar we couldn’t. I looked at them. Chicken. May I remind you we didn’t see a chicken in our lives! Anyhow, they bought me a little store. I remember in that store was \$6,000 dollars, on Harris street. They borrowed me the money and I paid, 75 to 50, and 75 the first. Only one time I skipped. It was Yom Kippur and

Shabbat. And if you didn't take in the money on Shabbat, forget it! You couldn't pay! Oh but they were very nice. They didn't even wanna hear about it.

GHITIS: What kind of a store was it?

SLOMAN: A supermarket—a store! A grocer store, on Harris street; Harris street is the express way.

GHITIS: What was the name of the store?

SLOMAN: Fort Street Market. But then, Bernard Hauptband, built a store, a big one, a supermarket, in Dixie Hills. If you remember, Dixie Hills had the first [unclear-source?] from the schwarzes. But we did good. We made pretty good.

Everything was from that store. We didn't do any [unclear-monkey pieces?].

GHITIS: Were you involved in community life?

SLOMAN: Yes, I was, but much not because my mamma was a big baby, may she rest in peace. I have to go here and I have to go there and I have to here. And I had three sons. One played the violin, two played piano. I didn't have too much time, you know what I mean? And I worked in the store. My husband wasn't healthy. My husband had four or five operations and I was always in the store.

GHITIS: [unclear]

SLOMAN: This? This he didn't let out there. He was afraid because he had accosted. It was terrible. It didn't heal. He had the gallbladder, one operation...here [points at neck].

EINSTEIN: Thyroid?

SLOMAN: No, no, it was stopped up—

EINSTEIN: Carotid artery?

SLOMAN: Yea, carotid artery. And it finally that attacked the heart. So I really didn't have too much to go around playing cards like I do now. And I didn't because—

GHITIS: Were you involved with any survivor groups?

SLOMAN: Well, I think it was another survivor. He came before the Unglück [German-misfortune]. Tepper. Maybe you know him? Rueben Tepper. Nice man. He worked for us. He came together with Bernard Hauptband on one boat. So he wasn't [unclear], but he was also very nice people. We used to sometimes make a cot in my house, always in my house because I didn't want to leave mamma alone, didn't want to leave the children alone. So it was in my house.

But not much, really. I used to go out on new year sometimes, but, you know, didn't really.

GHITIS: Who were you friends as a young couple?

SLOMAN: Oh a lot of them. They're all gone. Ida Weisse, Sam Weisse, Bella Newhouse, Liam Newhouse... Oh, many, many.

GHITIS: Was it mostly Holocaust survivors?

SLOMAN: Yea, they were survivors.

EINSTEIN: The Newhouse's were from [unclear] also.

SLOMAN: She was from, yea, Lemkin. The other side of [Neme] it was [Aleksot]. It wasn't Kovno but you had to go to the breach, like I said my brother had to swim to get—

GHITIS: You said that your mother was saddened by the fact that no one wanted to hear her story.

SLOMAN: Yea, she was heartbroken.

GHITIS: How do you feel about that now?

SLOMAN: You know what, guys? I'll tell you something. Now, what happens in Israel, and what happens here, people cannot imagine what that was. And what are we doing much for Israel? What can we do much? Except—and I lived there, for five years. I came in 1973, before **the war**. I came in March and October was the war and I didn't go away. I worked for the [unclear], I worked for the army. I gave them sandwiches and I had 75 women working with me. As a matter of fact, I got to dig up the pictures. They used to call me [foreign language – Israeli?], the daughter that means the aunt from [unclear]. Everybody knew it. Everybody said: “No, the laborers are going home.”

And I said: “That's my home. Look, I know where I'm going. I wouldn't dare go away from there when the war was—never.”

I went away but one by one my children went back and my husband says: “He does not want to be without you.”

GHITIS: How did you—did you move to Israel?

SLOMAN: Yea! I sold everything and went to Israel. The store, the house on Margret Mitchell, Sephoria Drive, and went. I said: “That's our home, guys.” I got a penthouse, just like my house

almost and we were very happy. My husband would not have died and a lot of things wouldn't have happened, but my children, one by one, they wouldn't—Julian said he's got nothing to do, what shall he do there? So, he was the first one, then Steven, olevesholem, and then Saul. He's not smart enough to go in college in Israel. Here, he was the best one. He was very good! But he tucked himself in; His brothers were not there, he doesn't want to be there, and that's all. So here I am.

GHITIS: How do you feel about what's going on—

SLOMAN: Now? Very scary.

GHITIS: —with the Jewish people?

SLOMAN: Very scared. Scared to death, because that's the way it started, by us. Unfortunately, I'm afraid even to say that because it's scary. I told you we were so living good in Lithuania. When my uncles came from South Africa, from Atlanta, they kept on saying: "Abby, sell everything and come." No! Can I live that way by you? No. You see what I mean? And just after a couple of years, it was finished. It was finished all.

GHITIS: What should we do as Jews? In Europe and here?

SLOMAN: I'll tell you one thing: Never again. If we have to fist fight, we will. Never again. That's what I'll tell you. Life is very good, but not that way. No.

GHITIS: As a survivor, what do you want to tell the world?

SLOMAN: That they should listen very carefully, to my brothers and sisters. Not to tell you this cannot happen.

GHITIS: What do you want to tell your descendants?

SLOMAN: Like my family? I tell them. They know how I feel about it. Do you know what my mamma used to say? [German or Yiddish]. A dog that gets bit by a...stecken!

GHITIS: By a stick.

SLOMAN: By a stick! Yea. Don't show him once more a stick. That's the way I feel. I was scared to death, that's all I could tell you.

GHITIS: If you had to make a statement about your feelings towards Israel, what would you say?

SLOMAN: I love Israel with all my heart, and only Israel can save us. Only Israel can save us. And don't think we don't want shalom. We want peace more than anybody but they want it for the whole country. They've talked themselves into so the whole country's there. So, we have our [foreign language] which I love. I just hope, at my age, I hope I shall live to 120 because nothing can we give. It's not that they want—they want all Israel. That's it.

EINSTEIN: Um...Rella, do you think that your experiences, when you were raising your children, did you raise them with any particular values or with...you know, having gone through the **Shoah**, did that affect how you raised your children in any way?

GHITIS: No. My mamma used to tell them. My mamma used to sit them and tell them everything that happened to their grandpa, to their uncles and Julian was the oldest one and tears he had. My husband, olevesholem, used to come home: "Why do you do that? It's not enough that we lived it through, so the children got to live through?" And listen I'll tell you, I didn't have trouble with Saul, because knowing everything in Israel and I didn't have trouble with

Julian, but Steven, olevesholem, because he, if he asked: “What’s so great about it?” You tell him a horrible thing about how the dead one was killed and he [makes horrified face]. So we didn’t talk about it! We didn’t talk about it. When he was 13, we send him to Israel for bar mitzvah³³ and he came back. You couldn’t recognize the boy. He cried day and night. We noticed and we asked his school and they said, yes, they noticed that too. So we went to the Emory for help. They send us, matter of fact. They wanted to have a family like that. And when we sit down, all of us—except Saul, he was too little—we talk about it. He starts crying and he says: “When I came to Israel, I found out all my family got killed. They made lamps from them, and that, and that. They never told me, nobody!”

So I said: “Stephen, I did! But you said ‘what’s so great about it?’. If you say on a thing like that ‘what’s so great about it?’ what’s there to say anymore?” And that cured him. Thank god.

EINSTEIN: And it’s been so many years since the war, but how has that experience affected you through these years?

SLOMAN: To live here? I love here.

EINSTEIN: No, but how has...even though it’s 60 years after the war, how do you look back on that time and how do you think it has influenced you? What mark has it left on you?

³³ Hebrew for ‘son of commandment.’ A rite of passage for Jewish boys aged 13 years and one day. At that time, a Jewish boy is considered a responsible adult for most religious purposes. He is now duty bound to keep the commandments, he puts on *tefillin*, and may be counted to the *minyan* quorum for public worship. He celebrates the *bar mitzvah* by being called up to the reading of the *Torah* in the synagogue, usually on the next available Sabbath after his Hebrew birthday.

SLOMAN: Never forget. That's no question about it. I can never forget what happened to us and, look, to me it didn't happen so badly because after all I have a family, thank god, but some of the women couldn't even have children. And really, they were pitiful. So I believe in fighting back, no question about it. I'm ready, even that I'm not so strong, but I'm ready for it.

EINSTEIN: I'm also curious about something. You were so young when you came to America. What was coming to America like for you mother?

SLOMAN: She loved it. She became a citizen, before me. She was sitting and learning. She knew everything by heart. The examiner, the man said: "How did you learn!?" Everything, she got it and she was so proud that she was an American citizen. Also me, I was pregnant with Stephen, olevesholem, and then when I got the papers, he asked me: "What did you have."

And I said: "Another boy."

[looks down at floor] She wants to go outside, she bites.

GHITIS: Thank you very much for doing this.

SLOMAN: Listen, I think we all need to do that. [dog barks]

EINSTEIN: And Kinko [the dog] gets to say the last word.

[end of interview]

[Small add on at end, unconnected]

SLOMAN: Israel Yudelson, may he rest in peace, when he told me that, "How did you let to go like that in the [unclear]?" So what could I answer? I just, tears came out. But when I had that

little store and he came to me in the store. He said, "Rella, listen," he said, "They come in to get your money, give them." And I said to him, "why should I give them?

One by one, I'll fight, just like you told us that we should have fight." Then, years later, [Yiddish phrase]. Wasn't I true? Wasn't that true? One by one why can't I fight, but if you put so many soldiers on, what can you do? [mic noise]