

**THE WILLIAM BREMAN JEWISH HERITAGE MUSEUM**

**ESTHER AND HERBERT TAYLOR**

**JEWISH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF ATLANTA**

**MEMOIRIST:** RELLA SLOMAN  
**INTERVIEWER:** RUTH EINSTEIN  
**DATE:** FEBRUARY 19, 2010  
**LOCATION:** ATLANTA, GEORGIA

**INTERVIEW BEGINS**

<Begin Disk 1>

**Einstein:** Today is February 19, 2010, and I'm here in Dunwoody, Georgia with Rella Solski Sloman. Thank you again for taking some time to talk with us. Now, we're going to go from the end of the war to the present day. So how old were you when you were liberated?

**Sloman:** 16.

**Einstein:** And you were with your mother, right?

**Sloman:** Yes.

**Einstein:** And where exactly were you?

**Sloman:** I was between Poland and Germany.

**Einstein:** Do you remember the name of the place?

**Sloman:** No, I do not remember because we didn't know where we were. We walked and walked about four days and nights. And then they left us, the Germans, and they disappeared. We didn't even know that they had gone.

**Einstein:** This was from where you were building the railroads? Working on—

**Sloman:** No, no, it was after. We walked, see, we didn't build. No, we made for the soldiers—

**Einstein:** Ditches.

**Sloman:** Ditches. And they took us from there and we started walking. Bydgoszcz,<sup>1</sup> I remember the Polish name, Bydgoszcz. And we walked and walked and walked maybe four days and four nights. And then, all of the sudden, we didn't know that they left us, and we were lucky because that man that was in charge of us wasn't the mean one. The one that was mean went for Christmas vacation, and that's why we survived.

**Einstein:** So what happened during the march<sup>2</sup>?

**Sloman:** Just walking, just walking. It was Bydgoszcz, I remember the name of...it was of over water. And we walked and walked and walked. No eating, no drinking, no nothing. And then all of the sudden we stopped in a place; we didn't even know where it was. But it was from some kind of wood — they say Polish people were there. And they left us, and we didn't know that we got from ourselves. And then all of the sudden, the Russian man came and

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<sup>1</sup> A city in Northern Poland.

<sup>2</sup> As the Russian army drew near the extermination and slave labor camps in the East, the Germans marched the prisoners on foot out of the camps to the West, usually back into Germany where they were often abandoned in camps such as Bergen-Belsen and Buchenwald. These marches could last for weeks, without food or water, during which time many of the prisoners died and were left along the side of the road.

found out that we were Jews, and ran from top to bottom and told us to go back the other way because they were going to fight. They said it. And the German and the Russian were fighting there.

**Einstein:** Was this the Russian man who was also Jewish?

**Sloman:** Yeah, we found out then that he was Jewish. We didn't know.

**Einstein:** Did he know—

**Sloman:** He was an army guy.

**Einstein:** Did he say anything about whether he expected to find Jews in this condition?

**Sloman:** He didn't. Because no one had survived. We were the first concentration camp<sup>3</sup> that had survived.

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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

**Einstein:** And do you remember when that was exactly?

**Sloman:** Bydgoszcz.

**Einstein:** But when?

**Sloman:** When, that was, yeah, January. January the 14 .

**Einstein:** Of 1945.

**Sloman:** Oh yeah, I do remember. Yeah, 1945.

**Einstein:** OK.

**Sloman:** Right.

**Einstein:** And you were with your mother?

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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.

**Sloman:** Yes.

**Einstein:** Were you with anyone else that you know?

**Sloman:** Yeah, there were a lot of women. It was completely, we were... There were 950 people. When we came there, we were 1200 from Stutthoff<sup>4</sup>. And then we were, when we freed ourselves, we were 900. I do remember that.

**Einstein:** How did you see your life at that point, when you realized that you had been liberated?

**Sloman:** We couldn't believe it. We couldn't believe it when he said, "Go back, go back, go back. Just go back. We are going to be fighting here." And we did, we did whatever he told us. We walked again back.

**Einstein:** All the way to...

**Sloman:** We don't know where we were, and we don't know how to go, nothing, because we were half alive and half dead. None of us were, anymore, in health.

**Einstein:** And the weather?

**Sloman:** It was cold. No shoes, I remember. It was kind of like a sandal, word from somewhere else; open, no shoes at all.

**Einstein:** So what shape were you in, then, when you finally—

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<sup>4</sup> 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.

**Sloman:** Very bad shape.

**Einstein:** Your mother...

**Sloman:** In very bad... My mother was in better shape than I was. I had tuberculosis<sup>5</sup>.

**Einstein:** And so they took you to Gaunting<sup>6</sup>.

**Sloman:** Gaunting.

**Einstein:** How do you spell that, please?

**Sloman:** Gaunting, G-A-T-E-N<sup>7</sup>. Gaunting, Munich, in Munich.

**Einstein:** I think we talked last time that you were in Gaunting and you...and Harold

Yudelson, can you just—

**Sloman:** Find me there.

**Einstein:** He found you there

**Sloman:** He find me there.

**Einstein:** Right

**Sloman:** Right.

**Einstein:** And...

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<sup>5</sup> A disease that typically attacks the lungs.

<sup>6</sup> A sanatorium in Bavaria region of Germany. Many concentration camp survivors were sent there for treatment after liberation.

<sup>7</sup> This is in fact, not how you spell Gaunting.

**Sloman:** And my brother brought him there because, see, Munich, he met him in Munich and either we took him to me and Mama. My Mama was also working there at the time so she can be close to me.

**Einstein:** And you met Bernard, your husband, in Gauting?

**Sloman:** No, in the hospital. Yeah, in the hospital. I met him and I was Betaria<sup>8</sup>, and he was a Beteri.

**Einstein:** And can you talk about that a little bit?

**Sloman:** Yeah, I was Menachem Begin's<sup>9</sup> people, Jabotinsky's<sup>10</sup> people, better to say. And we hoped, one day, to be again. And thank God, because my husband was also Beteri.

**Einstein:** Was it important to you to find someone who had a, kind of a similar background or. . .

**Sloman:** I was, in the background was the, he had water in the side. He had water in the side that needed to be taken out. And I was sick, and he found out that I was very sick. And I was there two years, and then my family took me to Switzerland. And Switzerland cured me.

**Einstein:** How long were you in Switzerland?

**Sloman:** Two and a half years.

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<sup>8</sup> Betaria here refers to being a member of the *Betar* Movement is a revisionist Zionist youth movement founded in 1923 in Riga, Latvia by Vladimir Jabotinsky. It was one of the most militant and nationalistic of the Jewish youth movements in Europe. Chapters sprung up across Europe. After World War II, and during the settlement of Mandate Palestine, *Betar* was traditionally linked to the original *Herut* and then *Likud* political parties of Jewish pioneers.

<sup>9</sup> Former Prime Minister of Israel, 1977-1983.

<sup>10</sup> Zionist activist, orator, and writer. He founded the *Betar* Movement which was a Zionist youth movement that is today known as the *Herut* movement.

**Einstein:** So it was really your own four and a half years of recuperation just to, after the war.

**Sloman:** Right, right.

**Einstein:** And when were you married then, finally?

**Sloman:** In '49, 1949.

**Einstein:** So that was after you went to Switzerland.

**Sloman:** After. I came back from Switzerland and I was going to look for some meat. My mother wanted to cook something. And I met him and he said, "When did you come back?"

I said, I don't know if I said: "A month ago," or something.

And: "Can I come and see you?"

I said: "Yeah."

**Einstein:** What did you like about him?

**Sloman:** He was very nice and quiet like my father, olev hasholem [may he rest in peace].

And he was seven and a half years younger than...older than me. I was seven and a half years younger than him. And it was very nice. And he worked for the Betar, in a store.

**Einstein:** In Germany?

**Sloman:** In Munich [Germany].

**Einstein:** Really? What was left of that organization then, after the war?

**Sloman:** After the war, people just like you all, started that thing. They started right away to look for some people who survived. Wasn't too many.



**Einstein:** How did you decide what to do with your life after...I mean, I suppose that you met again and you married soon after that?

**Sloman:** No, it wasn't so soon, it was about a year.

**Einstein:** OK.

**Sloman:** That I married. And hoped to go back to school. So till we came back to the United States, it wasn't so easy, you know.

**Einstein:** Did you have any hopes for what you wanted to do. I mean, you lost your whole...Most of your schooling, you were taken out of school so young.

**Sloman:** Well, we were in the ghetto school, [unintelligible], every one of us. And then in Switzerland, there was a teacher coming and teaching, you know, because we really were not ready for anything. But we were...I used to get pneumothorax - I don't know if you know what that is — with needles, big needles, twice, three times—

**Einstein:** —For the tuberculosis—

**Sloman:** —three times a week. They cured us.

**Einstein:** Were there other Lithuanians in Switzerland or were you with Poles or—

**Sloman:** No, Holland people. A lot of Holland people. And from Israel, people that came to cure them, also in Switzerland. I was in a private place. My family paid for it.

**Einstein:** Do you know where that was, what the name of it—

**Sloman:** Yeah, Davos [Switzerland], in Davos. Yeah, and outside, we slept outside with furs, very warm. And there, I think the fresh air is the one that helped a lot.

**Einstein:** Yeah, that was about the only, just about the only cure back then.

**Sloman:** Exactly. There was—and the pneumothorax, of course.

**Einstein:** So you come back to Germany. How did you feel about being in Germany?

**Sloman:** Very bad. Didn't want to go back, but I had my mother there, and my brother, olev hasholem, there, olev hasholem, my mother. And of course I wanted to meet them. And I met my husband that asked me right away to marry him. And when we got married, we were the first ones to go to America, but of course he also had family in New York.

**Einstein:** And where was he from?

**Sloman:** Poland, Bialystok. He was from Poland. I was from Lithuania and he was from Poland.

**Einstein:** He was from Bialystok and so he was in the Bialystok Ghetto<sup>11</sup>?

**Sloman:** Yeah. He was in the ghetto, but not long because they took him right away to concentration camps.

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<sup>11</sup> Bialystok is a city in Northeastern Poland that had been under Soviet control due to the 1939 pact between German and Russia. This changed when the Germans pushed into the Soviet Union in 1941. The Einsatzgruppen murdered several Jews before establishing a ghetto in August of the same year. About 50,000 Jews were confined in the ghetto and most were put to work through forced labor. Deportations from the ghetto began in February of 1943, with most occupants being sent to Treblinka for extermination. Others, who were deemed to weak to travel were killed on site. In August of the same year, the Germans made a move to destroy the ghetto and began liquidating the Jews to other holding centers before sending those marked for death to Treblinka and those fit for work to Auschwitz and associated camps.

As the deportations were happening, the Jewish underground staged an uprising in an attempt to free the remaining Jews and join the partisans nearby. The uprising was unsuccessful with many of the Jewish underground dying, but also almost one hundred Jews managed to escape to join the partisans.

The ghetto was liberated in August of 1944 by the Soviet army.

**Einstein:** And do you know where he was during the war?

**Sloman:** Everywhere. Auschwitz<sup>12</sup>, Dachau<sup>13</sup>, every my son Jul-Saul knows more. But all the concentration camps he was in. And he was hit real, shot through. And he lived through lots more than I did.

**Einstein:** Did you talk about your experiences with each other?

**Sloman:** Very much. And he cried, constantly, because he lost his family. The sisters, three sisters and a little brother and a mother in one day, all of them, like I said. He was...his mother pushed him out from the ghetto . . . from Goniadz [Poland].

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<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup>

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.

**Einstein:** The Bialystok Ghetto?

**Sloman:** —from Goniadz, yes.

**Einstein:** What was that story? Could you tell that from the beginning, because we don't...

**Sloman:** See, the little city had more Jewish people there, too.

**Einstein:** Which city?

**Sloman:** Goniadz. Goniadz, now it came to my mind. And the mother said: "You know, Germans came tonight. Probably they'll take you for work. Get out and go away. And the next morning, everybody was taken away to Treblinka<sup>14</sup>, and they were all killed in

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Treblinka was established in the Lublin district of Poland in November 1941. There had been a small labor camp there as early as 1940 where Germans forced Jews to build fortifications along the Russian border. The death camp began operations in July 1942.

Treblinka was part of the Operation Reinhard program, which also included the death camps of Sobibor and Belzec. All three camps were pure extermination facilities, that is, the Germans intended that any Jews who went into the camp were never come out again. Some Jewish males were selected to work in the camp supporting the process of death from the ramp to the burial and burning of the bodies, although their deaths were only delayed. The process of murder in Treblinka was divided into three parts: the ramp, the reception area and the gas chamber area. All three camps had gas chambers that used diesel engine exhaust to murder the Jews. When the trains arrived, they were shuttled off the main track in to the camp and a gate was shut behind the train. The ramp area had been dressed up to look like a real railroad station with timetables, signs, a clock, and nice beds of flowers. The Jews were unloaded on the ramp and then herded into the reception area where, to keep them calm, the SS men reassured them that they were just going to be given a shower and new clothes and moved on deeper into the east. The men and women were separated and told to undress. Then they were driven down a long path with high fences on both sides into the death camp area where the gas chambers were located. They were pushed into the gas chambers and the engines were started. One half hour later they were dead and the prisoners selected for labor removed their bodies and threw them into mass graves. The gas chambers were cleaned up to be ready for the next several thousand victims.

In the first few weeks of the camp's existence about 250,000 Jews from the Warsaw ghetto were murdered there. The Jewish prisoners who had been selected to work in the camp revolted on August 2, 1943. They killed several SS men, burned down several buildings in

Treblinka, the whole family. My husband didn't want to live himself, he was so upset. And he went to the Bialystok ghetto.

**Einstein:** They caught him or is that where he had run to?

**Sloman:** He walked in the nights and slept in the day. My brother also walked in the night.

**Einstein:** How old is he?

**Sloman:** My husband? He was seven and a half years older than me. I was—

**Einstein:** Ten and a half, eleven—

**Sloman:** Tell you, I think I was 21 when I married him.

**Einstein:** Well, I guess what I'm interested in knowing is, you know, you were both very young. You, of course, younger, but after having been in a situation where you couldn't make any decisions for yourself, how did you kind of start to become an adult and start to make, you know, you were—

**Sloman:** I had my mom. She, you know, she wanted to see me. When I went to Switzerland, she couldn't because I was in Switzerland. But when I got better and health was better, I went back to my mom.

**Einstein:** And by that time, was she working?

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the camp and fled into the woods and fields. Of the approximately 750 Jews who had participated in the uprising, several hundred made it to the woods although only about 70 survived to liberation.

Treblinka was closed in early 1943 and the bodies in the mass graves were dug up, cremated and reburied. Thereafter it was razed to the ground and a farm was set up on the land. The area was liberated by the Russians in the summer of 1944 but there was nothing left to find except the disturbed ground over the mass graves of nearly 900,000 souls from all over Poland and Europe.

**Sloman:** My mom? No.

**Einstein:** Or how was she surviving?

**Sloman:** She was living in St. Autillian [DP Camp in Germany]. Did you hear about St. Autillian?

**Einstein:** Mm hmm.

**Sloman:** That's where she was, my mom, in St. Autillian. I was in [unintelligible], in Switzerland. She was in St. Autillian.

**Einstein:** Mm-hmm. Miriam and Abe Gerson were there.

**Sloman:** I beg your pardon?

**Einstein:** The Gersons, Miriam Gerson.

**Sloman:** Yeah, Miriam and Abram

**Einstein:** Right.

**Sloman:** Sure, sure. Yeah, my mama, they know my mom. They knew my mom. And he knew me too, because when I left for Switzerland, I remember.

**Einstein:** So you got married and then you were telling me before we started taping about your decisions about having children.

**Sloman:** In Germany, I wasn't supposed to have any children. My husband knew that. No children whatsoever.

**Einstein:** And why?

**Sloman:** I beg your pardon?

**Einstein:** Why?

**Sloman:** It was enough that I lived through that terrible life, so I needed children shall live through it? Who wanted to see that? To tell you the truth, I wasn't thinking that I wanted to have any children at all.

**Einstein:** Can you explain more about why you were thinking about that, I mean—

**Sloman:** Because what can happen, that thing, I don't think it came out even now. It's still with me.

**Einstein:** That you're worried about your children?

**Sloman:** Life, about life. Very worried.

**Einstein:** From what point of view exactly? What kinds of things worry you?

**Sloman:** The war, never — I don't think I ever lost the feeling of the war, you know? I never lost, really. . . The war was the worst thing to live through, especially when you're not well. And I wasn't well. You know that. Mama was well, but me, I wasn't well at all.

**Einstein:** Do you have nightmares about it?

**Sloman:** I used to have a lot. We were looking for my father, and we find out that my father is not alive, that he was in the same place where I was afraid to be.

**Einstein:** In the cellar?

**Sloman:** It was in Kovno [Lithuania], in the ghetto<sup>15</sup>.

**Einstein:** Yeah, we were also talking a little bit about your father's last words to you after you had started crying because you thought there was no oxygen in the cellar and the Germans heard you.

**Sloman:** Yeah. And my father couldn't stand that when he was very scared. And when we start... when the German walked in, and we had to get up — "Raus! Raus! Raus! [Out! In German]— He said, "My dear, you killed us!" And that was in his mind, that I killed them. And I didn't know that I'm alive and they were killed.

**Einstein:** Do you think about that a lot?

**Sloman:** A lot. It was a little child that the mother choked in that basement because he was starting to cry, and that was terrible.

**Einstein:** It was time when people made decisions that you just can't imagine anybody doing in normal circumstances.

**Sloman:** Just to live, just to survive. It wasn't easy at all. God help us, I'll never see that again.

**Einstein:** So why do you think you did survive. What about you—

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<sup>15</sup> The Kovno ghetto was established in 1941 by the Nazis. There was a small and large ghetto and both quickly became overcrowded. The overcrowding continued to get worse as the Germans continued to shrink the size of the ghetto. The small ghetto was demolished on October 4, 1941 and the inhabitants were killed.

The ghetto supplied forced labor for the military with many Jews leaving to build an airbase and others worked in factories that were established inside the ghetto for women, children, and people too weak to leave the ghetto.

In 1943, the SS was in control of the ghetto and converted it into the Kauen Concentration camp.



**Sloman:** Life was very, very important for us to live, and it wasn't easy because there was nothing to eat. And I remember the Russians were cooking potatoes with little pieces of meat. And that's how we started eating, little by little. Maybe that was good, because if we would have started eating a lot, we probably would have died.

**Einstein:** You're talking about after liberation.

**Sloman:** After the liberation.

**Einstein:** How, what do you think about you or your mother or your relationship helped you to survive the war years?

**Sloman:** My mother, very much so. She kept on saying: "God will help, God will help."

"Mama, where is your God? What did we do that God shall do to us things like that?"

"Mein kind [German for my child], don't ask any questions. We must not ask questions like that."

My mother was a very believer, very, very strict, praying a lot.

**Einstein:** What do you think about that now, looking back?

**Sloman:** I beg your pardon?

**Einstein:** What do you think about that now, looking back? I mean, how do you make sense of that?

**Sloman:** That we survived?

**Einstein:** That, I mean, about the religious part of it. About God and where God was. What do you think about that these days?

**Sloman:** It comes and goes. It comes and goes. That's the truth. Sometimes it goes when you wonder: "Why am I alive and my father... " you know, 45 people from one family were gone. The whole picture...

**Einstein:** All the people in the picture.

**Sloman:** ...except the two from South Africa and from here in Atlanta. The rest of them were all, my grandpa, my grandma, everybody... I mean step-grandma, OK? That was my grandma, I didn't know any other grandma. And we hear that whole night — tock-tock-tock-tock (machinegun fire) — they were shooting. And the Ninth Fort<sup>16</sup> — did you ever hear about the Ninth Fort? That's where I was. That's what... you went — right was good, left was bad. Right was good.

**Einstein:** You had "Selections<sup>17</sup>?" And that's why you were still in the ghetto?

**Sloman:** Yeah, sure. We were in a big, big place. And my brother, olev hasholem, baked. The German let my grandpa go, let my grandpa go. So he gave him a beating and took him away. We could see that that side [left] was bad and that side [right] was good.

**Einstein:** Well how did you know that?

**Sloman:** Because you could see the younger people were on this side, and it was starting to get dark. It was from 5:00 in the morning to late in the night.

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<sup>16</sup> A location in the Kovno Ghetto that was originally a stronghold built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. When Lithuania was occupied by both the Russia and then the Germans, it was transformed into a sort of prison and was incorporated into the ghetto when the Germans established it.

<sup>17</sup> Selections happened (mostly) when people arrived at concentration camps and those fit to work (or the serve the Germans in some similar capacity) were divided from those not fit to work and were sent to the crematoriums.

**Einstein:** Do you remember when that was, exactly?

**Sloman:** Yeah, it was October.

**Einstein:** Of 19...

**Sloman:** 19 October. . .

**Einstein:** 1942, 1943?

**Sloman:** No, it was...oy vay.

**Einstein:** OK. Well, it's in a lot of history books.

**Sloman:** You have that in the other, in the other part, you have, that's right.

**Einstein:** I can find it out.<sup>18</sup>

**Sloman:** Yeah, it was October. I remember it was cold, very cold. And you could see that that side was bad.

**Einstein:** How have you thought about that over the years, that so many of your family members were murdered so quickly? I mean, how do you make sense of it?

**Sloman:** Never forgot.

**Einstein:** What do you think? I mean, why did this, why do you think this happened?

**Sloman:** Why did it happen, huh?

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<sup>18</sup> What Rella is discussing is what was known as the Big Aktion. The Big Aktion happened October 29, 1941 and it was the biggest mass murder of Lithuanian Jews. The Big Aktion was part of a series of 'aktionen' where Jews would be taken from their homes in the ghetto and shot. About 10,000 Jews died in the Big Aktion of October 1941.

**Einstein:** Yeah, why?

**Sloman:** I've got plenty of times, plenty of times: "Why mein kind," my mama used to say, "mein kind God, God wanted that way, it looks like it." Not that we are pleased, but she passed away in 1973, my mom. She was 86 years old, Mom.

**Einstein:** So did her feelings about that ever change? Did she, was she always—

**Sloman:** Never.

**Einstein:** —she always thought the same? Did she lose faith in God at all?

**Sloman:** Never faith. Never lost faith.

**Einstein:** What about—

**Sloman:** Me, yeah. But not my mom.

**Einstein:** So tell me about you—

**Sloman:** "God will help" and "God will do" and "God" and "God" and "God," and she kept on talking. And she knew every time in concentration camp when their holidays, like Yom Kippur<sup>19</sup> and all that, she knew by heart, my mom. She was very smart, my mom.

**Einstein:** Did she observe those holidays in any kind of way?

**Sloman:** How could you observe?

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<sup>19</sup> 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).

**Einstein:** Well I don't know. I'm just wondering if any—

**Sloman:** We were working in those ditches, you know, for the German soldiers, and that's all we knew. We needed to dig, and we were 12 people in the palapine [Lithuanian for tent], how do you say a palapine? You know, made from, like the soldiers, you know, put—

**Einstein:** A unit?

**Sloman:** --in concentration camp with—

**Einstein:** Like a barrack?

**Sloman:** Like [unintelligible Hebrew/Yiddish], you know, like. .

**Einstein:** A tent?

**Sloman:** Oy, a palapine, how do you call a palapine?

**Einstein:** Do you know in Hebrew?

**Sloman:** [no].

**Einstein:** Lo?

**Sloman:** Lo zocheret. [don't remember] It was 12 with six mamas and six. . .

**Einstein:** Another tent?

**Sloman:** Yeah.

**Einstein:** Tent.

**Sloman:** Yeah. .ken [yes]! A tent!

**Einstein:** Tent.

**Sloman:** Yeah, you're right, a tent. There were six mamas and six daughters...

**Einstein:** Mm hmm.

**Sloman:** . . .in that tent. And there was winter cold. October was very cold. And it was already later than October, you know, it was already... When we came back from concentration camp, it was, kind of, very cold.

**Einstein:** What were your relationships like in that group? You were with each other for quite a while, altogether.

**Sloman:** We were there for 11 months.

**Einstein:** And how did you treat each other—

**Sloman:** We were in the ghetto for four years, you know. In the concentration camp, we were there for 11 months. We were in Stutthoff— that was the first one. After three weeks, they sent us to walk, and that was where we dug.

**Einstein:** I guess what I'm wondering is whether all the mothers became the mothers of all the daughters or did you all feel like you were—

**Sloman:** One daughter and mother passed away in that place.

**Einstein:** Did other people take care of her after that?

**Sloman:** There was nothing to take care of, my dear. We had to go on.

**Einstein:** No, but the daughter.

**Sloman:** We had to go on.

**Einstein:** Did people help each other?

**Sloman:** There was nothing to help. There was no kind of help. Nothing. We had to work, and we worked. "**Bashert**." [destiny] You know what "bashert" means?

**Einstein:** Mm-hmm.

**Sloman:** It looks like a "bashert" to live through? That's what it was.

**Einstein:** What did your mother tell you to help you keep living?

**Sloman:** "God will help." She kept on talking only for God, "My God."

**Einstein:** What did you think about that at the time?

**Sloman:** I didn't know I'll live. Menachim Begin came to see me when we came to Israel. It was way after, you know. I was married already.

**Einstein:** Well let's go back to Munich, then. So you were...where did you want to go and make your life after you recuperated?

**Sloman:** Of course I wanted to go back to Lithuania to see if anybody was alive. We were hoping still, "Maybe somebody's alive."

**Einstein:** Was anyone? Did you go back?

**Sloman:** My brother.

**Einstein:** Your brother. Which brother is this?

**Sloman:** There was only one.

**Einstein:** The name?

**Sloman:** That, Charlie. Charlie Solski. He was the only one that came right away to

**Reinns(?)**, and digged that place to see if somebody's chocking, or if they couldn't get to him.

**Einstein:** And did you ever think about going to live in Israel or did you decide to come to America?

**Sloman:** We were hoping to go to Israel, that's all we wanted was Israel. We didn't know about America, nothing, my dear.

**Einstein:** But here you are. How did that happen?

**Sloman:** It was very, very good, you know. When I came, I was already married, and I married in Germany, in October.

Everything happened in October, come to think about it. You know that? I married the 29<sup>th</sup> of October.

**Einstein:** So it's a very memory-filled month.

**Sloman:** Sure was. I'll tell you something, come to think, I didn't even think about it. If you wouldn't have talked about it, I wouldn't even have thought about it.

**Einstein:** So, but you didn't go to Israel, you didn't immigrate to Israel. You came to Atlanta?

**Sloman:** The uncle... Bernie, my husband, Bernard Sloman, had an uncle in **Kibbutz Guat Aaliyadah**... And he said, "Kinderlach [dear children], you lived through a lot. Don't come now. There's nothing to eat and nothing to drink. Go, if you can go somewhere else." So what



happened? [Unintelligible] How did I decide to come here? I'll never know, you know that?

Come to think about it. How was that?

**Einstein:** Well, you had the Saul family and the Solski, Harold Yudelson, who had found you in Munich...

**Sloman:** Oh yeah, yeah, OK. Hal...Right, right, right, right, right, right.

**Einstein:** So they must have given you an affidavit to come here or did you just... .

**Sloman:** No, no.

**Einstein:** --were you able to go [unintelligible] no matter what number you were?

**Sloman:** To get the papers, Bernie, but now [unintelligible] the papers from [unintelligible name]. And it was easier to get, so you(?) said, "I don't want you to stay alone, and I don't want to be alone, and as soon as we get papers wherever, we will be." We had papers for Australia, we had papers for America. We had several kinds of papers and whatever would come first, we'd go on our way. Just go away. And that's what we did.

**Einstein:** And what did you think about Europe...I mean, put it into words for me about why you didn't want to have children while you were there...

**Sloman:** In Germany?

**Einstein:** ...and why you wanted to leave. It's obvious, but tell me anyway.

**Sloman:** We saw what happened. They killed the children, you know — my little brother was eight years old — and all the children were killed. Not just from the Germans, but from the,

oh, what do you call those...Fascists from Russia. Those, the bad people, they were worse than the Germans. They were also in the army, but they killed because, they killed a lot of...

**Einstein:** From both sides.

**Sloman:** From both sides.

**Einstein:** So you wanted to go and start a new life.

**Sloman:** Of course, of course. And when we... soon as we came to America, we worked.

Right away from the day...we asked for a job...

**Einstein:** Well tell me how you got here.

**Sloman:** Well, first with a boat.

**Einstein:** What was that like?

**Sloman:** "Ballou". I think "Ballou" was the name of the boat<sup>20</sup>. And I worked on the boat because my husband was sick as a dog from the water and everything. And then we came to New York. That was something, to see the uncles. Benard had an uncle, Moiske; years and years in America. And he cried when we came and he ran to see us right away.

**Einstein:** How did that feel for you and for Bernard? How did you feel about seeing family?

**Sloman:** Family was very important, but my family was here in Atlanta. I didn't have anybody. Well no, I had a cousin, Israel Saul, a multi, multi-millionaire, and he had clothing, everything on three, four streets, you know, where the east buildings were. And he wanted us,

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<sup>20</sup> USS General CC Ballou

right away, to get dressed. And he put us on a plane, and Sol Yudelson, Harold's father, picked us up, me...

**Einstein:** So you took a plane to Atlanta?

**Sloman:** Yeah.

**Einstein:** Really?

**Sloman:** Yeah, we took a plane.

**Einstein:** So what did you think of Atlanta when you got here?

**Sloman:** Loved it, every minute. It was wonderful to be here. It was a wonderful city. But something happened, and I'll never forget it, and my mother never forgot it olveshalom. That year that we came, there was a woman who was going to fly with a suitcase, and her son put a bomb in that suitcase. And my mother said, when they caught him — they caught him — 250 people, I think, were killed at that time for money. She said, "That's terrible, for money to get killed." "Can you imagine?" she said. So, like somebody said, [unintelligible]. But you know what? You forget things like that. I don't even remember anymore, but now — it came to my mind — I remember that son of hers put a bomb in the suitcase.

**Einstein:** So tell me about your first early time in Atlanta and what that was like for you and...

**Sloman:** Wonderful.

**Einstein:** . . . what Atlanta was like and...

**Sloman:** We, they got us an apartment on Boulevard<sup>21</sup>, and we worked and we enjoyed every minute of it.

**Einstein:** Where did you work?

**Sloman:** I worked in a ten cents store. There was a friend of my cousin, Jenny Kahn, [olveshalom]. And they gave me a job. But of course it was hard with no ability to speak English, with no understanding of English. It wasn't easy, so I said to those, "If you'll help me, because I don't know how to do anything."

Well, my husband got a job from Muses<sup>22</sup>. Sol Yudelsohn went right away to Muses and right away they took my husband.

**Einstein:** What did he do there?

**Sloman:** My husband, not me.

**Einstein:** No, what did he do there?

**Sloman:** He was making shorter pants and something like that for the store.

**Einstein:** Were people interested in hearing about your... what had happened in Europe when you came to Atlanta?

**Sloman:** Were they... ?

**Einstein:** Were people interested in hearing what had happened to you?

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<sup>21</sup> Boulevard is a street in Atlanta's Old Fourth Ward

<sup>22</sup> George Muses Clothing Company was a clothing retailer that started shortly after the Civil War, in 1874. The store was known for its menswear.

**Sloman:** No, no, nobody wanted to hear anything. No, no, no, no.

**Einstein:** What did they say?

**Sloman:** Nobody wanted to hear anything. As a matter of fact, they didn't believe it, what happened. They didn't believe it, what happened with us. And some people said...I was on the bus, and a lady said if the war would have been another year, we would be millionaires and we...So Mrs. Kaplan [olveshalom] got up and she said: "If it would have been one more year, none of us would be alive!" She didn't like to hear that. So you see what I mean? People didn't believe it. So it was very hard, you know, that...to really, to believe in it, it's not an easy thing to do. It was very hard. Who could believe things like that, that people can do to each other? And we lived through that too.

**Einstein:** Can you believe it? That you went through it? Can you believe it?

**Sloman:** I believe it because I lived through it and I saw it happen. Definitely.

**Einstein:** What does that make you think about people and about society? What, how do you come out of that?

**Sloman:** Very scared. Very, very scared. It took a long time to get back on your feet, like somebody said.

**Einstein:** Do you trust people?

**Sloman:** I didn't at first, in the beginning. Of course not. Not at all. But in the end, you know?

**Einstein:** I mean, what...Did you have relationships with people who were non-Jews when you were in Kovno? Or was the Jewish community kind of isolated?

**Sloman:** No, it wasn't isolated. We had a lot of friends, the Goyim<sup>23</sup>. As a matter of fact, my brother was three and a half years in their house hiding.

**Einstein:** So you had some people who were helping them?

**Sloman:** Oh yeah. Very few, but there were.

**Einstein:** I'm wondering whether you had a feeling of being betrayed by your neighbors, by your Lithuanian neighbors.

**Sloman:** Well, because some of them were very bad, you'd say that. They took away all the clothes and everything that we had, you know. You know what? It's a good thing what you're doing, because I already forgot what happened.

**Einstein:** We'll try to help you remember.

**Sloman:** Hmm, not easy.

**Einstein:** It was a long time ago.

So when you came to Atlanta, did you make friends with...Who are the other survivors who were here and, what is more, the Wis'es, were they already here?

**Sloman:** They were already here.

**Einstein:** So you knew them from... Did you know that they were here when you got here?

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<sup>23</sup> *Goy* is a Yiddish term meaning "people" or "nation." In common usage, it designates a non-Jewish or Gentile person.

**Sloman:** When I got here, I remember them, I'm sure. [Hebrew phrase] lived now, I told you, in one of the buildings now. And I knew she had a husband, you know.

**Einstein:** But did you know that they were here in Atlanta when you got here, or did you meet them here?

**Sloman:** I met them here.

**Einstein:** What was that like?

**Sloman:** I remember that one of my — this was my oldest son — was invited for a birthday party. And she came to take him. And he said: "But she's Jewish, Mama! She's not a Goyim! You don't have to worry that I'm going to that birthday party." See what I mean? See, because he was afraid that I was not going to let him go because, but she's Yiddish, she's Jewish, you know? It had to be told, so he knew that.

**Einstein:** So, I'm going to take from that that you were very protective of your children.

**Sloman:** Very protective, sure, of course.

**Einstein:** Do you think you might have...

**Sloman:** Of life...period, of life. Very protective, very. It wasn't easy. It was very hard, my dear.

**Einstein:** Do you think you might have been overprotective? Or, I mean, how did your children...how is your relationship so that they would be able to feel protected and yet independent, which most kids—

**Sloman:** We talked a lot about it.

**Einstein:** Yeah.

**Sloman:** We talked a lot about it, sure. No question about it.

**Einstein:** It sounds like they were sensitive to your feelings.

**Sloman:** Sure, of course. We were thinking about it constantly, you know? Scared, too. It took a long time to get used to being free.

**Einstein:** What were some of the things early on that made you know that you were free?

**Sloman:** Well, when I came to Atlanta, of course. My mishpokhe [Yiddish for family], they made a very big party — it was 365 people. That was the first time they had a get-together, and I was already pregnant with my oldest one, Julian.

**Einstein:** Is he named after anyone?

**Sloman:** I beg your pardon?

**Einstein:** Is Julian named for anyone?

**Sloman:** Yeah, his uncle, yeah, of course. And Harold has a brother, Julian, too. He's a professor in school.

**Einstein:** So the Saul family, the Yudelson family here, did they help you get on your feet?

**Sloman:** Oh sure, sure. My cousin...Do you know Jenny Cohn? Monette Siegel?

**Einstein:** OK. So when you came to Atlanta, did you join a synagogue or were you interested in taking part—



**Sloman:** Uh-huh, right away: AA<sup>24</sup>.

**Einstein:** AA? And how were, how was that community for you at the time?

**Sloman:** It was, wasn't easy, but was fine. My cousin, Dr. Rosenblum, was—I don't know if you remember her, *olev hasholem*. She was the president that was the first president, for a woman. And she wanted me to belong to belong to it, and I [dog bark].

**Einstein:** She's tough if she's in that...Come here.

**Sloman:** I think she wants to go outside.

**Einstein:** OK, let's stop the tape.

**Sloman:** Ahavath Achim Synagogue for 40 years, till Rabbi Goodman<sup>25</sup> came. That was the end of that. Couldn't stand him.

**Einstein:** Can I ask you why?

**Sloman:** Ha. The first Rosh Hashanah<sup>26</sup>, he came dressed like a millionaire, you know, like **King Faruch**. And he picks up his hand: "I had a dream!"

And my seats were right at the top. I said: "Oh yeah, good luck. Look who he's talking about," I said, "Children, go bring me some eggs. I'll throw some eggs on him." And from

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<sup>24</sup> AA stands for Ahavaht Achim, which is a synagogue in Atlanta.

<sup>25</sup> Rabbi Goodman served as Senior Rabbi of Ahavath Achim 1982-2002.

<sup>26</sup> *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.

that day, I said to my husband, olev hasholem, "We're getting away from here." We liked Rabbi Epstein<sup>27</sup> very much.

**Einstein:** Yeah, tell me about Rabbi Epstein, what you remember about him.

**Sloman:** He was wonderful. He was in Lithuania, in Slobodka<sup>28</sup>, where I was in the ghetto. He was going to school there. And he remembered that exactly, and my family. And it was very, very interested. He wanted to know how it was and what it was and everything, nebach.

**Einstein:** And his wife?

**Sloman:** Reva? Yeah, she was a very nice lady, very nice lady.

**Einstein:** Do you have any other memories of, you know, the early days in Atlanta and the people that you knew or what you...

**Sloman:** Yeah, all the... I had three sons, and everybody came for the brising<sup>29</sup>, you know. And it was nice, it was very nice to be.

Is she a pain in the neck [referencing dog]

**Einstein:** OK. So there were other survivors here. Did you make friends with the other survivors, or did you—

**Sloman:** Yeah, yeah, with a lot of... Yeah. Unfortunately, almost all of them are gone.

**Einstein:** Who were your close friends?

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<sup>27</sup> Rabbi Epstein was a Rabbi at Ahavath Achim from Lithuania. He served at the synagogue for 50 years and lead them from a more Orthodox teaching into Conservative Judaism.

<sup>28</sup> The Yiddish name for a neighborhood in Kaunas, Lithuania

<sup>29</sup> 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:** Hannah [Chanah] Klug. She told me that you wanted to hear from her too. She still here, Gott zu danken. There were a lot of, you know, like Chayeleh, and Sam and Ida and Calah?

**Einstein:** Did you feel comfortable, more comfortable with the survivors, or did you, were you able to start making friends who were—

**Sloman:** Yeah.

**Einstein:** —Were most of your friends Jewish?

**Sloman:** Were mostly, mostly Jewish friends, of course. We were in business, you know.

**Einstein:** Well what, tell me about your business.

**Sloman:** Yeah, we had a supermarket.

**Einstein:** What was it called, what was the name?

**Sloman:** Dixie Hills Supermarket. It was the first supermarket that was, what do you call that? A riot[?]

**Einstein:** Tell me about that.

**Sloman:** It was terrible, that was very scary.

**Einstein:** But where, tell me where it was, first of all.

**Sloman:** It was in West End. You know where West End is? That's where it was, our supermarket. Beautiful, big supermarket. But it was **lo naim** [not nice, pleasant in Hebrew]. It wasn't very good, you know, not pleasant at all. Memories, a lot of memories.

**Einstein:** Can you tell me some of those things that might have happened?

**Sloman:** We know there were, after the riot, that they were standing and begging and [unintelligible]...I wouldn't talk about it, **veh lo haya naim. Me 'od lo.** [and it wasn't pleasant. Not at all]

**Einstein:** Did you have any good... Before that, before the riot, what was your relationship like with the people, with the customers?

**Sloman:** Very good. We did very good business, very good. Everything I had is from that. That was our business and that's what we did, saved and everything.

**Einstein:** Did your family help put you into the business?

**Sloman:** Well, they borrowed me some money, and I paid it out, every penny.

**Einstein:** How did you learn how to have a grocery?

**Sloman:** I don't know, it just came to me very easily.

**Einstein:** Do you remember any particular customers that you had?

**Sloman:** I did, they were nice customers. As a matter of fact, they saw they picture and they, "Oy, Ms. Sloman, we didn't know what happened to Europe?" He said, they looked. See, that's my husband and me.

**Einstein:** And how did they react to that when they started to know you more as individuals?

Did they...did you have any conversations with them about your past, or did you just—

**Sloman:** We didn't like to talk about it.

**Einstein:** Didn't like to talk about it.

**Sloman:** No. Never. We never talked about it. We didn't want them to ask, and so we didn't start talking, and that's it.

**Einstein:** And did you talk about it with your children?

**Sloman:** Oh yeah! My children knew everything. As a matter of fact, go ahead and see.

[Unintelligible, Steven?]...When Spielberg got sent here, you know that?

**Einstein:** No, I didn't know that.

**Sloman:** Oh yeah, knew everything. He said: "Mama, it was not a good situation," and we said, "Of course not." And that's when I was shocked, when I heard that he picked our president [Unintelligible Hebrew]

**Einstein:** OK, we'll skip over that part. Well, did you teach, what did you teach your children? What, in your experiences—

**Sloman:** Hebrew, they went to Hebrew School and they went to school...teach them. I used to talk to them mostly in Hebrew.

**Einstein:** Really?

**Sloman:** Mm-hm.

**Einstein:** Not Yiddish?

**Sloman:** Yiddish? Yeah, with my mother, of course. Well, you know, I had a mother a long time.

**Einstein:** Here in Atlanta?

**Sloman:** Yeah.

**Einstein:** She came here?

**Sloman:** Mother passed away in 1973. She didn't want to come back from Israel. When we went to Israel, she said: "We don't go to die in the diaspora. I want to die in Israel." And she wouldn't go.

**Einstein:** Give me the chronology here. So you came here in 1950?

**Sloman:** 1950

**Einstein:** 1950. So late, OK. And so you lived here in Atlanta until...when did you move to Israel?

**Sloman:** In 1973 we moved the first time. To tell you the truth, I don't remember. We probably did. And I always took mother with me, and then she didn't want to come back.

**Einstein:** She wanted to stay in Israel.

**Sloman:** She said: "Mein kind. Time's coming. We have to lay here."

**Einstein:** Can you remind me of her name, her full name?

**Sloman:** Dinah Saul, S-A-U-L.

**Einstein:** And her maiden name?

**Sloman:** Olkinitski. That's very hard.

**Einstein:** Can you spell that?

**Sloman:** Her maiden name. O-L-... It's not easy. Shh! [to dog] [NB: Olkinitski, sp.]

**Einstein:** Was she born in Lithuania? Come here [to dog]

**Sloman:** She was born in Lithuania, in a little city...

**Einstein:** What was the name of the city?

**Sloman:** ...where my father...Gudleve (Yiddish; Garliava (Lithuanian)<sup>30</sup>. And it was over the river. That's where my brother survived.

**Einstein:** Oh, I see. So she knew people there with whom she could leave him. I see.

**Sloman:** Yeah, yeah.

**Einstein:** What did she—

**Sloman:** But the whole family died there.

**Einstein:** What did she—

**Sloman:** They killed them all.

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<sup>30</sup> A suburb of Kaunas, Lithuania.

**Einstein:** What did she think of Atlanta when she came here? She came as an older person, I know. Was it very difficult for her to get established?

**Sloman:** Yeah, sure. No, it wasn't. She was wonderful. She loved to learn, and she made right away, after five years, you know, the—

**Einstein:** Citizenship?

**Sloman:** Right away. She wanted to be the first one.

**Einstein:** Did she learn English?

**Sloman:** Yeah.

**Einstein:** How did she do that?

**Sloman:** She did very well. She, the people, you know what they give you, the paper? They were excited, the way she wanted to learn.

**Einstein:** And how did you learn English?

**Sloman:** Also the same way as my mother.

**Einstein:** In school or did you learn it—

**Sloman:** I learned it from. . . Who had time to go to school, my dear? I had to work with my husband in the store. And I did well.

**Einstein:** So do you want to talk at all about the time around the riot and what happened to your business?



**Sloman:** Riot, they didn't...they killed a person there. You know, Martin Luther King was the time, and they killed one person, but they couldn't survive. The police didn't let anybody through, so we didn't go there. Two, it was quiet.

**Einstein:** Did they...was your store destroyed?

**Sloman:** Yeah. It wasn't destroyed, but the windows were barred. They barred the windows with steel, and they couldn't get in.

**Einstein:** Did you go back and reopen the store?

**Sloman:** Yeah, yeah we did. Then we sold it. My husband didn't want to be there anymore; he said: "Bad memories." My husband was a very quiet man.

**Einstein:** So it, did that kind of violence remind him of your—

**Sloman:** Oh sure, it reminded us all, of course.

**Einstein:** What did you do after that?

**Sloman:** We went to Israel.

**Einstein:** Oh, that's when you went to Israel.

**Sloman:** Yeah, in 1973.

**Einstein:** How long did you live there?

**Sloman:** Five years, and then we used to come every summer.

**Einstein:** So the children grew up there?

**Sloman:** Well, yeah. Saul went to school there, of course.

**Einstein:** Where in Israel were you?

**Sloman:** Natanya<sup>31</sup>, north of Tel-Aviv [Israel]. You know whose building it was? The **machutonim** [in-laws] from Menachim Begin. He came right away to see me because we helped a lot, you know, the Betar.

**Einstein:** Yeah, I think you told me that story the last time we...

**Sloman:** Yeah, he helped a lot.

**Einstein:** And why did you come back to Atlanta?

**Sloman:** Because that's where the boys came...

**Einstein:** OK.

**Sloman:** . . .and they wanted to go to school. And my husband didn't want to be without the children. He wanted to be where the children were.

**Einstein:** You could have stayed—

**Sloman:** I could have stayed in Israel forever and ever.

**Einstein:** What does Israel mean to you?

**Sloman:** I beg your pardon?

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<sup>31</sup> A city in Israel on the coast that is today a more resort-ish town.

**Einstein:** What does Israel mean to you?

**Sloman:** It means a lot, my country.

**Einstein:** And—

**Sloman:** Today in Hebron<sup>32</sup>, when I heard they were fighting in Hebron, it made me very sick.

**Einstein:** Do you worry about Jewish security today?

**Sloman:** I don't know about what to worry anymore, to tell you the truth. It's scary.

**Einstein:** Everything, so it's just, everything is scary?

**Sloman:** Very scary.

**Einstein:** OK.

**Sloman:** I remember when we were not scared and we found out to be scared, you know, from years ago.

**Einstein:** So are you saying that just being in what you went through and during the war, [unintelligible] would really be very interesting [unintelligible]

**Sloman:** Shh! [dog] What a pain in the neck!

**Einstein:** She's cold.

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<sup>32</sup> A city in Pakistan in the south West Bank.

OK, so we were talking a little bit about how you adjusted to being back in regular society. Was that part of what was difficult for you, this fear?

**Sloman:** We didn't have any trouble. We were accepted and we were very happy here. That was like our home. We forgot about the home in Lithuania.

**Einstein:** Were you happy to forget about that home?

**Sloman:** Oh of course. I buried everybody there, so many people.

**Einstein:** Do you miss that life at all? The life that you had, say, before the war, when you think about it? How do you—

**Sloman:** I don't think, never. That's the funny part about it, what you just asked me. I didn't think about it. It was very cruel and very scary. Very, very scary. My grandpa, I remember he came in the morning and bought a few apples for something. And he said, "Today I'm 70-years old." That means life is just finishing. And sure enough, it was the big Aktia [action] on the Ninth Fort, you probably heard about it. And that's where it is, that's where the laying, all. Those are memories that you can never forget.

**Einstein:** How often do you think about it?

**Sloman:** Very much. Very much. Whenever something happens to me, I'm so scared.

Terrible, I hate to say that. And I bought the **Shaleilem [unintelligible] l' Yisrael eh Ika me'od chashuv. [very important].**

**Einstein:** Are you concerned about Israel's security now?

**Sloman:** Very much. Very, very much. **Lo beseder, eh lamah l'hashov. [Unintelligible Hebrew]. [Unintelligible] mashim imrah. Lo yoda'at ish, yamrah shezek camrah. Azi**

**omeret, "Now we have a nice life," you know? Yishto, at zoheret mah sheh amrah? Lo rotzah [unintelligible]. At zoheret, nachon?**

**Einstein:** Well, what else can you, what memories do you have of the early years in Atlanta and learning English or things that may have happened? What stories do you remember?

**Sloman:** My mama never forgot her little boy, my eight-year-old little brother. Never. She cried during the last minute of her life. It was very hard to forget. That's when they, the Russia [unintelligible]; they call them [unintelligible], you know this? The Russians...very mean people.

**Einstein:** So your brother was killed by the Russians, not by the Germans?

**Sloman:** My little brother? Sure.

**Einstein:** Oh, I didn't realize that.

**Sloman:** He was eight-years old. I showed you the picture, yeah.

**Einstein:** Sure. Do you know what happened to him?

**Sloman:** They killed them all! They murdered them. That's unforgettable. That's a terrible feeling, you know? My little brother, all the children from the ghetto. Rachel Wise, too. She had a little boy. But God helped her; she had a twin, thank God. You know Eli and Helen?

**Einstein:** Mm-hmm.

**Sloman:** That's a lot, you know? She was not young anymore.

**Einstein:** I know.

Have you ever thought about going back to Lithuania to visit? Have you gone back?

**Sloman:** I don't want it. I don't want to know, don't want to hear about it. That's it. I have a cousin that goes there, Peggy Friedman. You know Peggy! Ha ha ha! She's a meshugener [Yiddish for crazy person], you know? The whole family was killed, and nothing but from them, from the Lithuanians.

**Einstein:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. I know that she went last summer.

**Sloman:** Every summer! That's not the first time she wanted me to go! I wouldn't go with them if you...No, don't want to see them.

**Einstein:** There's not, is there not any Jewish life left?

**Sloman:** No.

**Einstein:** Nothing?

**Sloman:** I hear the few old people, nebach.

**Einstein:** So when you think back on all these experiences, I mean, it's kind of a broad question, but what effect do you think it had on your life?

**Sloman:** What...

**Einstein:** What effect. . .

**Sloman:** On my life?

**Einstein:** Yeah.

**Sloman:** God was good to me. If my middle son hadn't died, I would have had beautiful three sons. How can you ask for more? But of course, that's unforgettable.

**Einstein:** Yeah, it's another terrible tragedy.

**Sloman:** It's a tragedy that I lived through again, it's true.

**Einstein:** When he was sick, did you have — I don't want to be insensitive — but having to deal with another loss that's so deep, I mean, was it—

**Sloman:** It was a loss, but not because...I just didn't want to lose him. But I didn't compare those things, no. Definitely not, my dear, God help us.

**Einstein:** I know there's no comparison. I'm just wondering whether, because you had already gone through so much tragedy, it was so much more difficult—

**Sloman:** But that was a tragedy I never forgot about, too. Never.

**Einstein:** And did you teach, when your children were growing up, did you teach them, like any values, any particular values that might have come from your own experience? Maybe, I mean, you taught them Jewish... It was still important to you to be Jewish?

**Sloman:** Very important.

**Einstein:** Tell me about that. What does it mean to you?

**Sloman:** Very important to be Jewish and to see Israel. All my children were living in Israel, you know that, everyone. I was thinking that it's **ot hashuv**.

**Einstein:** And have you been involved with any survivor activities? Do you belong to Hemshech<sup>33</sup> or...

**Sloman:** No. With Hemshech, it's funny, you know, there's such a difference between the Lithuanian and Polish Jews. Like **Yom V 'Lailah** [day and night].

**Einstein:** Tell me about that.

**Sloman:** Yom V 'Lailah: It's a different story completely, you know. We belonged to Betar [a Zionist youth group] and that was **me'od hashuv** [very important]. We all left Betar — my children, too.

**Einstein:** So your various [unintelligible] Zionist activities...

**Sloman:** Yeah, very much. Very, very much.

**Einstein:** And a strong connection to—

**Sloman:** Yeah, very much. Very important.

**Einstein:** Did anybody leave for Israel before the war? Were there... was that an option for anyone?

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<sup>33</sup> Eternal Life-*Hemshech* is an organization of Atlanta Holocaust survivors, their descendants and friends dedicated to commemorating the 6,000,000 Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Approximately 100 Holocaust survivors living in Atlanta, Georgia founded Eternal Life-*Hemshech* in 1964. *Hemshech* is a Hebrew word that means "continuation." Their purpose was to "perpetuate the memory of their beloved families along with all of the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust." The group wanted the memorial to serve as a place to say *Kaddish*, the Jewish prayer for the dead. The committee was comprised Abraham Gastfiend, Mala Gastfiend, Gaston Nitka, Rubin Lansky, and Rubin Pichulik. Dr. Leon Rosen served as chairman and Lola Lansky and Nathan Bromberg were co- chairs. The Memorial to Six Million was dedicated in Atlanta's Greenwood Cemetery in 1965.



**Sloman:** I did have a cousin, as a matter of fact. You remind me now. She was pregnant, I said, remember?

**Einstein:** Mm-hmm.

**Sloman:** And her mother went — she had an infection in the knee. When you fell over there, it was very, something happened. And she brought her back. I wish she wouldn't have brought her back — she would have lived. And then Hitler took over.

**Einstein:** When you think about, it's been 65 years since the war was over—

**Sloman:** Finished.

**Einstein:** Yeah, finished. How have your thoughts evolved over the years about that? You said that you never used to talk about it when you were young, I mean when you were first married, and to other people. Do you feel more comfortable talking about it or have your thoughts about it changed at all?

**Sloman:** We tried to be together with Jewish people and those who survived. Mostly, you know, like Chayan, Rocholin, mostly, I mean those kind of people, you know?

**Einstein:** Mm-hmm.

**Sloman:** A lot of Americans didn't want to hear about it, between you and me, you know that? They weren't so...At first they didn't believe in it, and it took a long, long time... You know, my mother didn't live to see what happened, that they believed in it.

**Einstein:** Do you know what changed?

**Sloman:** It changed that people found out what happened. And they came and they really, a lot of young people worked in it like you, for instance. Right?

**Einstein:** Mm-hmm.

**Sloman:** Here you are, see? How could you believe if you, things like that, tragedies just like those, how can you even think about it?

**Einstein:** So that's a good question. It's so very hard to—

**Sloman:** To...

**Einstein:** —to...Sometimes the more I learn about it, the less I believe that it could even happen. I mean, it's so outrageous.

**Sloman:** That's a relief though. Nobody wanted to believe. How could people believe that people can be such animals in a lifetime?

**Einstein:** Well. . .

**Sloman:** **Glassov** says that's the [unintelligible] in Russia, you know, the Ukrainians, they were the worse ones. They were worse than Hitler's people, the Germans. So here you are, see?

**Einstein:** So in other words, you really, you've made your social life within the Jewish community?

**Sloman:** Yeah, that's right, yeah. Definitely.

**Einstein:** Did you open another business after you came back from Israel, or did you—

**Sloman:** Oh yeah.

**Einstein:** What did you do then?

**Sloman:** We had another business, the same kind. The same kind.

**Einstein:** Grocery store?

**Sloman:** Yeah.

**Einstein:** What was the name?

**Sloman:** Dixie Mills Supermarket, the same one.

**Einstein:** And where was this—

**Sloman:** In the same, in West End.

**Einstein:** Oh, you went back to West End?

**Sloman:** Yeah, we didn't open a new one, you know what I mean? We just, I said to my husband: "That's enough working. You worked plenty." And he did. So I said, "That's finished."

**Einstein:** Well, we've talked a lot about the tragic parts of your life. What gives you joy?

**Sloman:** What did the German—

**Einstein:** What gives you **naches**?

**Sloman:** The children, my husband, olev hasholem.. You know, my husband, **Sonlieb**[], died, really. He had a stroke.

**Einstein:** Your husband?

**Sloman:** Yeah. He was 73-years old, and he passed away.

**Einstein:** And how did he deal with...Did he talk about his experiences with you guys?

**Sloman:** Very little. He was very scared to talk about it because he had three sisters and a little brother and they all were gone in one day. That was very hard for him, very hard.

**Einstein:** Well, how did he handle that? I mean, how did he deal with it as the years went on?

**Sloman:** Cried constantly. He cried constantly. After he had the stroke, he cried constantly about his family.

**Einstein:** After the stroke?

**Sloman:** Yeah...

**Einstein:** So like—

**Sloman:** —because he was a very quiet person, and that stroke made him remember everything, and he... Very bad. He really was very bad. Ask Saul, he'll tell you. He saw that, too.

**Einstein:** So, I mean, Saul is very involved in Holocaust-related things, and he's very interested. Do you, are you happy about that?

**Sloman:** Oh, of course. I thank **lilmod[?] hashuv**. Never forget it.

**Einstein:** Mm hmm.

**Sloman:** I don't want you, none of you, to forget it.

**Einstein:** Well that's why we're doing this—

**Sloman:** Yes, exactly.

**Einstein:** —So we can remember you and your family members and your town. I mean, they destroyed a whole community.

**Sloman:** Exactly.

**Einstein:** We're hoping to help people remember those people.

**Sloman:** Oh, never forget it, yeah.

**Einstein:** Is there anything that we haven't talked about?

**Sloman:** What is that?

**Einstein:** I mean, is there anything else that you would like to talk about? You know, anything that you would like your...I'm sure your grandchildren will see this. Is there anything that you would like to tell them?

**Sloman:** My grandchildren shall remember, I would like...When they ask, I always tell them, "I don't want to start on it," you know. They have to ask, always, I tell them. And if they understand in Canada, they're in school, they're also learning. You know, I have four little girls. One is seven...now she's almost eighteen, seventeen and a half. And one is fifteen, and a twin. Two girls. And they all learn about it.

**Einstein:** In Canada?

**Sloman:** Yeah. And they ask about it, too. And I tell them, too. Whenever they ask, I tell them everything.

**Einstein:** Have you ever worried about...I mean, how... Answer the phone and I'll. . .

OK, we were just talking a little bit about some, if there's anything else that you would want to talk about. And I guess my other question is this: Whether you think that we've learned anything. Has the world learned anything from—

**Sloman:** Oh yeah.

**Einstein:** What have we learned?

**Sloman:** We learned that we have to be aware of what's going on. Very important, **me'od hashuv** [very important]. I was very, very angry at what's his name, Steve Spielberg. Very. Because every time I open the paper, he voted for him.

**Einstein:** He wrote what?

**Sloman:** Lo rotzah l'hagid I'mi [I don't want to say who]

**Einstein:** OK.

**Sloman:** He voted for him, the one we have now.

**Einstein:** Oh.

**Sloman:** I want v'hu Lo tov [and he's not good (Obama)]. Definitely. Lo raq bishvil Yisrael aval gam bishvil [unintelligible — not only for Israel but also for... ?] After all, he wrote me such a beautiful letter, Steve Spielberg. I have it in my safety deposit box. And he was so [tape cuts out] about everything. All of the sudden, even though I cook for him and I [unintelligible], who he voted for. . .

**Einstein:** So you're disappointed.

**Sloman:** Very disappointed. But as [unintelligible Hebrew] shah shtil lo medabrim moveh.

**Einstein:** Yeah, I know. Do you have, I mean, is anger part of your life as far as—

**Sloman:** I beg your pardon?

**Einstein:** Is anger part of your life as far as the war, your memories of the war? Are you angry?

**Sloman:** The war was the worst thing in my life, what happened to me. I lost my whole family.

**Einstein:** I was wondering whether it's more upsetting what happened to you or what happened to your family members?

**Sloman:** Altogether.

**Einstein:** I mean, how do you—

**Sloman:** Altogether. Losing my son is also a terrible tragedy. A terrible tragedy.

**Einstein:** Mm hmm.

**Sloman:** I could hardly get over that, you know that.

**Einstein:** Yeah.

**Sloman:** Just that I'm still trying not to lose my mind, but otherwise I would have been losing my mind. After all, he was only 41, 42.

**Einstein:** Right. Doesn't make much sense.

**Sloman:** He was so nice and so sweet. **Hasuv l'hiyot.**

**Einstein:** Right. Is there...

**Sloman:** I think I could have done it better in Hebrew than in Yiddish.

**Einstein:** You can speak in Hebrew or Yiddish. Well Yiddish I'm not so good at, but Hebrew I can...if you feel more comfortable saying something in Hebrew, that's fine.

**Sloman:** Life is very, very stressful, in life. Losing a child is terrible. I can remember my mother losing her eight-year old one. Not that I didn't...It was so stressful because we didn't know if the life, if we're living or we're dying. **Veh gam [unintelligible], nachon?**

**Einstein:** Mm-hmm.

**Sloman:** What can I tell you? What...look how you can live through everything and still not much, but it still works. It still works because many things are forgotten. But it still works a little bit. Gott zu danken for them.

**Einstein:** Mm-hmm.

**Sloman:** What can I tell you.

**Einstein:** Well, has it gotten easier with the years, or do you still feel kind of traumatized?

**Sloman:** Depends. It depends. It comes and goes, I think.

**Einstein:** Mm hmm.

**Sloman:** I think it comes and goes. Very much so.



**Einstein:** Well, is there, have I missed anything? Is there anything...

**Sloman:** Yeah, I'll call you.

**Einstein:** OK.

**Sloman:** Ha ha!

**Einstein:** Don't worry about it, don't be. . .

**Sloman:** I'll tell you — if you would ask me, then it comes to me. You see what I mean.

Many of the things I can't remember anymore.

**Einstein:** Well I'll come over anytime when you think of something else. You just give me a ring, I'll be right up.

**Sloman:** I know.

**Einstein:** I've got this little [unclear] here that wants to fit in, right?

**Sloman:** Oh yeah, she...Some animal, huh?

**Einstein:** Yeah, she's sweet. Well Rella, thank you so much for meeting with me again, and for finishing some more of the decades.

**Sloman:** Do you think you've got more things from...

**Einstein:** Well, yeah. Well, the other tape had stopped, really, at 1945, and that's a long time ago!

**Sloman:** Quite awhile.

**Einstein:** 45, 55, 65 years ago, yeah. 65 years ago.

**Sloman:** Julian is 58.

**Einstein:** Right. Your baby.

**Sloman:** No, that's my oldest one.

**Einstein:** I know, but—

**Sloman:** That's my oldest one. My baby is Saul.

**Einstein:** Mm hmm.

**Sloman:** Saul is my baby. And the middle one is gone. **Hashuv**. [important]

**Einstein:** Yeah.

**Sloman:** **Meod** [very]. What can you do? There is nobody to ask.

**Einstein:** Let me ask you about, I mean, when you're, you were one of the very few people who came out of the Holocaust with parents, I mean with a mother.

**Sloman:** With a mother.

**Einstein:** Yeah. Was she, I mean she must have been one of the older survivors also, and some people have talked about this, Betty Goodfriend talked about this, coming out of being in the DP camps and not really having anybody to ask about Jewish observance and how you make challah<sup>34</sup> and how you do this and how you do that.

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<sup>34</sup> Challah is special Jewish braided bread eaten on Sabbath and Jewish holidays.

**Sloman:** My mother knew everything.

**Einstein:** Did she teach other, I mean other survivors also?

**Sloman:** Oh, anybody who wanted, sure. My mother was very aware of everything, very smart, very intelligent. And very educated in Russian and in Yiddish, which is very important. Now Lithuanian she forgot, Gott zu danken. She didn't remember anything. But many things she taught everybody and anybody who asked, you know. Mother was very aware of everything.

**Einstein:** Right, because so many of you were just teenagers, that the end of the war really—

**Sloman:** Yeah, my mother was 40, I think 42 or 43 when she survived.

**Einstein:** Mm-hmm.

**Sloman:** Do you know that? She had a son of hers, he was in his 20s, of course. And then she had me.

**Einstein:** So she taught, did she teach you about... I mean I know you didn't remember a lot of the time before the war, but did she try to fill in those holes after the war?

**Sloman:** Yeah, because she had brothers and sisters and everybody was gone. The only ones who were left were me, her, and my brother, **olev hasholem**.

**Einstein:** Mm-hmm.

**Sloman:** Good-looking man, very good-looking man. He married — as a matter of fact, he left two sons.

**Einstein:** So is there anything else that you'd like to say? Is there something that you'd like to put on the tape to your sons and your grandchildren? Because I'm sure they'll see this. Is there anything you'd like to say?

**Sloman:** What can I tell them? Do they listen to you? I'm sorry, they don't.

**Einstein:** Well, that's children!

OK, well Rella, thank you so much for agreeing to do this.

**Sloman:** I enjoyed having you.

**Einstein:** OK, thank you.

Cuba Family Archives

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