Bertha Schwarz (2006)
Interview 3

Interviewers: Abby Berkson, Laura Mabry, Sarah Mills

[Beginning of Interview 3.1]

Sarah Mills: Hi. My name is Sarah Mills. I'm doing an interview for the Goucher class oral histories and Holocaust survivors. Can you state your name please?

BS: My name is Bertha Schwarz.

SM: Our last interview that we had ended with you telling us that you were at Institute Asher at the end of the war. Tell me about the first day that you learned the war was over.

BS: It was May 10th, I think, 1945, and all of a sudden in the whole area, the churches were starting to ring and we didn't understand why did the churches ring so loud. And they rang and it was not a time that usually they ring at the special hour, quarter hour, half. That was not the case. They were ringing with 24 hours, and then we started to ask why doesn't this stop, and this is when we were told that the war was over, in Switzerland.

SM: Who told you? Who was the person that informed you?

BS: Dr. Asher, the director of Institute Asher. He was the one who told us children that he had a very important announcement and that the war was over. Of course, then right away you started to think what will happen with us.

SM: Right. My next question is actually, what questions did you find yourself asking when you found out the war was over and--

BS: Well, there were a lot of very important questions. First of all, what--how soon will I be together with my mother and of course, the first thing came up is what happened to my father and to the rest of the family, all of us, and how will we find them? And where are we going to live, and there were a lot, a lot of very important questions that we started to think about. We were old enough to understand that we had to move on and that we definitely wanted to be with our family together.

SM: So you were in Switzerland at Institute Asher. How did the Swiss government and the people in charge there react to the war being over and how did they deal with the refugees like you guys?
**BS:** Well, my mother came and not long after that, and we really, as children, we didn't know what to expect, and Dr. Asher couldn't tell us either because he was not--he didn't know what the rules would be in Switzerland. When my mother came, she told us that the Swiss government gave us six months to stay as refugees and then we had to get out. We had to leave. And so it was a very big decision for us to--what should we do? Should we go back to Belgium and maybe the rest of the family will have come back there, and whoever was left. We didn't know really what happened to any of the family. And the other question was or should we go to Israel, which was then Palestine. And I talked to my mother about that, and she had a brother and a sister living in Palestine. They left Germany in 1936. And so she knew that she had a brother and sister there who were waiting for us. And so I told my mother that I think that Jews are not welcome in Europe and that we should leave and not go back to Belgium, but go to Palestine. And so we had to apply for a certificate, legal certificate, to get to Palestine and the problem was that the British had quotas about how many Jews were allowed to come to Palestine and they didn't let too many come in. So that it was a big problem, how are we going to get a certificate? I think that we were lucky to be in Switzerland because there the war didn't affect them so badly as far as documents and so on. So my mother applied to a certificate--we were, my father was born in Poland, so she went to the Polish consulate in Bern and she applied for a certificate. First of all, yeah, she applied through the Polish consulate and the Polish consulate sent her the certificate for her and for her children. And this is how we arrived legally to Palestine. We were allowed to enter Palestine.

**SM:** How long after you found out the war was over did you leave?

**BS:** Well, in September. It was until September that we were in Switzerland. After we decided to go to Palestine, they sent us, the children that decided to come to Palestine, were sent to a place which is called Hafsharah, and Hafsharah was a place where you learned how to farm and you learned a little bit more Hebrew, and it was a preparation to come to Palestine. So my middle sister and I were sent there and we were there for about a month, a month and a half. That was the time when we left Institute Asher and we never went back there. So we separated from all the children that were there and we left and we really didn't know what will happen. I also didn't know when I'm going to see, join with my mother, so all these decisions, we were dependent on other people to make them for you.

**SM:** Did you stay with your mother's family while you left and she wasn't with you?

**BS:** No. In Switzerland?

**SM:** No. In--
BS: Where?

SM: In Palestine.

BS: Ah! Well, I first have to tell you how we got there. So we arrived--they took us by train to a town called Toulon. Toulon was a port in France. It was about 45 minutes from Marseille. Actually, it was a military, a navy port, from-- The French Navy had, they had quarters there in Toulon, and so we arrived there and this is when my younger sister and I arrived to, and my mother, arrived to that camp. And we had to wait until the ship arrived. The name of the ship was *Monteroar*, and it was a British ship and the ship--I think maybe 500 passengers could go on it. I think the ship was actually, was hired by the--it was the Jewish Federation in Israel, in Palestine, and they were trying to bring a lot of people that came up from the concentration camps. They didn't have where to go, so this was all organized also by the joint and by other Jewish organizations to bring them to Palestine. And so we were one of the first ships to arrive in Palestine. What happened--once we got on the ship, the Jewish Brigade were there which meant the Jewish soldiers had--were actually in the British Army. It was a special division. They were called the Jewish Brigade. And they were taking our certificates which were legal, right, and they took it from us and they went down from the ship and bought some more people on the ship, so instead of being 500 on the ship, we were approximately 1,000, and many of the people that came up were children from the concentration camps. And so these children were very badly nourished. They hardly had any hair, looked terrible, and were wild, terrible, and they started to steal from us everything, whatever they could. And they took over our bunks. They took over our clothes. They took over the food. It was unbelievable.

When the ship left Toulon, the captain of the ship said, I don't understand. We're supposed to be only 500 and how come there are so many people sleeping on the deck of the ship? So he didn't return and he just--it was about five or six days that we were on that ship until we arrived to Palestine. We arrived on Rosh Hashanah, on the high holidays, and there were quite a few Jewish Orthodox people on that ship and they didn't want to get off. And so the captain said, if you don't get off, I'm going to take you to Egypt, and so they came to an agreement that after sunset they will get off the ship. So now it was a problem, what do you do with the illegal passengers on the ship? So the passengers--it was very well organized by the Jews in Palestine. What they did is they were telling like that, whoever is white meant that you were legally, you had a certificate, and those that did not have a certificate, they set the black ones aside. And what it meant is if you go on the side, there were trucks waiting and they took them to different kibbutzim. So the British never caught on to what was going on with all the illegal passengers that came from the ship. So that was--our ship was one of the lucky ones that the passengers still stayed in Israel because later on many of the passengers that arrived in Palestine were sent to Cyprus. They didn't let the Jews come into Palestine, the British, so they had to build camps there in Cyprus. That's not my story, but that's what really happened.
When we got the legal ones, they took us by train and they brought us to a camp called Atlit. I have a book about that, Atlit, and what Atlit was, this was a camp which was to quarantine all the legal people that came to make sure that they're in good health, that they don't have lice, that they have clothes. And so what they did is they took a lot of the clothes that we all had, whatever we brought with us, and they disinfected them in a big, huge machine, and that machine shrunk all the clothes so nobody could wear anything. So you walked around in that place and they didn't have really--they had showers that were communal, and they still had--Atlit is a museum now and I saw it only two years ago. I went to visit there with our children and grandchildren, and so what it is is the camp had barracks and you didn't have any closet or anything. Whatever you had, belonged, you hung on the ceiling and they had these beams, and so everybody has a little package of clothes there. You slept on straw mattresses and I think there were about 25 in a room, in one barrack like that. And the men were separated from the women and they could only see each other at the particular time. It was double barbed wire and the British were the ones who were in charge of that camp, and you had to wait until somehow arrangements were made for you, when you leave, where you're going to go. So my aunt, my mother's sister, was the one who gave her name and we were lucky. A friend of hers, he was one of the policemen in the British Army. He actually was from a kibbutz and he--at the time the Jews did not have any army or any police. Everything was British. So the British used some of the Jews for policemen, and so he was a policeman, and his name was Hymie, a very nice man, and he came and he brought us some candy and whatever my aunt was sending with him. He could get in and so we were very lucky that we got out.

But my aunt had a very small, one bedroom apartment, no kitchen facilities. She lived in an apartment where she rented a bedroom and she had a little heating stove, electric one, and that was it. So she took us all in, in that one apartment, and so it was very clear that we couldn't stay there. So what should we do now? So my mother was trying to arrange, to send us to different places, children's facilities. So I was already a little bigger so I was sent to an agricultural school in, not far from Haifa, and my two sisters, my two younger sisters, they were sent to a children's home. I was sent close to Haifa. They were sent close to Tel Aviv. Now, so again we were separated. We were not together, and my mother stayed with my aunt. Her aunt had a friend who had more room, a bigger apartment, so she moved in there. And her problem, my mother's problem, was where is she going to get a job? She needed to start to work. And so she found a job working in a ceramic factory and that was very, very hard work. So of course, she didn't have us. We were separated. She was trying to live with a friend and trying to work, and she had to get up. Work started there at 5:00 in the morning until 4:00 in the afternoon and that was it. So we saw her one--yes.

So again, my job was to--when the high holidays came, Passover or the high holidays, my job was to pick up my sisters from Tel Aviv, so I had to first of all, take a bus. The buses in Israel at
that time were very run down and you had to stand in line to get on a bus three to four hours. So I
had to change three times, a bus, 'til I got to my sisters, take them, and go all the way back again
in order to spend some time together. Now, I was in--and then I had to do it again. That means
twice. That was because my mother had to go to work, so I had the free time to do it. So first I
had to come by bus from where I was in that agricultural school and then go to Haifa, which was
about a one-hour trip. Then I had to stand in line and wait again for three hours, and let me tell
you, it was hot. There was no air conditioning. It was unbearable, really unbearable, and you had
to--the bus, the line, started already. It was like underground, so there was no air, and it was
really terrible. So that was--this is how I saw my sisters.

And then when I arrived to the agricultural school, half of the children were the children that
came with me on that ship all from the concentration camps. So here were these children that
were speaking--many of them were speaking Polish because they were from Poland, a lot of
those children, whoever survived. They had terrible nightmares. They didn't know what was day
or night, and of course to start teaching them was a very hard job. So for me, it was my first
experience with living with really children from the Holocaust and that was coming from
Switzerland where it was a much more normal life was very difficult. We could not
communicate with them. They were like a group that stuck together and they ruled the place.
Whatever they were told, they just didn't listen. It was--they didn't understand what it means at
all to sit quiet, to write, to-- I mean, they didn't have any schooling. They really had to start from
A, and some of the children were already quite big and could hardly read and write. So you had
to have special classes for them. Of course, the first thing you had to teach them Hebrew, and I
knew some Hebrew because at Institute Asher we were learning some Hebrew. So we were
Zionists and they didn't know anything what it means to be Zionists. They didn't understand why
were they there at all. So there was a lot that had to, preparatory work to work with those
children in order to really turn them back into human beings. This is the way I saw it, you know.
So of course you couldn't talk on any level, intelligent level, on things that were--what does it
mean the Torah? What does it mean? It didn't mean anything to them. They never learned it. So
we--I had to pick children that were to be my friends who were already there longer and never
went. Quite a group of children that were also were the children from Terezin and these were
children that came from Poland and Russia, and where--they came to Israel in 1942 and they all
lost their parents. So they were, most of them, not all of them, a big part of them lost their
parents, so just to--this was--I'm just giving you a very small idea of what it was for the Jews in
Palestine to absorb all those people that came from the concentration camps, and you know, that
was what was so very, very difficult.

Then you had rations. Then you had the British. The other story which is part of it, too, just to
give you an idea of what it was like to live there, was that the Jews were not allowed to have
arms. So there was a Haganah which was smuggling arms and hiding them in kibbutzim in
bunkers. That's right. So the British were coming to kibbutzim and were looking for these arms

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and were arresting those people in the kibbutzim that were smuggling arms. So how do you start an army? How do you start? Then you had the Arabs which were sabotaging, and one of the jobs that was for me in this agricultural school, we had a water tower. Every kibbutz that was founded, the first thing that you went, the first thing that you did, was to build a water tower so that you should have water. So this faranah also had a water tower. It was quite high and as children, after school in that agriculture school, at night we had to go up, climb up to the tower and watch to see if arms were not smuggling in to that, to faranah because they were murdering them. They were murdering, literally killing the Jews there. So in the morning I went to school. In the afternoon, we had jobs. If it was a vegetable garden, chickens, cows, this is what we learned. It was actually a preparation to take a group of children. We're divided. Every group had a number. I was number 17. And the idea was that these group of children--we were about 50 or so--would all start a new kibbutz or join a new kibbutz so that--and so we were preparing to do farming. That's what the kibbutzim did. So we did that. We had turns in the kitchen. We--they even had an infirmary. I was working there for a while after school. What was my job? To clean the floor, to clean the bathroom, to bring food from the dining room to the sick children who were there. I didn't give any medication or anything like that, but to help the nurse, whatever she needed. And so that was an eight-hour job besides going to school. And then they trained us. When the closer it came to--in Israel, you had the feeling that something is going to happen because the situation couldn't continue like that. The British--the Jews were sabotaging the British and murdering the officers, and the Arabs were murdering Jews, and it was quite a chaos.

So the British finally were thrown out. They gave up on being there, and so that, tied together with that, this was when Israel was declared by the United Nations that it is a state, in 1948. So this is what happened while I was there starting, how did it at all happen that Ben-Gurion decided, announced that we are going to be a state after the British left. And so how do you start a state without arms? So while the struggle was going on with the British, you had--the Palmach was one group. The Lechim was one group. There were a few groups of Jews that were organizing and trying to fight against the British, but also preparing for the future and to have an army. And of course the minutes, the minutes, the declaration of independence happened. Then you had these seven countries that started to declare war against Israel. So how do you deal with those poor people that came from the camps and you had to teach them how to use arms and go and fight? And this is the story of many of those young people that came to Israel after the Holocaust and had to go to the army, to the make-believe army which was really like a make believe, and you have some very, very touching stories, and I have books here about all of this. So about how, what happened. You had the story about Jerusalem, what happened in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was sieged and how did you bring water and food to the population in Jerusalem? And they had, Bilma Road it is called that they built in order to supply within the--many of the soldiers were killed on that road bringing food and water to the Israeli, to the Jews in Israel, in Palestine, Israel. So that was my--as far as what happened once I arrived to Israel.
SM: When do you first remember, and what was the day like, and describe to me how it was when you found out that Israel was going to become a country of its own, a sovereign country.

BS: Well, first of all, I have to say that for me to be in Israel and to finally come to Israel was a very, very wonderful feeling because I felt that that's home.

SM: We can take a break.

BS: That's okay. That's okay.

SM: That was my next question, where you considered home.

BS: Yes. It was really home. Although you struggled, but you knew that this is a place where you should be. So that was important. And yes, when it was--one of the things that we also learned, and they started to train us children how to defend ourselves against the Arabs. So they taught us something with sticks which is called kabah that actually the Arabs used to fight. So we learned it from them and then they took all of us children and trained us how to use these things. Don't forget that many of the teachers that we had had to leave and go to the army, to the Israeli Army, so you had these young men and some of them never came back. They were killed, some of these teachers. So yes, it was a very exciting time, but we really didn't have time to really enjoy it because right away it was--we had to defend. It was a matter of life and death and how many countries all around you, and they were all much better armed than we were.

So now you also had the problem with the Arabs and where--some of them ran away. Some of them stayed. What do you do with all those that ran away and with the Arabs? So you had to set up some camps for that and supply them with food because, you see, for instance in Jerusalem, if they didn't leave, they would kill you, so you had to chase them away. There was no other way except to tell them you have to leave. In some cases, some sections in Jerusalem a little bit further out, not too far from Jerusalem, in the outskirts, they did not leave and they still live there until today. Those that did not leave stayed until today.

There was another story which was also very important and that is that the Arabs themselves told them you should leave because we're going to win and then you'll come back. Why should you get killed? So many of them were not that the Israelis told them to leave. They were organized themselves against the Jews. So those that were organized against the Jews, you had to make sure that they shouldn't stay. So you had the internal war and you had also a war that went on around you which was the Syrians, the Egyptians, the Jordanians, the Iraqis, the Lebanese, all of them with the border of Israel. So yes, there was, there was dancing on the streets for two days, absolutely everywhere. The hora--you were dancing hora all over the place.
SM: How long did you stay in Israel? How long were you there for? What age were you when you finally left?

BS: I stayed in Israel--of course, my mother got remarried and she found out that my father died and she really didn't tell us much about it. She couldn't say it to us really, and so it was a long time. When she got married, of course, I objected to it quite a while because she got married I think in 1946 or '47, very early, and I said, how can you do a thing like that when you don't know if he's still alive or not? You know, so, I objected to it and it was hard for me to accept it, very hard. And so once she got married--she wanted to get married in order to have her children back, and so it took a little while and then I was the one that came home first. And then my younger sister came home, and my middle sister moved from this children's home because it was up to, I think, age 12 that they kept the children, and then that placed closed up, that children's home, and she went to another home, a much better one, that was supported by the women Hadassah in-- many, many of the children's homes were funded by Hadassah, and some other Vista organization and all--a lot of women organizations were trying to support these institutions because there were so many children that didn't have any parents. They had to somehow survive and what do you do? So these organizations--Jews from the United States helped a lot until today. These organizations are still helping until today.

So she was there and my sister, my middle sister Malka, and she met her husband there and she married him there. And she went to--later on, she finished school there and went to Jerusalem and she studied home economics, and she was a teacher of home economics in the old school. So, yes, and her husband who was from Yugoslavia lost his parents. He came to Israel a little later than we did--I think in '46 or '47 with his grandmother and some aunts, and he and sister went in the same place where my sister was, and when we graduated, he went to the Technion and is an engineer today, yes.

So I came back to my mother for about a year and then I went to the army, to the Israeli Army, and there I was sent first to a training camp for one month where we learned to use guns which we never used, and then I was sent to--it was for artillery, so I went to the artillery. There were about 400 boys and seven girls, and we were--our job was to move from the north to the south to the east to the west to defend the borders. So of course, the war in Israel didn't last very long, and you had more and more and more people come to Israel. And so you see how they were setting up camps and then they were starting to build very low-grade homes as fast as they could, and jobs, to find jobs for them in factories and then-- It was a really big struggle and also to teach them Hebrew. You needed to have a country where everybody spoke the same language. You didn't--that was a very, very important part. If you want to have a country, you need to have a living language and you didn't have that except those people that were already there, made aliyah in the 1800s or 1900s that lived there. So what do you do with all those people? So you had ulpan, this is how it started. The ulpan started to teach all the immigrants that came to Israel. The
first thing they did, they organized that she should have in each plith ulpan to learn Hebrew. Without the ulpan they couldn't get a job, so for six months--they were supported by the government to learn the language first before they got a job, and they had housing for them, too, for some of them. That was later. In the beginning there were so many, so they didn't have enough room, so they put them in tents. You had areas with a huge, huge area where they had tents and slowly these tents disappeared and you had--the first buildings in Israel were quite run down. It was like projects that you have here. This is--and they still are there. There's a big difference between what was building now and what was then.

SM: I know to this day that Israel had mandatory military service.

BS: Yes.

SM: Was yours mandatory or did you--

BS: Yes, yes. All the girls had to be two years.

SM: Two years.

BS: I was two years.

SM: Boys for three years, correct?

BS: Right. So I went with the artillery. I ended up going in the Negev and I was in Eilat when there was no Eilat. That's right. I lived in the--way up in the hills, beautiful view, in a tent, and the men were taking turns at the border between Eilat and Jordan, Israel and Jordan, and I was working for the commander. They had all kinds of things--phone answering and letter writing and whatever had to be done. So I was with that for about half a year, and then I had a friend that was working in the headquarters. The Israeli Army had the headquarters, and she arranged for me to get out. I was very unhappy. Of course, I had to go to--if I wanted to visit once in a while, it took five hours to get to Haifa where my mother lived, and that was for one night and then go back. So I didn't have--I just slept and I went back, and I ate a good meal, took some food with me and then went back. And I had vacation once a month and that's what it was. So I, after a while, one year I was with the artillery and then I transferred to the headquarters, and there I worked for--they had the first computer, IBM, and this how I started to use computers, in the army. Yes. So I was there and I studied, I learned it, and they wanted me to continue, but I--my mother wanted very much that I should come back to be a little bit more at home, and so I did, but I wasn't very happy doing it. That was in Jaffa, and that was close to Tel Aviv, so I really enjoyed that much more than where she lived. She bought a little--it was a split house, two
apartments in one area next to the ocean, but there was nothing--no movies, no nothing. It was next to the beach and that's it. So I had to take a bus to get where I wanted to go get out of there.

SM: How old were you when you left the army?

BS: Twenty. Eighteen until 20, right.

SM: So you were about our age then.

BS: Right.

SM: Going back just a bit, speaking of your objections to your mother getting married, remarried, without knowing if your father had survived or not, how did you go about finding relatives or friends and trying to find out what happened to them? What did you do to figure those things out?

BS: To figure out what happened to my father?

SM: And other relatives.

BS: I did not.

SM: You never did.

BS: No, I never did. I never did. I never did because it was very difficult to find out. It was not as organized as it is today, so where would you go? And there were so many people looking. So many people were looking. You had until today in Israel, Friday afternoon there is a program looking for relatives. It's 60 years later. That's what happened now, so at that time there was maybe the Red Cross, but what did I know how to get to the Red Cross and where was the Red Cross and how? I mean, it was almost--there were so many different things that had to be dealt with and now, with people that arrived now, that it was very difficult to get in touch in Belgium or anything like that. Only now, now did I do all that research, 60 years later. I never did. I couldn't do it. It was impossible to find it, just waited for lists to come. This is what you looked, for lists, and you went to an agency, the Sochnut, which was a Jewish agency in Haifa and Tel Aviv, and you went there and they had printed lists. Every day they had lists and lists and this is what you went. It started already in Switzerland, and so when we--for half a year that we were there and we looked at that list and his name never came up, so we realized it might not happen, but I still had a lot of hope. And I know that my sisters and I, sometimes we were looking on the street. Maybe we'll meet him. That bad.
SM: So after you got out of the army, did you have a plan for your life? Did you know what you wanted to do at all? Did you have any goals?

BS: You didn't have really that many choices. I met my husband in the army, and he was already out of the army. He was four years older than I, and he was working for hotels and he had, in the front desk, and he met a lot of people and had very good contacts. And so he went to--he got in touch for me to work for the--I went to work for a company that was a dairy company. It's the biggest dairy company in Israel, and they were trying to use the IBM. So they were looking for people like me, and they just started to have these machines. In those days, you had key punch machines they called it. So I was very good at it and so they said, okay, you organize this whole department. So I said, fine. Let me see. So with some help, organized, I had about 25 girls that were--I was training to learn how to do the key punch in those days. So that was it. That's how I really got into computers and later on, of course, it got very much advanced. It's not the same way it used to be. So I had to learn it all over again.

SM: So how long did you stay in Pakistan—uh I mean Israel, after that, but how long did you stay entirely? When did you--

BS: In Palestine. You mean after Palestine?

SM: After it became Israel, how long did you stay?

BS: Well, I got married in 1955. I was 22 then, and then in 1957 I came to the United States after I got married.

SM: That soon. What was your husband's name?

BS: Michael.

SM: Michael.

BS: Mmm, hmm.

SM: And where was he from?

BS: He was born in Germany, but he came with his parents in 1936 or '38 from Germany, from Berlin to Palestine, and he was invited. He was--his father was a director of the Jewish Museum in Berlin and when Hitler came to power, of course the Jews were not allowed to work anymore in these institutions, so the mayor of Tel Aviv, Dizengoff, came to ask him if he would be
willing to open a museum in his, in Tel Aviv, Dizengoff. So he came to Palestine, Tel Aviv, and he really was a founder of the Tel Aviv Museum.

**SM:** So why, what was the reason that you guys chose, or what was the reason that made you decide to move to America?

**BS:** Well, my husband wanted to look for a job in the hotel business, but he went--actually, he left for a while after we met and he went to England and Switzerland, and he came back, and this is when we got married, and he got a very good job in Tiberius, and he was assistant manager running there. And then the way the hotels were at that time, there were not enough tourists coming, so in the wintertime it was Tiberius which was below sea level so it was warm there. But in the summer, they closed this hotel. So the hotel was only open half a year. So then we moved to Haifa on the coast, and that was where you had the hotels that are opened in the summer but were closed in the winter. And then finally there was a job available in Jerusalem where the hotel was open year round in the city. It didn't have that many hotels then you have now, and the staff decided that they didn't want an outside manager, but they wanted somebody from the rank. So they went on strike so he didn't get the job. And so between that and in 1956 there was a war. There were a few wars. So I came in '57, arrived '56. No tourists came at all. So there were--all the hotels were no tourists, so there was really no opportunity for, to advance or to do anything. It was very--so that was a decision why we came here.

**SM:** A matter of necessity.

**BS:** Yes. It was really a matter of necessity.

**SM:** How did you get here?

**BS:** By boat.

**SM:** How was your travel here? Can you describe it?

**BS:** Well, we decided, we decided to move to--we decided to take a trip to Europe first before we came here, so we took a trip and we went to very nice--to Italy, to France and to England, and then from England we took the French ship called *Libertie*, and that brought us to New York. And there was a family. He has family here, a cousin, and they were actually the ones. You had to have an--in order to arrive to the States, you had to have somebody that would sponsor you, so a cousin of his sponsored us and this is how we came here.

**SM:** So you came to New York first.
BS: First, I came to New York and I looked up in the *New York Times*, and two weeks later I had a job working for computers.

SM: Pretty good timing.

BS: Yes. It was—it was that easy then to find a job in New York, but we didn't stay long in New York.

SM: First, to go back a little bit, how did you and your husband meet? Like, describe how you met and how you started courting. That kind of thing.

BS: [laughs] Well, really, that's important? Alright. [laughs] Well, um this friend who arranged for me to come to be with her, she's my best friend 'til today. And she lives in Israel and she had a date, but it was two men at the same time.

SM: [laughs]

BS: That's right. So she said to me, you know what? I think I'm going to pick this one and you're going to pick--

I think, this one would fit better to you because he speaks German and I speak German because my mother spoke German with me. And her husband, she married really that guy and I married that guy.

SM: Oh, my goodness.

BS: Yes, this is how it happened. And so he--she met him and so she said to me, you know what? If it doesn't work out, we can switch and you go to him and I go to him.

SM: [laughs]

BS: I said, okay. Why don’t we do that.

SM: [laughs]

BS: So this is what it was.

SM: How did you choose to--did you choose to come to America because your husband had cousins here to sponsor you, or were there job opportunities elsewhere?
BS: Well, actually he was hoping to make it big in the hotel business here, and he got a job in the Tufts Hotel in New York. That's right. But the job was coming from a manager of a hotel. He was checking rooms to see if all the--if they checked out. So he was watching "Amos and Andy" and he said, I don't think that that's something for the future for me, and they told him he doesn't have American experience. So he decided that that wasn't a good thing for him to stay, and he had an opportunity because about seven or eight men that worked with him in different hotels--they all knew each other. They all left because there just was no jobs. So they all came to the United States. Some of them had an uncle who was trying to bring in a new product from Germany, of all places, which was actually developed in France and that had something to do with rubber, rubber that was--didn't have to go through heat. It's a little bit of a different process, but we had no idea about how that will work.

But anyway, this friend said, you know what? We need somebody in the territory of New England. So one day we came to Boston, and this friend who was already there wanted to have a partner, and it was not a real partner. It was just somebody to help him out, and he said, okay, let me see what that is. I don't want, like what I'm doing. So they took me to a luncheon in Charles River in Boston, a very nice area in a nice restaurant. He said, guess what? You're going to live here.

I said, oh, I like it. I like it. So they really kind of drew me in to come to Boston, and that's why I had to leave New York. I was very sad because I lived--I worked on Madison Avenue next to Saks and all of that, Rockefeller Center, you know, had a nice job. People were very nice and my English wasn't so good so they were teaching me English and they really got a big kick out of it. Actually, the manager of the place wanted me to go for training for IBM to get, to take a higher position, but then I had to leave because we came to Boston. And so he had to start something that he didn't know and he didn't know how to drive a car, and he had--actually, it was a salesman job what he got for this new company that didn't have--nobody knew yet. That was really something brand new, pioneer. So he had first to go--he went to Worcester to pass a test after five. He drove for five days and then went for a test, so you imagine until he came back from Worcester. It was about an hour away. You learned a lot of daring things like that when you lived in Israel in those days. You do all kinds of things like that.

So anyway, he had--so I had a job, but he didn't. I got a job in Boston right away with Blue Cross and Blue Shield working in computers again. And he was struggling to make it, so it was, didn't--in the beginning, it didn't work so well. People didn't trust him and the material that they had here was for smaller, for cars that didn't drive so fast. So it was mostly for tires. This material was to fix tires. In those days, you don't do that anymore, but in those days you didn't go and buy a new tire, but you had a patch. So you had these different patches, and these patches were also for trucks and for bulldozers, and then you had that part, but you also had equipment that you needed to take the tires off and then to put them on again and to--all kinds of processes, how to
do it. You needed to have the tires cleaned and buffed and a lot of different things. So you had to learn all of that, so in the beginning I think people saw that he didn't know what he was talking about to all these people that did it already for years. But somehow they kind of started to see that what he had was good and that it was easier and not such hard work. So they were willing to try these new products, and so he was traveling a lot.

And so we rented a furnished one-bedroom apartment in Boston and--where mostly where students lived, so the noise was unbearable, so I said, that's it. I'm getting out of it. But it was close to the streetcar. Of course, I didn't have a car, so I didn't know how to drive, either, so I had to learn how to drive, of course. That came much later, but--so I took the streetcar like. It's not like the Metro here, but it would be like Light Rail here. So that I took to work, and then we moved to an unfurnished apartment, so then we had to go and buy furniture. So then I had to walk a little bit further to the streetcar, but it was a nice place, and so we had already two bedrooms and a living room and a kitchen on the second floor of a two-house apartment. So it was good. It was good.

[End of Interview 3.1]

[Beginning of Interview 3.2]

Sarah Mills: What happened to your younger sisters and your mom?

Bertha Schwarz: My younger sisters stayed in Israel and my mom stayed in Israel, and I was the only one that came here of the whole family. Nobody else ever came.

SM: Have they visited, though?

BS: Oh, yes. They came to visit and my mother came here six times to be with me. Yes. So she came here once for a whole year and then for three months and six months, and for all the children's graduations and weddings and whatever. So she was here.

SM: You had said during the last interview, and you repeated in this interview, that you felt that they didn't want Jews in Europe, that you felt like you weren't welcome there.
BS: Yes, right.

SM: Did you feel welcome coming to the States?

BS: Yes. There was definitely a very different feeling about the States. You felt very free. I didn't notice any anti-Semitism at all, so for me, coming from Europe, there was none. Of course, the Jews here I think think a little different, but to compare it to what it was like in Europe, there was a lot of freedom and people could say what they wanted and talk and they didn't have to whisper or to hide or do anything like that. But of course, for me to adjust to here, I really wanted to live in Israel. I didn't want to come here. If not my husband, I would never have come here. Why should I leave my family and my country really and come to the United States? But it was what had to be done. So we couldn't have children there because the job situation was so unsettled, so the future was not there at that time.

SM: How long were you married before you had children?

BS: Well, actually four years because two years in Israel and then two years here. And then once we had an apartment and once his job went a little better, we decided it was time to have children. And so we had--our son was the first one.

SM: Did you always want to have children?

BS: Oh, yes. I love children. I love children. So I was very happy that my son was born and yes. It was a big event for all of us. It was the first grandchild for my mother and a boy on top of it, so it was just that she only had girls, so for her it was really special.

SM: Tell me about your children, all of them.

BS: All of them?
SM: Everything. All of them.

BS: [laughs] Well, Danny--his name is Danny. He was a very cute little boy, was always a very warm person which he is until today. You could see it already when he was small that this is the kind of a person that he would be. And he went--he's now a psychologist in Philadelphia and he himself has two boys, now 14, one, and 10, the other. So, 10 1/2. Aaron and Zachary are their names.

And the twins--I have twin girls, Mira and Monique. Right, so they were born four years after Danny was born. So they were four years apart and it was a surprise. I didn't know I was going to have twins. It was really a very interesting experience. Actually, we moved from where we were in Brighton, which was a suburb of Boston, and we moved to another area which was called Brookline. And the reason why we moved was that when we moved, the reason we moved was that I couldn't have a washing machine in that apartment and I had to go to the laundromat every week and it was getting to be a little bit too crowded for us. The rooms were very small and so we decided to look for a bigger place. Little did we know that we were going to have twins and it was absolutely the right thing to do. And also Danny--I thought the school system in Brookline was a much better one, and so we kind of prepared. And then we went to Israel with Danny when he was three years old for the first time. That means five years. So we had American passports already, and so we went to visit the family with Danny. My mother was--yes. In the meantime, my mother's husband died two years after we left Israel and he was 59 years old, so, yes, so she was left alone again, and she lived in the Haifa area and my sisters moved to the Tel Aviv area and my younger sister to Jerusalem. She got married and moved to Jerusalem, so my mother was all by herself in Haifa. So she decided to move closer to my sister in Tel Aviv. So that was the first--of course, it was a big commotion because that was the first grandson for my mother and for my sisters, a nephew, and so they spoiled him but good, and he had a marvelous time.

And, so then when I came back, this is when I had the twins. So I went to the doctor quite a few times and he could only hear one heartbeat. So today you wouldn't have a thing like that. You have ultrasounds and you see everything, but in those days, no. So I went to the hospital and I said to the nurse and the doctor, make sure to take out the other one. This is how I felt because I was very big, but I didn't gain much weight. I gained as much for one baby. So the doctor was all confused and the ninth month--in the eighth month I took an xray and it showed only one baby. So we went back to the radiologist and he said, look here, what do you think? Is it one or two? And he said, looks to me like one. He said, you'll be surprised if there were two. Each of them weighed six pounds, so there was one breach. One was breach so this is why he couldn't see it. So I came home with two. All of a sudden, I had, four years, three children, so that was a big job.
SM: What language did your children learn as kids? I mean, did they grow up with mainly English?

BS: Yes.

SM: Did you speak German to them at all?

BS: No, no. Well, in the beginning with Danny I tried to speak a little German. With him, we thought, well, that will be another language that he could get like I did with my mother. But once he started to go to kindergarten, then he just rejected it.

SM: English only?

BS: Yes. He didn't want--he only wanted to speak English, so, yes. I learned English in the mean time a little better, and so yes. I started to read books to him in English. Everything was in English. We communicated in English.

SM: Did he learn Hebrew as a child though? Did he go to--

BS: He did, no. Really, we did not belong to a temple, really, but I mean we grew up in Israel and I grew up and I knew Hebrew, and so on the holidays--we celebrated all the holidays and I always felt that the best thing for him would be to go to Israel and to see, meet the family, and to see the different lifestyles and to understand, and really, later on all three of my children went to study in Israel. Danny, after he graduated high school, went for a year to Kibbutz Ulpan and he speaks Hebrew. Mira--Monique went after--she's a lawyer. Monique is a lawyer and she, after she graduated, she went also to a special program for graduate students in Israel, and later on she made aliyah. She made aliyah and she just came back last year.

SM: Congratulations.
BS: So she is very much, and Mira, she's the one that knows the least Hebrew, but she went there also, followed her sister for a year, but her husband wanted her to come back and get married. So she came back and got married in Cali--San Francisco.

SM: And where does Monique live?

BS: Monique lives in Teaneck, New Jersey and Danny lives in Philadelphia and Mira lives here in Baltimore. This is why I moved here from Boston.

SM: To be closer to your daughters?

BS: Because being closer to the children.

SM: I understand that. Tell me about how you celebrated holidays with your kids and your--their relationship towards religion as they grew older and as you grew older.

BS: Well, as I said, I didn't go a lot to temple. It was a very difficult thing to do. I think for Israelis to come here and to go to a temple is very strange. It's not at all like that in Israel, and you have two possibilities. If you are religious, you go to your shul, and if you're not religious, then you don't go at all and you go to the beach sometimes. [laughs] That's right. So this is how it is. It is nothing like--there is now, but in those days when I grew up, I had really to change my whole way of thinking and I wrote my mother a letter that I told her because I was really educated Orthodox and in Switzerland and in France and my father. But when I arrived to Israel, I wrote her a letter saying that I really think that the religious way of living is too restricted and I don't think I would like to live like that. I still have that letter.

SM: Did you send it?

BS: Mmm?
SM: Did you not send it to her?

BS: No, no. I sent it to her. She kept it and she gave it back to me. The letter was written in French because when I arrived to Israel, I spoke--I wrote in French, not in Hebrew. So the letter is written in French. And, so I explained to her that I think that she should understand my way of thinking and that doesn't mean that I won't follow the traditions, but I didn't want to be committed of not going anywhere on Shabbat and all of those restrictions. I didn't feel they were--that's the way I wanted to live. And I must say that the majority of the young people that came to Israel felt that to be in Israel as a Jew, you do not have to be religious. That was really the way of thinking in those days. It was, it was more important to be a Zionist and build the country. Giving to that part was much more important than to live an Orthodox life, but together with that, in Israel 'til today you have all the holidays are celebrated and you learn it in school, and definitely you know that there is a holiday much more than you know here unless you belong to a temple or a shul.

So for me, I kept all the holidays. I kept the holidays. The children knew. We moved, after a couple of years after the twins were born, we bought a house in another section of--close, in a neighborhood, very nice neighborhood, because the school system was very good, and 80 percent of the children were Jewish. So on the high holidays, the school was closed because there were no students coming to the school. So that was--

SM: I don't want us to run out of time, so there's a big question I know that you want to talk to us about, and I want to know. I want to know about the first time that you returned to Europe and returned to your hometown and all of that, and the large trip that you took and everything. Tell us all about it.

BS: Oh, really?

SM: Yes.
BS: Well, that-- Really? You want to know about that? Okay. Well, I tell you. Let me put that way. I had this feeling that after my mother passed away that I felt that I wanted my two sisters to know more about what--to know more about where we came from because their children were asking questions, and grandchildren, and my sisters really--my middle sister was kind of ignoring and she asked what for. My younger sister went through a process and she really wanted to understand more and wanted to--she remembered quite a bit, but wasn't sure, and she wanted to know more. And so I kind of made a really big effort and research about where I wanted to go. I remembered everything, and so I decided to go to--on the internet. I wrote to some people I discovered for instance-- So I went to Yad Vashem and there I was looking to see-I gave the name. You give a testimonial page it is called, and what they're looking for people that know a member of the family and they want to have it in the computer. And so I went with my sister two years ago, three years ago, to Yad Vashem to look up some information for the trip. That research that I did before I went was three years. Three years I worked on this, and the more I looked, the more I found, and this is what the more encouraged I got to go and do it. So this particular case was--we went to Yad Vashem. I look up to that testimonial page and all of a sudden I see somebody gave a name of--when you give a testimonial, you have to say who you are, and if you have an address, too. So I see there is a Mr. Steiner there who gave a testimonial that he knew my grandparents, and he had his address, too. And so I took his address and I started to do research, and then I came back here and I couldn't find it on the internet in Israel. I don't know why, but here I got--you can get the international phone numbers if you have an address, so I got his phone number. And so I called him and I said, I don't know if he's still alive or not because he must have been an old man by now. Well, he picked up the phone after my third call, and he was home and I told him who I--that I was a granddaughter of my grandparents Ciass, and he said, yes, send me information about them. And so I sent him, and he is in charge of the area where the Jews were deported from France, from that area where he lives. He himself was with, on the same transport with my grandparents to Auschwitz, but he escaped. He was very young, and he came back to that town where he lived and he decided to work on making a memorial. And so he is in charge of the memorial and the ceremonies that are taking place every year.

And so when I called him, I said, look here, I'm coming with my two sisters and I would like very much to meet with you and maybe you can tell us more about the history of our grandparents which we never knew. So sure enough, I wrote him the dates, three different dates, and he was very anxious to meet us, and we came to his house, and he said to us, I know your grandparents. I knew your grandparents. And then he described of how they were deported, and then he said, you have to go to that village where they were hiding. And he said, go in that village, and he made a hotel reservation for us, and we drove there and he said, go to the square.
Go to the square in the day, a huge plaque with my grandparents' names on it. The first transport from that village that was taken to Auschwitz was there, a memorial for all the Jews that lived there and were taken by the French gendarmes first to a camp. It was an intern camp, and then to Drancy and then to Auschwitz. That was the route that all the Jews that were deported from France were first shipped to Drancy and from Drancy to Auschwitz. So this was, and he wrote his autobiography which he gave me, but I haven't read it all yet. That was one experience. And so if I would say--it took 18 days, the trip. We arrived in Belgium. My brother-in-law was in charge of--he took upon himself to be the photographer, the video and he wrote the diary. And I made all the hotel reservations, the train reservations, the plane, and meeting with the people. Of course, I spoke French and my sisters didn't know. My brother-in-law also, so I had to translate from Hebrew to French, from French to Hebrew.

The first stop in Antwerp, we went to see where we were born. We had a cousin, a daughter of a cousin who lived there and she was very nice and she took us to the cemetery where my grandfather is buried. My father's father is buried there. From the four grandparents, we have only one tombstone and that's his because he died before the war. And then we went to the Holocaust Museum in Malines and there was a Hebrew guide there that I requested, and he was there and he explained to us all what happened to the Jews in Antwerp. And it was a very disturbing, but very well done. One of the things that was very impressive was that they took pictures, a photograph, of the family before the war and then highlighted the people that came back from that family. So let's say they were a family with six children. One came back. So the highlight is one, and this is how the whole museum. It tells you the development, how anti-Semitism was in Belgium before the war, in Antwerp, what happened to the Jews, how they had to wear the yellow star, and you see a photograph of a couple that are getting married with the yellow star on it. You see how children are deported. You see what happened to the people--the working place. I mean, it gets worse and worse and worse and worse, and you see how they arrived to Malines which was an intern camp in Antwerp, for the Jews in Belgium. So that was a very well informed museum.

From there, we went to the synagogue where my father was a cantor. We went to my school, where I went to school and all that. And we left and we went to Paris, and in Paris we wanted to go only to one place and that's Drancy. So Drancy was a very, very hard visit. We--I have a photograph here of Drancy. Here. That's Drancy. Can you see? This is Drancy and it tells you exactly when it was open, who was in charge, the French commanders, the German commanders. All of that is there. How many were exterminated from there. How many Jews were sent to, from Drancy to Auschwitz and how many came back. Unfortunately, very few.
From there, there was one more place which we wanted to know, and that was also something very important, and that was visit to the Holocaust Museum in Paris. And that Holocaust Museum was opened not long ago by the Shira and he--what they did there was something, a memorial for the Jews that were deported from France, mostly to Auschwitz. And when you walk in there, it's a marble, three marble walls. I mean, it is from high. You can hardly reach the top in the room, and it is arranged according to year when the people were deported--1940, 1941, '42, '43, '44, '45--and then names alphabetical, so we went looking for our father and grandparents and they were there. They were there. Yes.

[long pause] So then I had to give a testimonial [crying] there from--they want to have it in the computer so I wrote something about them. In Drancy, there was--they have there--they don't have a museum in Drancy. They have a very small museum, but they have the cattle car there. That's a very important thing to show the cattle car. So there was a man there that had a key, a Jewish guy, and every time when you see people walking around, he says, do you want to go and open? And they have an exhibit there, but to stand in that car, in that cattle car, believe you me that's a double experience, especially that you know who was there. So it gives you a description about how the Jews, what happened in Drancy and how they were divided and how they were shipped and what kind of--they hardly had any air to breathe. They only stood there. They didn't have where to sit and they were really shipped like animals, terrible.

So we went from there to Paris, so we stayed there for a while and they have a very interesting exhibit, permanent exhibit, about what the French Resistance, the Jewish French Resistance, did to help children because in France that was the last resort. And so they had 15,000 children that they had to take care of, and where to accommodate them, where to find places for them. These children were sent from different countries, and so it was an exhibit of where they lived, how they arranged it, very, very detailed and very well done.

Another exhibit was also very important in the contribution of the Jews in France over the years- - the history of when the Jews came, what they contributed as far as writers, as far as economic, bankers, actors. I mean, any part and it is amazing, absolutely amazing what the Jews, what the Jews did there in France over generations and how they were treated. So, and what is left of them. So that was in Paris and what we did is we were very strict on our time, so we really didn't take a lot of time out to do anything else.
And from there, we took an express train and we went to where we were hiding. So first we arrived to the--when we left Belgium on the train, we escaped when the war broke out, we arrived, as I told you, to that-- So we went back, and so first we went to see the intern camp where we were arrested and to look at that, and there they have a small plaque, and the barracks are still there, but it's overgrown, and you still see the guard that--the little hut there where the guards are. That is still there, and across the street is a disco, and nobody really--there is nothing about it.

So we left--we left there and we went to see where my grandparents were interned, and that camp now is turned into a jail and they really didn't want us to take pictures. But that Steiner who lived in that area made sure that they had a nice memorial and he even took a photograph and sent it to me before we went there, and with the memorial for the Jews that were in camp there. And that's small, but decent.

And then we went to the camp where my father was, and that camp was another terrible thing because there that was a labor camp, and the labor camp is a field now. In short, they erased it completely. There is nothing left except one thing and that is the Spanish were in that camp. The Spanish were there in the Spanish-French War, so they had some prisoners there. The Spanish today come there and they put up a whole big thing about their memory of, memorial for the prisoners, so they have a whole-- They have a ceremony there every year. That's the only thing, except one thing that they had, somehow the French Resistance put up, and I don't know why, but they have an archive, too, that I hadn't found out yet, photograph, of what the camp looked like. And there you see what the camp looked like when the Spanish were there and then what the camp looked like when the Jews were there, and you see how the Jews were in charge of dividing bread, so everybody got a slice of bread, so you see how they sliced bread. And then they had one picture which really was very difficult for me to see, for all of us, and you see how it is, the Jews praying with the tallit on.

[pause, tears] So this one's very hard, too, to see because I knew that that's my father standing there. I knew that this is him. So that was that part of it. Okay. And then we left there. There wasn't much to see. We just remembered that we came to visit him twice and there was no barbed wire. We remembered barbed wire. Nothing is there. It's just an empty field. And it's out of town, the camp was a little bit out of town, and it took us quite a while to find it.
And then we went to visit the village where we were hiding and that was also quite an experience. We looked around and I remember that it was a big church there, and the church was still there. And then we drove until it was a dirt road and the dirt road is still there, and all of sudden we arrived to that, to that chalet, and it's locked, and the dog is barking, and nobody around. And there was a farmer next to that chalet, and it looked like they enlarged it. I said, well, listen, this is much bigger than what I remembered, and all of a sudden somebody comes with a truck and he said, what are you doing here?

And I said, well, in French I said, you know, we lived here during the war. So he got all excited, and I said, you know, I would like very much to go into that chalet because we lived in that chalet.

And so he said, yes, I can let you in. And so what we did was my brother-in-law, everywhere we went, we stood in front of this or that and we talked what we remembered from it. So we have a video of everybody remember--telling their story. And so we videotaped what we remembered, and my middle sister remembered that there was a little porch on the second floor and my mother didn't let her go because it was unsafe, and she wanted very much. And that thing is gone. It broke. It fell. So it wasn't there.

I remember looking for the well where I used to take water, so we looked for the well and sure enough, the well as there, but overgrown. And the geese are gone, but we opened the door and nobody lived there for the last 60 years. The wallpaper, the same. The beds that--my mother—my parents' bedroom, the beds were still there. Nothing, nothing changed. Nobody did anything to it. Where we cooked, the fireplace was there. Nothing moved like it was waiting for us to come and see it again. This what it was. The most amazing story.

Then he said to us, and the guy, the French guy, the farmer. I said, yes, it grew. Yes, he said. We bought it. Our fathers bought it from the farmer and this is supposed to be my place, but I didn't fix it yet, he said. And his brothers enlarged it, but there was nobody there. And the vineyard was right there. I mean, all the things that you remember as a child, you go and you see it and it's there. It's not only that you have some memory from far, but it's there, that exactly. You stood there in front of that vineyard and we told the story what we remembered as children.
Then we went to the, then we went to--he said, you know the mayor, his father came from Belgium. Yes. So he said, why don't you go to city hall, to the building there, any maybe you will meet him there. So I said, okay. So we took our car and sure enough, the place at lunchtime--usually it's closed--was open. So I walk in there and I said, hi. My name is name is so-and-so and I used to be here during the war. We were hiding here. And the mayor jumped from his seat and he said, well, let me go and check, and he goes and checks the documents and sure enough he found our names there. And he was very, very nice about, very excited, and he said to us, you know, there is a book that was written about the Belgians that escaped to southern France, and I think I showed you that book last time, right?

**SM:** Yes, you did, yes.

**BS:** He's the one who told it. He called up the bookstore in the next town, in Montauban, when we were there and he said, go to that bookstore and they have a copy for you. And so he went on, took us in his car. We went back to that chalet and he said, I have to tell you. The priest gave you that chalet. He gave up that chalet and he went to live somewhere else so you could hide there in that chalet. And he said, and I'm going to take you to the cemetery, and he took us to the cemetery where he's buried, that priest.

So we went with him and the house where the priest moved now is some kind of a sports thing and he was very proud of that, whatever happened to that chalet, to the--and then he said, you know, maybe, and he was walking in the street. Or maybe he remembered you. He's old already, in his 70s, 80s. I really didn't have the patience to start talking to these French people, didn't have such good memories about them anyway. So I said, no, no. We have to go. But I left my business card everywhere so I gave it to the--and he gave me a letter, the mayor, that he got from a Jewish agency asking if they had some information about a mother and two children that were deported from that village, and could he give them any information. He said, I don't have any. So I said, you know what? Why don't you make me a copy and maybe I'll help you to find it. So I really took that copy with me.

So that was that story in Orgeuil, which was that little village. We went back to Montabaun. We went to the train station. That train station is a very important station and there, there is a huge plaque at the train station. I couldn't believe it because--and it said--I have a photo. I have an album about all of that that my sister made for me. It says on it that here on that train station thousands of young people were shipped to Drancy and to Auschwitz and we will never forget.
And this is a huge thing like that, that the French even let that happen is unbelievable. So that it's--in short, wherever we went, you could see that they were trying to have some memorial, but that one was really the biggest one that, very clear.

We went to look for the agency where we--I went with my sister by myself and I think I found it, but I'm not a hundred percent sure. But anyway, I took a picture. It was the tallest building, and I knew it was the second floor, and no other building had two floors except this one there, and it was within walking distance from the train, from where the bus. The train and the bus were the same place there, and all of it is all Muslims, everywhere, in Paris and in, where we went to Drancy, all Muslims. Everything is Muslims there.

We went then, after Montabaun we took a train and we went to Marseille, and in Marseille I had got in touch with a woman who is--she's a professor of Jewish history, teaches in Marseille. She's actually from Algiers or Morocco, and she did research. I bought the book from her and she came to meet us, and I asked her that she should come with me to Schnazel where we stayed in Marseille. And she came with her husband. He was a very nice man. And first she interviewed me. She wanted to know more about what I remembered, and then she said, I will show you, but you show me what do you remember. And I made an arrangement, a hotel, and it turned out that that hotel was one of the hotels where they had the Jews, gathered them, before they shipped them to Drancy. And I couldn't believe it. I was staying, we were staying in a hotel where they--it was a little bit out of town. We stayed in a hotel next to the train station, but they had three or four hotels. I did the research and I know, so all of a sudden, this hotel is a beautiful place today in a very nice area of Paris, and so we went and as the chateau in Marseille was not far from there, but without her, we couldn't have seen it. What she did for us, her husband joined her in the evening. We went to the chateau. They have an idea that the chateau, it was--the area is very developed now. It's next to the ocean and has very nice beaches there. And there an artist built on the beach there a beautiful memorial of the Jews that were deported from Marseille, something--the Gates of Jerusalem he called it. It really is a beautiful piece of art, of sculpture. And then they took us out to--they showed us the nice area of Marseille and took us to dinner to a fishing village, and it was really--they really went all out for us.

And she told us the following day, I want you to come and there is going to be a ceremony in city hall. Marseille is divided into three sections, into sections, and one of the city halls is going to be a ceremony of the Righteous Among Nations, and why don't you come to that ceremony? It's going to be at the small city hall. So my brother-in-law didn't feel like coming because he didn't understand French and all that, but I said to my sisters, you know what? We are doing the whole thing as a historical event, so I think that is a very important part for us. And so we went,
all three of us, to that ceremony and we met some Israelis. I think that the consulate general in Marseille is an Israeli. He's Israeli who is a consulate general in Marseille, and some, a few, quite a few dignitaries, mostly from the Jewish community, and the story is as follows: There was a woman who was trying very much to have this, her mother be recognized as one of the Righteous among Nations because when Paris was--when the French guarded the Jews in Paris, what they did is something quite bad, terrible. They guarded them into a stadium which is called-bicycle divert--something like that. I don't remember the name right now. It's a stadium. They kept them there without food, water, for three days outside, with children before they shipped them out, and that was 1941, '42. Well, this one mother tried to save her children and so this woman, the mother in Marseille, told the story of how her, this gentile woman, took 25 children from Paris and took them south to Marseille, in one of the outskirts of Marseille, and made the neighbors take those children in. Twenty-five, all in that village, and so she wanted to make sure that that mother--the woman is dead so the daughter got the plaque for her mother. And so we saw that whole ceremony while we were there. So that was quite an interesting event to see that. So you still, 60 years later, you can see that they are still very active about recognizing some of the people that were helping the Jews.

From Marseille, we went to--we left Marseille. We went to Toulon where the ship was, Monteroar, and we walked around there, the navy base. I wanted to see the archives, but it was closed, so I wanted to know if the navy archive had a list of the passengers that were--because I have the date. On the internet I found the picture of the ship, so I have a picture of the ship. And so we went to--we walked around there. Toulon is very developed, was a very run-down city and bombarded when we were there, and now it's a very beautiful, even have a little opera house which I was surprised to see.

Marseille, on the other hand, is--I think about 60 percent Muslim. It is one of the most run-down cities. It used to be a nice city. Terrible. We tried to go to find the hotel where my sister and I stayed. We ended up that my sister was almost robbed and we had to leave and go back quick to the train station because they were trying to rob my sister. So they didn't succeed, but this was a very scary experience. So, but they were only Muslims in that area and the downtown Marseille, this is why we went. I arranged in a hotel in the outskirts of Marseille because it's too dangerous to be there.

So then after Toulon, we took the train from Marseille and went to Geneva. In Geneva, we rented a car and went back to the French area and went to see where we crossed the border. And so we went to--we arrived to that little village and I found the name of that--my cousin in Israel who was with us when we crossed the border, she is very active in Israel about the Holocaust. She
does—as a matter of fact, she works for the Holocaust, the Yad Vashem, the education department of Yad Vashem, to teach teachers all over the world about the Holocaust and this—the headquarters is in Yad Vashem, and she does it in French because she taught French and she is a supervisor in the school system in Israel. And so now she—this is what she does and she put a lot of effort into it. So she was—she met a woman who was living in that town where we crossed the border, and so she gave me her phone number. She didn't answer. So I said, okay, I'm going to do the same thing that we did in Orgeuil where I went to city hall, and I walked. Turned out the place is so small there's a post office and the city hall is the same thing, in the same—This is how small it was.

So we walk in there and I said to them, I was wondering if you have, if you know anything about the people that were crossing, helped Jews to cross the border, smugglers?

So she jumped on the seat and said, why are you asking?

I said, because we were one of those that crossed the border here.

And she said, wait a minute. Wait a minute. I have to call the mayor of the town. It is not far away. It's going to take ten minutes. And when she called him, she said, he's coming right away. He wants to see you. So here she spilled out all that information that they have, that this little village has a ceremony every year in the school remembering that, his father of the mayor. And what is really the story? No. It's not his father. His grandfather.

Well, he took us. He walks in and he says, well, my mother was the one that helped my grandfather to cross the border and she's 81 years old, or 82, and she remembers everything, and she wants very much to meet you. And so we went there, to her house, and then we started talking, and then we discovered that her father and her— he was a widow. He had seven children. He decided that he wanted to help the Jews to cross the border that was, and he did it for no money, and she, the daughter who was the oldest one, the mother of the mayor, was—she helped him and the children, all his children, were checking to see when it's safe for us to cross the border. They were running back and forth. Literally, she took us to the place where they were hiding us before we crossed the border at night. She took us to the border where we saw the barbed wire, where we had to crawl under, and she couldn't talk enough of it. And sure enough, she showed us again. Her father was denounced by some French, was sent to a camp and his
helper. There were two men who came to pick us up. He and that helper were killed in the concentration camps and she was left with her, with her brothers and sisters to bring them up. And today her son is the mayor of that little village and there is a plaque on the schools and this is why they have all that ceremony every year about it.

We go to that forest and there was not much forest left. What they did is they rebuilt the town a little bit, and it's a very lucrative thing for Swiss people to live in France and to work in Switzerland. So it's cheaper for them to live in France, so all of a sudden these forests were torn down and now you have houses there, and it's a quite well known little place, that thing. So that was that experience, and of course she--we took pictures and she served us wine, and she showed us that she's also one of the recipients of the Righteous among Nations, that she also got that for her and for her father and for his helper. So she was very proud of that. And I asked her, why did she do that? Because it was the right thing to do. That's what she told me. And the priest of that village--they have two churches. One of them, he was the priest, was also deported, and he was hiding Jews for days and days. Of course, now I have the write-up about what they did there, and they helped about 2,000 Jews to cross the border.

So then I said, tell me, for how long could you cross--how long did you do that? For how long did you do that? And so she told me in September 19th or 20-something like that, in 1943 was the last time that they could cross because the Germans took over then the borders. Okay. So they were still crossing when the Italians were there, and so I rushed to my file in the car and I took out and I looked up the date that we crossed the border. September 9th we crossed the border and September 19th you couldn't cross it anymore. Alright? So this was--that was that story. I tell you, sometimes you just, you wonder how things happen.

And so, that was it. And then we went to Switzerland and we went to Institute Ascher. So we arrived to Institute Asher and there Institute Asher, the place is run down something terrible. The first time I, I couldn't even recognize it. I'm saying, no, no, no. That's not the place. I think it must be further away, and my middle sister, Malka, said, no, no, I know that's the place. I know that's where it is. That's what I remember. So we went back and we walk in there and what it is today, it is a place that is run by the Swiss Red Cross, or by the government, for people that come from Morocco or Tunisia--I don't know. One of those countries, and instead of giving them jobs, they keep them in a place like that where they are--it's closed in and there's a fence, and I don't remember a fence. This is what got me confused. Whole families are kept there for two years. They are getting money from the government, so they don't work. After two years, they ship them back. That's what the Swiss do. That's right. So of course, they turned the whole place upside down. The dining room is now a playroom and the bathrooms are--we remembered a
bathroom. They're a kitchen now, so they have kitchens and they have lavatories and they have--
she said, and it was a social worker there that is in charge of all of that, and she said, when you,
the Jews were living, everything looked so nice and neat and now it's terrible. It's just terrible.
And they terrorize the village. They go and they rob and they destroy property. This is why
they're kept inside so they shouldn't go out, and they want them out of there, the Swiss. They
want them out of there. They don't want them even in the village.

And my last stop, our last stop was to go to Morgins where my younger sister and my mother
were in Morgins and the ski area, and of course we went to the train station again in Bex where
we had to take the train to visit my mother and all of that, and that is the same. And we go on the
platform and I said to them, I said, you know what? The smell is the same. Nothing has changed.

And she said, you know what? I remember it like that, too. So it is--they didn't build it. They
didn't add to it. They didn't change it. It's the same place. And then we went to Morgin and
Morgin was a very nice place. Oh, yeah. I forgot one place. I'll mention in a minute. Morgin is a
very nice place. It has a lot of ski resorts, nice woods. My sister remembered, my younger sister,
where she took walks in the woods and there was a fire there, and my mother, hotel, and she
couldn't stay with my mother. She had--she was in the children's home, and she talked a little bit
about that.

But the one place which I didn't mention and that is [inaudible location], and [inaudible location]
was a place where we were waiting for the smugglers to come and pick us up, and we never
could go out there to see what it looks like. [doorbell rings] And that is a beautiful-- Can you just
stop a minute? So it won't be [inaudible location]. What is the question?

SM: My question is if we can, in any way, pass on a message for you? If there's anything you
really want us to learn or you want the world to know about everything that you've told us, what
would it be?

BS: Well, I tell you. I find that why I'm doing this and I just want to tell you that I just went to
the Jewish Museum and spoke to some Catholic children, 7th graders, and it was very, very
rewarding because they were listening. They wanted to know. Afterwards, they came up. They
hugged me. They took pictures of me. It was a very, very important experience for me to see the
reaction, and I think that--what I really want to say that as long as you know. We are the last
generation now, living generation, and I never spoke before. The first time that I really started,
since I'm in Baltimore, to start to speak about it through the speakers' bureau and Baltimore Jewish Council, and I find that it's very important to have a living testimony about what happened. And if I can get that through and give the feeling that a) that it should never happen again, and b) that what you learn from it is as an individual, also what is important to you. What does the values? What it means to survive. What it means not to have, and what it means to give it on to the next generation. I think that really is why I feel it's so important for everybody to know about it. So--

SM: Thank you so much.

BS: You're welcome. [pause] Okay. "Every life remember. I'm a child kept in hiding. I'm a child with no home. I lost my smile. I lost my family. I'm a child alone. I'm a train taking families. I'm a train filled with fear. I carry pain to an ending. I'm a train of tears. Every life remembered. Every story shared helps the world to comprehend for every dream surrendered. Every child scared. May it never be again. I'm a song, a song of freedom. I'm a song led by truths. I will go on telling stories. I'm a song of youth. Every life remembered, every story told, helps the world to rise above. For every dream surrendered, never to unfold. Let our voices speak of love. We're going to stand up and shout. Each and every child will spread the news. Going to make these stories last forever. We let our voices ring out and walk a mile in someone else's shoes 'til the world can walk along together. Every life remembered. Every tale reborn helps to honor those who have gone. Every family torn. May their memory carry on."

SM: Sixth graders.

BS: Please?

SM: Sixth graders?

BS: Yes.