

**LILLIAN GRÜNEWALD RABINOWITZ
ALICE GRÜNEWALD FISHMAN
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SIGRIST: Good morning. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Thursday, May 16, 1996. I'm in Teaneck, New Jersey, with two sisters. I'm here with Alice Fishman and her sister, Lillian Rabinowitz. Alice and Lillian came from Germany, stayed for a chunk of time in France, finally left from Portugal in 1941, arrived in this country just before Pearl Harbor in 1941. Alice was nine at the time, Lillian was twelve. For the sake of the tape, I want to say you may hear traffic and airplanes overhead. And we will try to discern the two sisters' voices as best we can, but I can say that Lillian has a more full-bodied, deeper voice. Okay. Ladies, thank you for letting me come out. Can we begin, Alice, with you giving me your birth date, please?

ALICE: November 27, 1931.

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SIGRIST: Lillian?

LILLIAN: Um, August 22, 1929.

SIGRIST: And I should say that your maiden name is Grünewald, and that is spelled G-R-Ü-N-E-W-A-L-D. That's how it appears on your passport.

LILLIAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: All right. Let's begin. Let me begin with Lillian. Where were you born?

LILLIAN: In Waldfischbach, Germany.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

LILLIAN: Oh . . .

ALICE: Right here.

LILLIAN: I have to get my glasses.

SIGRIST: All right. Um, Alice will spell it for us, please.

ALICE: Okay. It's W-A-L-D-F-I-S-C-H-B-A-C-H.

SIGRIST: Where in Germany is that, approximately.

LILLIAN: Die Pfalz. That means – right? . .

ALICE: Southern part. It's near Frankfurt.

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SIGRIST: Near Frankfurt. All right. Um, Lillian, since you're older, let me ask you, what are your earliest memories, earliest memories of your childhood?

LILLIAN: First I wanted, yeah, but first I wanted to tell you that I have a twin sister, Inga, Inga Meger, her name is, and she lives in Colorado. And the three sisters we lived in a farm town in Waldfischbach. And our father was a veterinarian and we were children in this -- three Jewish families in this town. Right, Alice?

ALICE: That's right.

LILLIAN: We were three Jewish families in this town, and this was just before World War Two.

SIGRIST: Um, just for the sake of the tape, can you spell your twin sister's last name, please?

LILLIAN: Meger, M-E-G-E-R.

SIGRIST: Meger. Okay. Um, what do you remember sort of the specific details of the house when you were a small child?

LILLIAN: Well, it was a farmhouse, and we had lots of animals. My father, and especially me, we always went to different farmers in the area who who needed his help. And we all went with him all the time, especially me, because I enjoyed animals and I just loved being with him like that. And it was a town where it was spacious, it was a farm area where people worked very, very hard, and it was very comfortable to be there.

SIGRIST: You mentioned that you loved animals. Tell me something about your love of animals when you were a kid. Tell me a story about an animal.

LILLIAN: Well, I loved giving birth to horses or cows. I loved, enjoyed it tremendously. If things were different, I think I would have been doing the same thing my father did because I enjoy-- I still today love animals like that.

SIGRIST: How would, how would a farmer or a farmer's daughter or, you know, a person aid in the delivery of a baby horse?

LILLIAN: A farmer wouldn't. My father did. My father did it all. You took your hands and you went in and you helped the animal out, and it was just a wonderful experience.

ALICE: You ha—you put a rope around your -- I remember he put a rope around the wrist. And then the other hand, you slide that onto the horse's feet, or the cow, and you pull it out. Yeah. We used to watch this all the time, yeah.

LILLIAN: It was really nice. And we made our own sauerkraut at home. And it was -- it was a very wonderful time as I remember it -- when we were little, very, very little.

SIGRIST: Do you know anything about your birth, Lillian? Did anyone ever tell you a story about the day you were born, Lillian?

LILLIAN: No. I don't remember a thing about it. All I know is that my Mother gave birth to us in the house. I don't know who did it, or how it -- how it was done. I really don't know.

SIGRIST: Alice, do you know anything about your birth?

ALICE: Yeah, and about my sister's because we lived near a nun-- near a convent. And the nuns -- I know the nuns, when I was delivered -- the nuns delivered

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me. But I believe my two sisters, my Mother had a midwife. And she herself was a midwi—wife later on. It was very, you didn't go to a hospital. You did that at home. A midwife, a sister, a nun, you know, aided in that.

SIGRIST: Was that unusual for . . .

ALICE: No.

SIGRIST: For -- for a Catholic nun to participate in a Jewish birth?

ALICE: Not at all.

LILLIAN: Not at all.

ALICE: Not at all.

LILLIAN: We were one of a kind. In fact, if it wasn't for them, we wouldn't be here today.

ALICE: Absolutely, absolutely.

LILLIAN: They're the ones that saved us when we had real big problems over there where they, they hid us.

SIGRIST: And that's coming up later, once we get through the early childhood.

LILLIAN: Yeah, yeah. But that's how we were. We were all one kind of people. We didn't think of separation, like it happened.

SIGRIST: Alice, let me ask you some of the same kinds of questions. What are your earliest childhood memories of, of living in Germany?

ALICE: Much like my sister, I used to like to go with my father also, to -- as a veterinarian. He went on farms. That's all they were, farms. And I remember once falling and -- falling off a horse. My father just dropped me on there -- just a little kid, and the horse reared up and I slid off. And my father was a real strict person and he said, "Next time you'll learn to hold on." That was his lesson. And I did. (laughs)

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of the physical details of the house that you lived in?

ALICE: Oh, yeah. We had an outhouse, of course. And would have had, in Germany that time. It was . . .

SIGRIST: Do you have a good outhouse story you could tell us? (they laugh)

ALICE: No. I shouldn't get into that. In fact -- oh, yeah, I think once I think my sister, my twin sisters, they locked my father in. We never did that again. My father was very strict. You did that once, you never did that again. Uh, it was all the house was about three stories, a real farmhouse, and lots of room. We had our own vegetable garden. It was a very nice time until Hitler came to being. Then I -- I myself don't -- didn't have much of a childhood. Most of my childhood was spent in a convent, before we came to the United States, or in the concentration camp. My parents and I were there. So my -- from about, I would say, from five to nine it was not a pleasant thing.

SIGRIST: I see. But before then your memories are pleasant of this place?

ALICE: Yeah. It was -- it was -- yeah, it was a lovely town. Certain towns I go traveling to all the time. To Europe. I'm a big traveler, and it was lovely, charming. We had cobblestones. As I said, the convent was there. It was

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just a charming town.

LILLIAN: You see. She went back many, many times to Germany. I never went back. I go around. I will not go back where I came from.

SIGRIST: Lillian, let me ask you, since your father has been brought up by both of you, what was your dad's name?

LILLIAN: Heinrich, Heinrich Grünewald.

SIGRIST: And can you spell Heinrich for us?

LILLIAN: And Heinrich, also, yeah. Heinrich was also a man that was, how many years older than my Mother?

ALICE: About thirty-five.

LILLIAN: Thirty-five years old older.

ALICE: He was sixty-nine when I was born. Busy person.

LILLIAN: Yeah.

ALICE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can we spell Heinrich, someone?

ALICE: H-E-R . . .

SIGRIST: Or is it on one of your papers here?

LILLIAN: No, I don't have it on there.

SIGRIST: Actually, Heinrich must be H-E-I-N-R-I-C-H.

ALICE: Yes, it must be, yeah.

LILLIAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Okay.

ALICE: It doesn't say here parents.

SIGRIST: Both of you have mentioned your father's strictness. Lillian, tell me a story that reflects your father's strictness, something that happened.

LILLIAN: Well, when you did not go along with what he wanted, you knew about it. You, he would reprimand you. In other words, if he knew how much I loved to go -- and I would never do anything not to go with him to different farms and have deliveries, or see a sick animal and do things -- so I knew how to keep myself apart from it. I never, never would wander off and do anything that he didn't want me to do. Because it was so strong for me to do, to be out there. You know what I mean. To be out there, and it was really very important to me. So I never would cross the line. I don't think I did, right?

ALICE: I don't think either.

SIGRIST: Did you, Alice?

ALICE: Yeah, I'm sure I did. I'm a feisty one. But my father was really strict. I mean, he -- he, say if he whistled and you didn't come . . .

LILLIAN: That's right, exactly.

ALICE: It was immediate . . .

SIGRIST: Tell me a story about when you crossed the line. Tell me, tell me a, something you did.

ALICE: Well, mainly I liked to play. And, you know, I didn't come home for dinner on time. And he, there was no ifs, ands or buts. You had – no -- we were, first of all, I figured . . .

LILLIAN: It was different times.

ALICE: Different, he was much too old. I am, I believe in discipline. I was very strict with my children. But he, I feel -- as a lot of German men, and women also - - too, it's too much. It's too much.

SIGRIST: Do you remember some of the rules that you had to obey in the house specifically, either of you?

ALICE: Not really. He didn't, there was much you -- you came in, you ate. I never went to school in Europe. I—I never attended class -- school. I just was at the wrong time. Hitler had – had put some of the--. In fact, my father -- Hitler had put him in a camp for a while before we actually went to the concentration. You were under arrest, I should say. So I never, I never had the opportunity to go to school.

LILLIAN: We did though, didn't we?

ALICE: Yeah, you did, you and Inga. But my mom, I'm very close with my mom, much more than I was to my father.

SIGRIST: What was your Mother's name?

ALICE: Oh, Rose.

SIGRIST: Rose. And her maiden name?

LILLIAN: Rosa.

SIGRIST: And her maiden name?

ALICE: Wonderful . . . Bergenruth.

LILLIAN: Bergenruth.

ALICE: She was a wonderful human being, wonderful human.

LILLIAN: B, well, I can't . . .

SIGRIST: I have a pen here.

ALICE: Now, she--. I related to my Mother, 'cause my father was -- when I -- wen--
when you're -- I can't relate to people that are cruel. I -- so I --.

SIGRIST: Lillian, you want to spell that out loud for us?

LILLIAN: Okay.

SIGRIST: This is your mom's . . . Whoops. Your mom's maiden name.

LILLIAN: Rosa, Rosa Bergenruth. B-E-R-G-E-N-R-U-T-H.

SIGRIST: Tell me how your Mother met your father, either of you.

ALICE: My – my Mother -- my mom was in the United States, going for a doctorate degree. She was a very intelligent woman.

SIGRIST: So, Alice, your Mother was educated.

ALICE: Yes, she was, a very educated woman. Her sister, Helen Bergenruth, had come here and gotten married and stayed. My Mother was going to stay, but her Mother -- I forgot her name, our grandmother -- was taken ill. They had a big farm in Europe, and they—a -- a they sold china and glass and things like that. My grandmother did not see that my Mother should stay in the United States. She should – she – he – she wanted her to be secure. So this older gentleman -- my father, Heinrich Grunewald -- he had, had just lost a wife. He was married once before, and he was looking for a wife. And they got them together. In those days, that was done. It really surprises me. My Mother -- with high intelligence, who I don't believe really loved my father -- did that, stayed. But she did.

SIGRIST: Conventions were different at the time.

ALICE: Yeah. But my – yeah, my Mother was very close to her Mother, as I feel I am to mine and felt it was the right thing to do to ease her. Her Mother passed away, and my Mother could have – could have been great. She's -- to me my Mother was always the Albert Schweitzer of -- really. She is a wonder, was a wonderful human being. She would do anything for anybody. Give you an example. She used to live in the Bronx in and she had an apartment which after she remarried (after my father died she remarried) and she had this big apartment. And she would put an ad in the paper saying that you know, some rooms for rent. So this lady called and

she told her she has a couple of children, would it be all right, and my Mother said, "Sure, come on up." She says, but and she came on up, and the lady happened to be black. So she says, "Are you s—are you surprised?" And my Mother said, "If it doesn't wash off, it won't bother me." My Mother was a wonderful person. I mean, that's just the way she treated everybody.

SIGRIST: Lillian, let me ask **you** about your Mother. What, what kinds of things did your Mother do around the house when you were a child? What were some of her domestic responsibilities in the house?

LILLIAN: Well, she had to work, because my father couldn't any more, right?

ALICE: Right, right.

LILLIAN: She had to really work, and she was a hardworking person. And she -- it was such a shame, because she really didn't have a life. She was just worked all her life.

SIGRIST: What? What? Be more specific. When you say she had to work, what was she doing?

LILLIAN: She was doing nursing. She was doing taking care of other people. She would stay there. She would give them injections. She was like a -- not a nurse, but like a -- what do they call them?

ALICE: You know, home caretaker.

LILLIAN: Home caretaker. But she had enough knowledge of medication and injections and stuff like that -- that's what she would be doing, besides taking care of them. And she would travel with these people, sometimes to

Florida, right?

ALICE: Right.

LILLIAN: To Arizona. And she would go, be gone for . . .

SIGRIST: When you were a child, she was traveling to Florida?

LILLIAN: Well, we weren't together. They were in concentration camp.

SIGRIST: Well, how old were you when they were taken to the camp?

LILLIAN: We -- this is when, this is the picture that I told you about that -- this is just before she made these dresses . . .

ALICE: Yeah.

LILLIAN: Before we went away. We left my sister Alice and my Mother and father there, and she sent us off to -- to the United States. And they -- not -- what was it? -- a week later they landed all up in concentration camp, or a little bit later?

ALICE: Right.

LILLIAN: They landed all up. So she really stayed for how many years?

ALICE: My -- my -- my parents were in the concentration for seven years. They were liberated by the Americans. I was able to get out through the International Red Cross. Uh . . .

LILLIAN: And you met us in Marseilles.

ALICE: That's right. I met my sisters. They took me, but they didn't take -- my Mother had the foresight to send them ahead. But why I was behind, I don't know. But I was in the concentration camp for about two-and-a-half years. But the American Red Cross, the American International, the Red Cross International got about three thousand of us out.

SIGRIST: I guess what I was asking, Lillian, is what you remembered before all of this happened. When, in the happy period where you're going off with your father, what do you remember about your Mother's duties? . .

LILLIAN: Oh, at home.

SIGRIST: At home.

LILLIAN: Well, she was working. She was always working. Wasn't she working on the shoes?

ALICE: Yeah. She used to make shoes.

LILLIAN: Anything to make some more money. Because we really didn't have -- in those days it was no comparison as far as salaries, as we understand it today. Just to -- to -- to live and to do, she had to work in a shoe factory.

ALICE: Right, right.

LILLIAN: I think she worked for a while, right?

ALICE: Uh-huh.

LILLIAN: Because my father didn't make enough money. Because he was the kind of

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person if you paid him, fine, if you didn't, that's it. So somebody had to help. So, but she made a lot of things. I remember her making, cooking a lot, baking a lot.

ALICE: [superposed] They make their own sausages, you know?

LILLIAN: [superposed] Sausages.

ALICE: [superposed] My father later on worked for a butcher, because he no longer could be veterinarian.

LILLIAN: [superposed] It was not what you would call, how I look at it now, a normal life. It was a life that was constant work, constant worrying, and constant responsibility because her husband was so much older and really didn't take responsibility. We loved it because we loved being with our father 'cause it was playtime and we . . .

ALICE: [interposed] Correctioned [sic]. You loved being with the father. I did not. I have to say, I did not.

SIGRIST: Alice did not.

LILLIAN: Yeah.

ALICE: I resented my father for being, he was harsh with everyone, with my Mother, with . . .

LILLIAN: Yeah. He was very harsh.

ALICE: With everybody.

SIGRIST: Well, actually, that was going to be my next question. I was going to ask, you know, if you wouldn't mind talking about their interaction.

ALICE: I don't think they had one. They just tolerated.

LILLIAN: They tolerated.

ALICE: Like a lot of married people, my Mother felt she had an obligation. She treated him like with, say, almost like her father. She, someone she had to take care of. And she carried that over when she came to the United States. That's just how she felt. She got herself into -- my Mother had a good saying, 'you make your bed, you sleep in it.' And she took her responsibilities seriously -- her three children, her husband. Though I never believe there was any love lost between them. He was very difficult to love. I could never, myself. That's how hard she was.

SIGRIST: Let me ask you a question about your mom, then I'm going to ask you a question about your dad. When your mom wasn't working, what did she like to do for herself?

ALICE: I don't . . .

SIGRIST: Was there something that she did that gave her personal pleasure?

ALICE: I -- I'm sure there must have been. I know she loved to read, but she never had the chance.

LILLIAN: The chance.

ALICE: Never had -- we were, we were grow up in wartime. That's altogether different, you know? There was always the worry where your next meal

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was coming from. My Mother always said to me, and I have it over -- I take it over to my way of life today, 'Eat when it's there.' Today -- whether I'm hungry or not -- if it's there, I eat it. Because times were so bad, they were.

That is why my mom sent my two older sisters to a -- to a nunnery to have a better life, you know?

SIGRIST: Because of that.

ALICE: There was no food. Hitler was--. We knew it was just a matter of time before these three families, three German -- three Jewish families, would be taken away.

SIGRIST: All right. Lillian, let me ask you the same question about your dad. When your father wasn't working when you were a child, what did he do that pleased himself?

LILLIAN: I think he was religious. He -- he -- remember? . . .

ALICE: Yeah, he went to *schul*.

LILLIAN: He went to *schul*.

ALICE: That's right, he did.

LILLIAN: He went to *schul*, he believed in that. But he did not believe in what -- what Germany was doing to him. He always felt--. Remember *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles?*

ALICE: *Alles*, Hitler.

LILLIAN: And he could not believe what's happening in -- you know -- it just was

terrible. It just, he could not believe . . .

ALICE: [interposed] His world was-- . . .

LILLIAN: He couldn't work. His work was – was getting narrower and narrower and narrower, and he could not work. And he was not allowed to work. And he landed up in jail all the time because they arrested him for working. And the people wanted him because there was nobody else there to do the work that he needed to it. It was a very hard time. We can't even think about leisure. We can't even think about enjoyment, because we didn't think that way.

ALICE: No, there wasn't, there wasn't, no.

LILLIAN: [interposed] There was nothing.

ALICE: It was always a state, a state of siege. It really was. You always scared, someone would come and take you away or where's the next meal. If someone went out there, are they going to come back. I remember one time I recall my father sent me, I was always afraid to go out at night, but my father insisted. I -- I don't know where they were what -- my sisters. He insisted I go out for a loaf of bread. And I was scared because there were troops in town. By then the troops, Hitler's troops are takin' over this little town of Waldfishbach. The convent was taken over by soldiers, and I was frightened, you know? But that made no difference. I had to go anyway. And I'm not, you know, but that's just the way it was. My father and I, we rubbed each other the wrong way. Even though I was a little girl.

SIGRIST: This is probably a good time to talk about your religious life in this town. You're living in primarily a Gentile town. I mean, only three Jewish families.

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ALICE: Absolutely, absolutely.

LILLIAN: But we didn't think that way, though.

SIGRIST: Well, Lillian, start telling me a little bit about what you remember of your religious practices when you were young and growing up.

LILLIAN: Well, he believed in Friday night.

ALICE: Right.

LILLIAN: And that – that we had to have dinner on the table. Right, he had to have dinner on the table.

ALICE: Right, and he said his prayers.

LILLIAN: He said his prayers and all that. And Saturday, he also would do the same thing, very quiet, not, no working or anything. And he was very, very persistent on that, I remember. But then on Sunday he would, in need-- if he needed to do, go out and help somebody, he would do it. But most of the people around us were not Jewish, so they – they -- observed Sunday services. So he couldn't do too much, but he couldn't do anything at home either. He just would go to the stables downstairs, he would see about the animals, and that was it, right?

ALICE: Right, right.

SIGRIST: Is there a prayer that you remember from that time period?

LILLIAN: No.

SIGRIST: No.

LILLIAN: I turned everything off.

SIGRIST: Alice, is there a prayer that you remember from that period?

LILLIAN: I turned everything off.

ALICE: No. 'Cause that we had a very rough life and, uh . . .

SIGRIST: Can you add something about the religious, like practicing the religion at home, or you mentioned going to *schul*. I mean, what was . . .

LILLIAN: No, there was really no *schul*.

ALICE: You couldn't, you couldn't go, because . . .

LILLIAN: We couldn't go.

ALICE: We, I said, with three Jewish families Hitler was everywhere. And you couldn't go to pray. You couldn't -- if you were caught doing this, it would be your life. You know. So, it's like the Russians the last couple of years. Uh, you didn't-- that never entered into religion. I di-- didn't have time for religion, to tell you the truth.

SIGRIST: Who was more religious, Mom or Dad?

ALICE: My father.

LILLIAN: The father.

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ALICE: My Mother was too busy keeping us all alive and fed, to tell you the truth.

LILLIAN: That's right.

SIGRIST: All right. Well, then, I think that I think perhaps we should start talking about you know, the political climate, and what's happening as the 1930's are progressing in this town.

ALICE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And how it affected your life. Do you want to talk about that, Alice?

ALICE: Yeah. Well my sisters, they took --. My Mother saw this coming long ago and she insisted the girls -- she wanted the three of us to go to France, to a convent, to be safe. But I never really understood why I was not go-- left behind, but I was. My father had wanted to keep me, maybe, as a ace in the hole.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how that made you feel at that time?

ALICE: I was, I was very close to my sister. I was always closer to her than my other sister.

SIGRIST: To Lillian, who's with us.

ALICE: And I'm closer to her, yeah. Like you see on this picture, I'm holding her finger. We always used to do this. Some people you just, that's just how we'd connect. I felt, I didn't know why they were leaving. I was too young to understand. And I didn't want to – didn't want to be left behind. But I would rather be left behind than give up my Mother. So maybe my Mother felt that. Maybe she felt I couldn't make it without her. But it was very hard to

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see them go, you know? Because I had no idea why they were going, and, oh, it was a big train station. And, yeah, you're still a kid. Even though there's danger around you, you're still, like -- you fool around and you think, 'Oh, my goodness, why are they going on a train and I'm not.' You know. But they were gone, and then I didn't see them again for about four years later.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about what your life was like directly after they left. How was your life changed by their leaving?

ALICE: Uh, we didn't have time to worry about. About -- I'd say two months later or maybe three months later, we were shipped off in a cattle car. We were in a concentration camp.

SIGRIST: What year was that?

ALICE: Uh, '40, must be '30 . . .

LILLIAN: No, '30 . . .

ALICE: '38.

SIGRIST: 1938 is when that happened.

ALICE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Lillian, let me ask you the flip side of this story. Tell me about how you felt about being sent away from the family.

LILLIAN: Yeah. Well, I, I couldn't understand why we were going. I just couldn't understand it, and why we had to go. And then I couldn't understand why

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my Mother goes ahead and makes two dresses. That we should get dressed up, like in this photograph, and be shipped away with other people - - with strangers, complete strangers. I resented it terribly. Until today that I turned so angry at everything and everything -- oh, my whole life, in fact. It affected my whole life. My attitude towards life and everything, because we could not understand why this was happening to us. And why we would have to go with these strange people to another country, and then to another country, and then to another country, and then -- then coming to the United States.

SIGRIST: Did your parents make any attempt to you, Lillian, to explain why you were being sent away?

LILLIAN: No. They just said that you'll be better off that way. You'll be safer, you'll be going -- eventually you will land up with my sister in New York, in Astoria, Queens. That's where we landed up after all these years. But who understands that, you're a young person.

ALICE: You're a kid, yeah.

LILLIAN: You're all by yourself with strange people . . .

ALICE: Strange language.

LILLIAN: Strange things happen, air raids all the time, remember?

ALICE: Yeah.

LILLIAN: All that. Oh, it was terrible.

SIGRIST: Well, that's what I want to get to, because obviously there are a series of

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events here that are becoming threatening enough for your parents to make this decision to send you older girls away.

LILLIAN: No, but what happened was Alice landed up in concentration camp with my Mother and father. I -- we went on with this group of twenty children, I think it was. Eighteen or twenty children, all the way to Lyons, France. From Lyons, France, we went all the way down to Marseilles. This took months and months in order to get there. She met us in--. Alice met us in Marseilles on the way to go to through the Pyrenees, through Spain, down to Portugal, and out.

ALICE: To here, United States.

LILLIAN: To Serpa Pinto, and out. That's how we went. And all that time with bombing and carrying on and threatening . . .

ALICE: It was war, state of war.

LILLIAN: It was war, and it was awful. That's why I never explained it to my kids. I never explained it to anybody. I never wanted anybody to know, because it sounds so unreal.

SIGRIST: While you were both still in that town, before the separation took place, tell me some of the events that are happening in this town that are becoming threatening. You mentioned air raids. Talk about this. You go ahead first, Alice.

ALICE: The soldiers, the soldiers came and took over the town.

LILLIAN: Yeah.

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ALICE: The convent, the nuns. I don't know what happened to the nuns, they took over that building.

SIGRIST: What do you remember, your own personal memories of when the soldiers came into town?

ALICE: Fright. I'll tell you, it's frightening.

SIGRIST: What did you see when that happened?

ALICE: Well, you see guns if you were marching. I think even I had the pleasure of seeing Hitler once.

LILLIAN: He lived in the plaza, yeah.

ALICE: In the [not understood]. Very much like Napoleon, you know? A little guy. Uh, it was – it was very threatening. It was you always had to be in, my Mother always wanted to know where I was. You couldn't play, you couldn't. Even the people who were no– who were not Jewish had the same problem. It was like you were under siege, is what you are.

LILLIAN: What I remember . . .

SIGRIST: Lillian, tell me what you remember.

LILLIAN: What I remember is the plaza where everybody was told to go down to the place -- right? -- to the plaza.

ALICE: That was across the street from us.

LILLIAN: Everybody had to put their, their hands up to -- for Heil Hitler. I, we, I mean,

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everybody was just pushed down there. Right, remember? And we had to stand by attention, and the soldiers were in back of us. And some of them were in front of us, and there was this big platform. And they were telling us what to do. There was no question in your mind that if you had money, if you could get away from the situation, people would just flee all over the place. It was a terrible time.

SIGRIST: Was there any incident that you recall where the soldiers were actually in your home?

ALICE: Well, when they, not . . .

LILLIAN: Not where we were.

ALICE: When I, when we were getting ready to leave, they got us out.

SIGRIST: After the older sisters . . .

ALICE: Left, yeah. They, in fact, I think it's just a couple of weeks. I don't really remember how long it was. They came in, they threw the stuff out the window, "Get out, get out." Rush, rush, rush, rush, and hustled into a bus, and then from a bus onto -- cattle cars is what they are. And that was the beginning of the end for a lot of people.

SIGRIST: Do either of you remember any kind of printed material being distributed at that time by the soldiers?

ALICE: I'm sure there must have been, but as a kid . . .

SIGRIST: But not from a child's . . .

ALICE: No, point of view, no.

SIGRIST: . . . memory.

ALICE: It's just, it's just fright. You just worry. You want to be close to your parents, and that's -- my concern was not to leave my Mother's side. That was just my concern.

END SIDE A, TAPE ONE BEGIN SIDE B, TAPE ONE

SIGRIST: Alice, can you talk about your parents' reaction, you already talked a little bit about your father's reaction to all this, but can you be a little more specific about their actual reactions to what's going on.

ALICE: Well, my Mother understood it very well. My father was already on in years. And as older people are, you have to -- they don't know what's going on, or they can't really comprehend. Or my father couldn't believe this was his country. What are they doing? you know? How could this be? My Mother understood very well what Hitler was doing and what can be. And if you don't be quiet, do exactly what they say, you'll be dead. Our next door neighbors, they would hide us in the basement. They wanted to, before we were taken away, they were searching the village for all the Jews. And eventually they caught us. Eventually they said, "You will have to go."

They knew there were three families. But every now and then when the s-- when they would make random searches, our next door neighbors, they would hide us downstairs. I remember being underneath the piles and piles of potatoes. To this day I love potatoes. I mean, hundreds of pounds. That was, they grew a lot of potatoes in this area. And you used to, you were waiting for, you know, there's all cobblestone street, you're waiting for all that noise to stop. The da-da-da-da, the soldiers' hooves, and the cars

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going through. My father, he was almost like a child in that time. He did what my Mother said to be safe, you know? And my Mother just, she knew you had to do certain things. And you do it, and you get on with it. Because there was no choice. But we were all frightened? Yes.

SIGRIST: Lillian, tell me about being taken out of this town and the trip to France, and what that was like for you. What do you, what sticks out in your mind the most about going to France?

LILLIAN: I blocked it out. I blocked everything out from that day on. From the time I left, all the way. Except in France, with all the air raids and the bombing, where my sister almost tried to commit -- my twin sister tried to commit suicide, tried to go off a cliff. It just was terrible.

SIGRIST: How long did it take to go from the town in Germany to, was it Lyons that you went to first?

LILLIAN: Lyons, France. I don't remember, because we had to stop because of the air raids and the bombing. It was awful. I don't remember how long it was. I know it was a long, long ride on the -- on the --.not on the bus. It was on a train, I believe..

ALICE: Train.

LILLIAN: Yeah. It was such a long, it just seemed endless rides, and it seemed noisy and frightening because of the -- the sirens going off in some of the areas. It was awful.

SIGRIST: Can you talk about, you remember these air raids. Can you talk about the warning system and what you had to do when you heard whatever warning it was.

LILLIAN: Well, the train would stop. Everybody would get out, and then you would find a place in the earth wherever you stopped to try to lay there, outside. And then when it was finished, then you would [not understood] again and get onto it. But the most frightening thing was that -- that you always felt you're not going to make it out of the country, out of France. It just was frightening. This whole experience was so frightening, it was terrible.

ALICE: Yeah. That is.

LILLIAN: It was terrible. And you-- as a child, you just don't know. "What did I do? What did I do?"

ALICE: Regardless.

LILLIAN: "What did I do?" "What did I do?" Do you know?

SIGRIST: As if it were your fault somehow.

LILLIAN: Yeah. That's exactly what you'd . . .

ALICE: That's how you think, like a divorce, you think the same way. Children think as much. It was my fault, I did something.

LILLIAN: Exactly. "What did I do?" That's -- the two of -- my twin sister, Inga -- she, she went completely off her rocker.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about that, if you would?

LILLIAN: Well, she couldn't tolerate it any more, so you had to really hold her down. And when Alice joined us in Marseilles it was a little bit better. Because she

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could, at least she could communicate with the three of us. But I think the worst part was on the boat, though. Right? When she really, she acted up terribly.

ALICE: Yeah.

LILLIAN: Because they put us all the way down the bottom of the boat.

SIGRIST: So Inga, psychologically, probably had the most problems.

ALICE: Probably, yes.

LILLIAN: Even still today.

SIGRIST: Were there any other children, or was it just the three of you?

LILLIAN: Just the three of us.

SIGRIST: There were no children that were, that died or anything like that?

LILLIAN: No.

ALICE: Well, in the concentration camp, yeah.

SIGRIST: No, but I mean, your Mother and father didn't have any other children.

ALICE: No. No, no, no, no. No.

SIGRIST: Did he have children from a former marriage?

LILLIAN: Yes.

ALICE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you have any interaction with those people?

LILLIAN: Nothing, nothing.

ALICE: Nothing.

SIGRIST: All right. Well, look, Alice, perhaps you could tell me now about being taken to the camp. Um, you've talked about the occupation of the town, and being hidden. Tell me about when they found you.

ALICE: Uh, well. When they found us, they made us go back to our house, get whatever belongings we could. My Mother got -- had some jewelry, you know? She put them in -- she sewed them in her dress, in her coat, I believe, in the hem. They found it later anyway. Then we were all hustled into these cattle cars. It was about a day trip. We went to Buchenwald. And there we were, masses of us, masses of us. And it was quite terrible. It was horrible, I think, for the adults -- more than the kids. Because they knew what was going on. My worst experience, my do-- the men and women were separated. My father was in one camp and the children stayed with the parents, with the Mother.

My Mother worked in the infirmary, so to speak. She helped deliver babies and helped people along, what have you. My worst thing was, I don't know why. I wanted to get, as kids are, I --you know, you play around in the snow. And I wanted to get out and see my father. Don't ask me why. I wouldn't, I wouldn't. They'd sent me back to my Mother. Y'know. These were just young soldiers, teenagers with guns guarding you. And I guess I made a pest out of myself, so somebody hit me in the head with a rifle.

Because I -- well, rather than shoot me they -- I guess they did me a favor. So I was out for a couple of days, and to this day I have problems with my head. But it was my own doing. But you don't I-- as a child you don't learn, you know, you don't realize the danger. I -- I tell you . The parents are -- it's -- it's incredible how -- how -- now that I'm a parent how you can --. Oh, this horrible feeling of -- that there's nothing you can do for your children. And there wasn't. They were being, we were being tossed around, beaten around. So were the adults. But, you know, as a parent you -- it's out of your hands. It was horrible.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me as objectively as you can the living facilities at Buchenwald?

ALICE: Ugh. They're -- we were all, it's like a ca-- like summer camp type of living, in barracks, you know, laid out, maybe a couple of hundred to a barrack. It was disgusting. There was no sanitary conditions. It was all up to the Mothers, you know, to handle your child's problems, you know? Uh, I was very hard being -- thank God you weren't a teenager, 'cause the soldiers did what they would. I myself was then about seven, eight, and very malnourished. So I was about -- in the camp I was about forty pounds when I was about eight years old. So one of these odd-looking people with your stomach out, and very bad. The conditions were horrendous, horrific.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how you were fed?

ALICE: Well, my Mother was always -- like, you know, these big tubs, like, yeah. And my Mother was -- always saved a little on the side for me. She just was one of these people, you know? And we'll sit—you know -- in -- it's like you see in the movies, like that movie Schindler's List? It's exactly like, it is, I saw that movie three times now. It, I was right in it. It was exactly as it was, exactly.

SIGRIST: Was Buchenwald where your Mother's jewels that were sewn into the hem, or the jewelry . . .

ALICE: I never knew when it was taken.

SIGRIST: I see.

ALICE: We were g--, we were very fortunate we didn't get gassed. We were on line one day to get our, our numbers.

SIGRIST: The tattoos.

ALICE: The tattoo. Somehow there was an air raid or something went wr-- I don't know what went wrong. Some loud noise went off, maybe a bombing, or I don't know what. But then we dispersed back to our own areas, and we never went back on line for the numbers. That's the only way we saved, were saved from that. But the smell of death is everywhere.

SIGRIST: Was there one person that sticks out in your mind about when you were there at Buchenwald? Just one of the fellow prisoners, or just one person that sticks out in your mind that you remember?

ALICE: You know, it's funny. The guy that hit me. Today I, when I think about it, years gone by when I thought about it, he must have been about fourteen, fifteen years old. I, after I came out of the concussion, I always went back to him -- that young man. He was a short little guy, a little blonde guy. I don't know why. Outside of my Mother, that would be the only one.

SIGRIST: How long were you at Buchenwald?

ALICE: Two-and-a-half years.

SIGRIST: Two-and-a-half years. Um, during this time, I'm assuming, assuming that there's no communication, obviously, between the, between the sisters in France.

ALICE: Right. I had no idea any more. I had forgotten. You're in such terror, I completely forgot. All I knew was my Mother. You – you -- you're – it's just such terror, constant terror of staying alive. It's terrible. It was, you know, that -- you can't believe what a grip that has on you, wanting to stay alive. That my Mother was, she was everything for me anyway, but she was my life.

SIGRIST: Did your Mother ever talk about any of her experiences working in the infirmary there?

ALICE: No. She was totally exhausted at the end of the day and it was enough to keep me fed and to see that I was alive, and -- no, no. There was no social amenities at all. I didn't fool anybody. You just were trying to stay alive minute by minute, not even day by day.

SIGRIST: Oh, two-and-a-half years is a long time.

ALICE: Well, my parents were in there seven, and my father (tough bird, I'll tell you.) he had two major heart attacks, major heart attacks, in the camp. He's strong as an ox. That didn't kill him. He came to the United States. He lived to be ninety-two. He got hit by a car.

LILLIAN: On the Concourse.

ALICE: On the Grand Concourse in the-- and he didn't even get, he didn't even die

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from the hit by the car. He got, he would -- that's right, he wouldn't stay in bed, caught pneumonia, and died. After going through hell.

LILLIAN: Yeah.

ALICE: Can you imagine?

SIGRIST: That's amazing. That's amazing.

ALICE: And he walked, my father was a very proud man. He used to wear a little chateau [sic], a cap on the side. He had a walk, you'd see he'd walk across the Grand Concourse with his cane, that all traffic should stop for him. (Lillian laughs) He had no realization of anything. He just, he was with you. Stop. And a car hit him. Can you imagine?

SIGRIST: A real relic from this Austria-Hungarian empire. (he laughs)

ALICE: Yes, yes. He was . . .

LILLIAN: He was in World War One. He was a [not understood] rider

ALICE: [superposed] That's right. But he was totally . . . He was totally out of it.

SIGRIST: Um, Lillian, tell me a little bit about when you were in Lyons and what, what you do remember about once you got there, and I assume you were there for a while once you, once you were . . .

LILLIAN: Oh, yeah, because we met Alice in Marseilles.

SIGRIST: That's where you . . .

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LILLIAN: In Marseilles, later on, in -- two-and-a-half years later.

ALICE: Prior to meeting Alice, tell me what you remember about . . .

LILLIAN: I don't remember a thing.

SIGRIST: Anything.

LILLIAN: I don't remember a thing.

ALICE: [interposed] She completely blocked it out.

LILLIAN: I blocked it out completely. The only thing that I remember, a couple of times -- just to save my twin sister, Inga. She was in, in, in such a state. It was awful. But that's all I remember. I don't remember anything about it. The only thing that I remember, after we met Alice in Marseilles, going through the Pyrenees, and a wonderful train ride. It was a wonderful train ride. And it was, you know, like away from the war at that time already, right?

ALICE: Yeah.

LILLIAN: It was really, I mean -- the war still was going on, but the scenery was out of this world.

ALICE: Right.

LILLIAN: And going through Spain, it was nice, and Portugal.

ALICE: [superposed] You didn't hear bombings, or troops marching along.

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LILLIAN: Yeah, even in Portugal.

SIGRIST: As an adult, many years later, as an adult, have you ever tasted food or heard music or had some sort of trigger, mental trigger, that brought you back to that time in France.

LILLIAN: No.

ALICE: Always.

LILLIAN: No, me neither.

ALICE: Always.

SIGRIST: You know what I mean, though?

ALICE: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: You smell coffee, and some . . . (voices garbled)

LILLIAN: Really?

SIGRIST: What are yours? Do you know?

ALICE: Sausages. My Mother used to save, even in the con—in the concentration camp she used to, I don't know, who knows where she got them. Maybe from the soldiers. She would save -- I love sausage and potatoes. She would -- and then I have every time I have boiled potatoes and sausage.

LILLIAN: Really?

ALICE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: That would bring you right back.

LILLIAN: Oh, yeah, I remember in Marseilles, snails.

ALICE: Really!

LILLIAN: Snails. People used to pick them off the tree. That's about it.

SIGRIST: One memory may lead to another.

ALICE: You never know. (they laugh) No, we tried many times to stir her, but she won't have it.

SIGRIST: Tonight, you know, usually after we do these interviews and then I'll talk to the interviewees later, they always say that night, you know, they dreamt about this, or suddenly, you know, everything sort of starts coming back.

ALICE: But I think about it often. I -- all the years. I've—I -- I—I-- and I like to talk to -- to -- about it to people to know what really went on, to be happy what you got. You know? You don't realize what's goes on in this world, and what can go on, anything. It isn't just the Jews. Look at Russia, look at the -- what's happening over there -- the millions of people that are being, ethnic cleansing. It goes on all the time.

SIGRIST: Alice, what did you wear in Buchenwald?

ALICE: I wore that yellow star, I know.

SIGRIST: What was that made out of?

ALICE: Paper. No, cloth, cloth.

LILLIAN: The yellow star?

ALICE: Yeah, a yellow star.

SIGRIST: And do you remember . . .

ALICE: Oh, gee . . .

SIGRIST: I'm just trying to get a sense of the sort of everyday details of what that existence is like.

ALICE: I imagine some kind of a, it was cold. It was always cold out there, so I imagine a sort of a dress with a coat on. Oh, I had one horrific experience. My -- I was sleeping and I -- why -- I woke up to a sound that was earth—earth-curdling. I had a rat laying on my neck. And my Mother, my Mother was, they're not making people like that any more. My Mother picked this thing off my neck and stomped it to death. Who would -- could have that, who could-- I'm talking rats, not mice. A rat was laying on my neck, and she just picked it off and stomped it to death. To this day I don't like mice or rats.

SIGRIST: I don't blame you for that. Um, the weather is, the weather was cold?

ALICE: Yeah, damp.

SIGRIST: Do you have memories of snow or any experience that happened surrounding snow at that time?

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ALICE: Yes. No. I remember rain. There was a lot of rain one time. We had these planks, you walked from here to there.

SIGRIST: Planks, you said. Planks.

ALICE: Planks, yeah. I was really short and for my age, because I didn't have the nourishment, or what have you. And I slipped off, probably fooling around with some other kids, I slipped off the plank, and I nearly drowned. Not quicksand, but there just was so much mud that I was up to here. Someone had taken me out. Yeah. But it was a lot of, a lot of death all around. You could slip and fall into a ravine, or if you got outside the camp – it, it was bad.

LILLIAN: Animals lived better than us. Right, Alice?

ALICE: Oh, yeah. Well, this was inhuman, inhumane.

SIGRIST: Tell me about being released from Buchenwald. How did you get out of that situation?

ALICE: One day my Mother told me I was going to go and see my sisters. I even completely forgot I had sisters. It's been such a – of trying to stay alive, it takes a lot of energy. I'm telling you.

SIGRIST: Your priorities change.

ALICE: That's right. Staying alive and eating was my main priority, and not to lose my Mother, my sight of my Mom. So one day my Mother told me, "You're gonna -- get yourself together, and you're going to go on a nice bus ride." And I didn't want to go. 'Cause I didn't know where I was going. It was like they went on a train. My Mother says, "You have to go. You will go, you

have to go, blah, blah, blah, blah." So the Red, there was a couple of buses, you know, big, big buses, and the International Red Cross came, they were very kind people. They -- they -- they tried, they made it easy for us. You know, "Your Mommy will join you later." And, you know. But there was screaming and pandemonium, because nobody wanted to leave their Mother. You know, naturally. They got onto the buses, and we were off. Went to France, and we met them.

SIGRIST: Do you remember your emotional . . .

ALICE: I was hysterical.

SIGRIST: Feelings when you said goodbye to your Mother?

ALICE: I was beyond -- I was -- it wasn't just me, everybody. We were -- we thought for sure -- because every time they took a bunch of people, they would be gassed and you'd never see them again. This you understood, even if you were young. So I thought, you know, you can't help them. Never mind what your Mother said. You can't help but think that way. Because everyone you were playing with or saw the day before, they were gone. And this is where they went. They went into this room. And you never saw them again, this barn-like effect. And that's what I thought. But they finally calmed you down. They fed you, that got -- calmed you down, because their food. The International Red Cross, they were ve-- I remember, very kind people.

SIGRIST: What about cleaning you up? I'm just curious. Was there a process of . . .

ALICE: Oh, I was filthy.

SIGRIST: I mean, before you went off to France.

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ALICE: No. The bus, no, no. There was no way, nowhere to do it. They, you had so much time. They -- I guess they gave them so much time they could get these kids out, and that was it. When I came to the United States, I had crabs here from filth.

SIGRIST: You're pointing to your hips.

ALICE: Hips. I, just crud. I was just crust, crustation. My Mother bathed me when she could. There wasn't water to drink, let alone clean. And you're living in this. And when we got to France, the medication wasn't there. You know, there was a war going on. And on the boat there was -- you know, you -- you -- they got you bathed. You were on your own on the road coming over, because there were so many of us. But once we came to the United States, we were in foster care and they did very well. But I had lice, name it.

SIGRIST: But for the most part the Red Cross took you dirty from the camp.

ALICE: Absolutely.

SIGRIST: And you remained more or less dirty.

ALICE: Dirty, yes.

SIGRIST: For quite a while.

ALICE: Tell me about seeing Lillian, when you finally got to . . .

ALICE: I didn't know who it was. I didn't know her, I didn't know my other sister. But eventually, wasn't there some communication with a -- with a -- with a ring or a watch? One of -- Inga -- Inga had a watch?

LILLIAN: Yeah, something like that.

ALICE: Yeah.

LILLIAN: I don't remember that.

ALICE: Something about a wa--. I think wha-- Inga had the watch that – that would-
-. Eventually, they told us this – this was my sister, and eventually it
came . . .

LILLIAN: It dawned on you.

ALICE: It dawned on you, we were the sisters, yeah.

LILLIAN: It was so many years after that, almost three years.

ALICE: How they looked, and I looked like hell. I was, oh, the eyes were all sunk in,
and the stomach. I was really a . . .

SIGRIST: Lillian, do you remember seeing Alice in Marseilles?

LILLIAN: No.

SIGRIST: That's all still part of the blackout area. How long were you in Marseilles
prior to getting on the train to get to Portugal?

LILLIAN: Not too long. It wasn't too long.

ALICE: No, I don't think it was too long either.

LILLIAN: A couple of months, I think.

ALICE: Yeah.

LILLIAN: And then we went on, and then we went down to the boat, and the boat . . .

SIGRIST: Well, wait. Before you get on the boat . . .

ALICE: I forgot the succession to find out when.

SIGRIST: Let's get you on the train to the . . .

ALICE: Yeah, to the boat.

SIGRIST: Because you already mentioned how lovely the countryside was.

LILLIAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: That sticks out in your mind.

LILLIAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What other details, Lillian, stick out in your mind, like about the actual train, perhaps, or . . .

LILLIAN: Not the train so much as the scenery was beautiful.

SIGRIST: Did you see something you had never seen before?

LILLIAN: No. It just was mountainous. It was very, the Pyrenees are very mountainous and very beautiful in an -- in an --in a mas—. It's just a -- it's overwhelming, and it's strong. It's mountains, it's the -- like the Alps. It's

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just absolutely overwhelming. It's just gorgeous. And then it just was a wonderful ride. And it felt like a peace, like peace in your mind a little bit from what you've gone through, what you left behind. And that's how it was. And then coming down through Spain, was the same feeling. It was very, very nice. A lot of orchards, and it was very nice. But, uh . . .

SIGRIST: Were you in school in France?

LILLIAN: No, no. Never were in school.

SIGRIST: Do you know where you were living at that time, or . . .

LILLIAN: We were just, it was like staying in . . .

ALICE: Weren't you in a convent?

LILLIAN: In different convents, but also staying in places where they could take these twenty kids. And put 'em there for a couple of days -- a week or two weeks.

ALICE: [superposed] And then they shifted off someplace else.

LILLIAN: And they shift them over someplace else. Because you could never stay in one place too long, because we were all Jewish kids at that time.

ALICE: That's what that was, yeah.

LILLIAN: They were trying to save them. And then HIAS is the one that spon—that got us out.

SIGRIST: The HIAS. Uh-huh. I see.

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LILLIAN: And that's how. And when we got here, my Mother's sister is the one who took us.

ALICE: Aunt Helen.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about what you were like as a child, Lillian? Give me sort of a personality sketch of what you were like.

LILLIAN: I think I lost it. I think I lost it as a child, I really did. I don't remember anything. Because I . . .

SIGRIST: But not what you remember. What you were like as a person. You talked earlier about enjoying helping your father work with the animals.

LILLIAN: Yeah, but the other stuff . . .

SIGRIST: What were some of the other things that you, as a child . . .

LILLIAN: I wish I could remember. I just, I never thought of myself any more.

ALICE: She was an outdoor person, really. She liked that . . .

LILLIAN: And I never thought of . . .

ALICE: Even today she likes gardening. She likes putzing around outside, and animals. She does.

LILLIAN: And animals. I love animals. But I -- I don't remember anything as far as liking anything. The only thing that I remember, the trip from Marseilles to the Pyrenees. It was the most wonderful thing.

ALICE: Yeah, because she likes the outdoors.

SIGRIST: I was going to say, and that's an important personality trait. Through all of this adversity you're going through, what do you remember, how beautiful the outdoors were.

LILLIAN: Yeah, yeah, there you go.

SIGRIST: And what does that say?

ALICE: But your mind, you – you got – you have to give your mind a rest someplace along the line, all this terror.

LILLIAN: Also, what you also were feeling an awful lot is, "Where is this going to end? What is going to happen to us at the end?" I – I didn't know.

ALICE: [interposed] You always afraid for your life. Mainly where were our next meal was coming from, and my life.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the trip from Marseilles on the train through the Pyrenees?

ALICE: That I was safe, that they fed me. I --.

SIGRIST: Are there any external details that you remember, like being in the train and what it looked like, or anything like that, or other people who were traveling with you?

ALICE: No, not really. No, I was just . . .

LILLIAN: We weren't on vacation.

ALICE: Very happy. (she laughs) To get your, I was--. I'm going to tell you. Since the day I can remember until about, until I was about fifteen or sixteen, just sheer fright. When I came to the United States, even. The – the airplane. You don't get, you don't lose that. My poor other sister Inga, she – you -- you just lose control. Everything frightens you so. You -- to – to always be afraid for your life is terrible.

SIGRIST: Because you never are not afraid. I mean, you don't know -- the relief.

ALICE: Anything else but to be afraid. Yeah, there was no relief. When you got to be about fifteen or sixteen as a teenager, you could understand a little better, you learned the language. That was another thing. Learning the English language was no piece of cake. It's a tough language.

SIGRIST: Well, we'll get to that in the second tape. But uh, do you remember how long it took to get from Marseilles to Portugal? How long was that?

ALICE: Well, it couldn't be too long. But, I mean, I don't know how we went.

LILLIAN: It was -- it must have been at least two weeks.

ALICE: You think so?

LILLIAN: Yeah. Yeah, because remember we stopped . . .

ALICE: I don't remember getting off that train. I remember . . .

LILLIAN: I think we stopped.

ALICE: Yeah?

LILLIAN: I think we stopped, and we changed trains, I think, from -- from -- France, to Spain. I think we stopped.

ALICE: I remember just getting off the train one day, getting on board the boat.

SIGRIST: The ship. Good. Let's talk about that. What do you remember about actually getting on the ship?

ALICE: I, this is a real coincidence. I – I spent my life, I love traveling. I work now in my later years so I can travel. I travel a lot. On the ship, this was a cruise liner. It was so, we were down the very bottom hold where they keep the coal. But the ship itself was a – a luxury liner. We'd be in the bottom there, barely fed, a filthy place. I would always crawl up at night and look, when I could, and look, like at first class. People were da-- it was like the da—it was like a Harlowe movie with – with slinky gowns and people were -- guys were in tux. It was -- and I keep playing this movie over and over again.

SIGRIST: Jean Harlowe, right.

ALICE: Yes. But these people were. It was a very elegant upper deck, but we were always stuck down there. It was very, very bad. I mean, why – why we didn't get all (I don't know what) kind of diseases. Is the first time I ever saw a man nude, a boy. (laughs) I -- we were so layin' on top of each other in bunks, you know, maybe – ochh! – maybe eight –

LILLIAN: Terrible.

ALICE: -- or ten . It was disgusting. And then I would look down one day, it was someone had urinated. And it just came, it was horrible. But I—first I saw this guy -- a young fellow and, "What is that?" (she laughs) That I need [not understood]

SIGRIST: Surprise. (he laughs)

ALICE: That doesn't look like me. Yeah.

LILLIAN: Then don't you remember when we came -- we weren't out not even two days at sea when a torpedo stopped us.

ALICE: Oh, yeah. A U boat, yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about that experience?

LILLIAN: Well, they were looking for Jews. And they came, and we were all the way on the bottom. And so they -- they and that -- the captain knew what was -- what was coming and they -- they started doing an argument on top there, remember, to try to divert them, and all that?

ALICE: Yeah. Right.

LILLIAN: And, sure enough, we were saved, otherwise we would have had to go back.

SIGRIST: So German officials actually came onto the ship.

ALICE: On board.

SIGRIST: What was the ship's registry? Do you know? Was it a Portuguese ship?

ALICE: It was Portuguese, yeah.

SIGRIST: Um, we should say for the sake of the tape, we discussed it before we

started, that the name of the ship . . .

LILLIAN: The Serpa Pinto.

ALICE: Serpa Pinto.

SIGRIST: The Serpa Pinto. And we're going to give it a phonetic spelling. S-E-R-P-A, capital P-I-N-T-O. Serpa Pinto. Um, had either of you ever been on a ship prior to this?

ALICE: No.

LILLIAN: No.

SIGRIST: Lillian, tell me what you thought when you were actually aboard this ship?

LILLIAN: So frightened, so scared to go on this boat and the unknown. Where are we going, what's going to be on the other end? And it was such a long ride, wasn't it?

ALICE: Yeah.

LILLIAN: Terrible long ride. And we didn't even know if we were going to make it. Because the, like Alice said, she would go on top, and then somebody would have to come take her down. Because she – she was looking at the good side of life all the time, the hope. You know what I mean -- to see what's going on. We didn't think -- I didn't think we were going to make it because it was so horrible. It was so dark, and it was so, you know, it was so degrading. The whole thing was unbelievable.

ALICE: A lot -- I would say about three thousand children were down, young adults,

children, were in that hole.

SIGRIST: Were they all children, or were there adults mixed up?

LILLIAN: No, Alice, there weren't that many. There weren't that many.

ALICE: No?

LILLIAN: No, there weren't that many, no. Maybe three hundred.

ALICE: Get out!

LILLIAN: Yeah, that's all there was. But they climbed it, that's what, that's how come they got away with it. That's how come they got away with it, Alice. I remember, no. It seemed much more, but it wasn't. But we were all the way on the bottom there, and we just never thought any of us are going to make it.

SIGRIST: Were you allowed out of that area?

LILLIAN: No, we really weren't.

SIGRIST: I mean, you mentioned sneaking out.

ALICE: I was sneaking out, yeah.

LILLIAN: Well, other people, other children sneaked out, too.

ALICE: Yeah.

LILLIAN: I was scared out of my mind. Once I went to get her, because I knew what

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she was doing. Because – because you could get in such trouble!

ALICE: Oh, sure.

LILLIAN: And I always was so cautious about, you know, that. But she, she had no tolerance, and my other, my twin sister was like you found a home.

SIGRIST: Lillian, talk a little bit about Inga on the ship, because obviously she's been most distraught through most of this uh . . .

LILLIAN: Yeah. Well, she was sick. She was sick all the time.

SIGRIST: Sick how?

LILLIAN: Sickly. But she also was seasick, like I was seasick. I mean, I was seasick. I've never gone, really, on a boat.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what happens when you're seasick?

LILLIAN: You feel like throwing up all the time. You feel nauseous [sic] all the time. You feel that rhythm in your mind, back and forward, and seeing nothing. To this day I can't take a cruise. She takes a cruise.

SIGRIST: Were there portholes or anything in this area?

LILLIAN: No!

ALICE: We were down too far.

LILLIAN: Just black, dark.

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SIGRIST: Was there a bathroom down in this area?

LILLIAN: Yes, there was a bathroom down there. But it was like a hole, just like a hole. And everybody -- one person, they all, everybody used the same thing.

ALICE: I remember that, yeah.

LILLIAN: Everybody used the same thing. You could not go upstairs. You're not supposed to go upstairs.

SIGRIST: Were there animals that you remember on the ship?

LILLIAN: No, I don't remember that at all.

SIGRIST: Um, tell me about . . .

LILLIAN: I think it was a luxury liner.

ALICE: It was a luxury liner.

SIGRIST: Do either of you, but obviously this wasn't the luxury part. (they laugh)

ALICE: No, that was really third class.

LILLIAN: Well, our shame was we were Jewish.

ALICE: Yeah, that was our problem.

SIGRIST: And all the kids, the three hundred, or three thousand . . .

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LILLIAN: No, it was not three thousand.

SIGRIST: Or how ever many there were, they were all Jewish children.

LILLIAN: Yeah, they were Jewish.

SIGRIST: Was this all sponsored by the HIAS? This was . . .

ALICE: Yes.

LILLIAN: I believe, yeah.

SIGRIST: I see. Um, tell me, either of you, about interactions with the staff on the ship.

ALICE: We didn't have any interaction with them.

LILLIAN: No.

SIGRIST: Stewards?

ALICE: No.

LILLIAN: They wanted nothing to do with us, nothing to do with us.

ALICE: I don't think anyone knew we were down there except maybe the captain who got us on there. I don't think anybody knew.

LILLIAN: Only the big officials knew that we were down there. Nobody else knew.

ALICE: And there must have been one or two adults that looked after us. There

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must have been somebody. How did we get fed? We ate, I remember. We were close to the kitchen in some parts.

LILLIAN: Not really close to the kitchen, Alice. We had to go downstairs.

ALICE: I remember you once helping a guy do the carrots and the potatoes. Yeah.

SIGRIST: That was when you were sneaking around.

ALICE: Yeah, I'm bad. I am. If you tell me no, it's yes.

SIGRIST: We need to just stop for a moment so I can put in another tape, and then we'll get you to America.

ALICE: Okay.

END SIDE B, TAPE ONE BEGIN SIDE A, TAPE TWO

SIGRIST: Okay. We're now beginning Tape Two with Alice Fishman and Lillian Rabinowitz, who came from Germany via France, and ultimately Portugal, to get on the ship in 1941. Alice was nine, and Lillian was twelve. And today is May 16, 1996, and I'm in Teaneck. This is Paul Sigrist. Anyway, we've got you on the ship, the Serpa Pinto, and Alice was just talking about recollections of actually helping kitchen staff.

ALICE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: To prepare food. But you're not sure where this area was.

ALICE: Not really.

SIGRIST: Or how you got there.

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ALICE: Because I was probably hungry and we were looking for food, you know what I mean? I don't know how often they fed us, do you? But I knew we ate there. I don't remember going hungry on the ship. No.

SIGRIST: Alice had recollections of seeing the first and second class . . .

ALICE: First class.

SIGRIST: First class passengers.

ALICE: Wonderful.

SIGRIST: Lillian, do you have any recollections of seeing these people?

LILLIAN: No. None whatever.

SIGRIST: What about prior to boarding, or during the boarding procedure?

LILLIAN: There was no such thing as boarding. They just shoved us in.

ALICE: No. At night . . . (she laughs) Like cargo.

SIGRIST: Shut the door.

ALICE: It's true!

LILLIAN: This is what they did!

ALICE: Like cargo, yes.

LILLIAN: This is not you know, it's not fiction. (Alice laughs) This is what they did in those days.

ALICE: This is not the Q.E.II.

SIGRIST: Well, at least not where you were.

ALICE: No!

SIGRIST: Are there any other memories that you have of being on the ship? For instance, do either of you have any recollection of being on the deck and actually looking out?

ALICE: No.

LILLIAN: No.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what they fed you?

ALICE: Probably a lot of potatoes. I mean, that was – now, they're in the -- usually – usually a soup type of thing. Like in the Concentration, it was always a mixture whatever there was, radishes and potatoes and, you know, soupy things. I think it was like that.

SIGRIST: It was probably some kind of . . .

ALICE: A soup, yeah. I think they did their best for us, I really do.

SIGRIST: Well, they were trying to save your lives.

ALICE: Heck, yes, and they did.

SIGRIST: Lillian, do you remember what you were carrying with you? What . . .

LILLIAN: Nothing.

SIGRIST: Did you have any kind of . . .

LILLIAN: I had nothing.

ALICE: I didn't either.

SIGRIST: Nothing.

ALICE: No. We were refugees. What you see in the movies? That's just how it was.

SIGRIST: How long were you on the ship?

LILLIAN: Before, I think it's over fourteen days.

ALICE: Yeah. It was a long . . .

LILLIAN: Fourteen days. It was terrible. Um, it just was whatchamacall, you couldn't wait to get off.

ALICE: Well, you were seasick, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, did anyone attempt to treat your seasickness at all?

LILLIAN: No.

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SIGRIST: You just had to throw up and . . .

LILLIAN: You weren't even there. You just were a Jew. If you lived, fine. If you didn't, that's it.

SIGRIST: Was there a representative of HIAS . . .

LILLIAN: No.

SIGRIST: . . . that you know of on board?

LILLIAN: No.

ALICE: Not that I know of, no. I don't know. I would, I imagine some adult had to be . . .

SIGRIST: There must have been.

ALICE: Watching over these kids. You can't run amuck. Yeah. There must have been. There must have been. Somebody, adult.

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollection of participating in safety drills of any sort on the ship?

ALICE: No.

LILLIAN: Who heard that in those days? That -- this is like later on in life, not now.

SIGRIST: Okay.

LILLIAN: Not at that time.

SIGRIST: Tell me about what happens when the ship comes into New York?

ALICE: It was great.

SIGRIST: Well, what, but what was great about it? What do you remember of when the ship . . .

LILLIAN: What I remember is the buildings. The buildings the, the – the -- the building at the-- . First when you docked, you saw this huge monuments or buildings, you know? And you couldn't believe where are you, where could this be? You could not believe these huge, huge buildings, and the also the Statue of Liberty.

ALICE: Right.

LILLIAN: That was impressive.

ALICE: Very.

LILLIAN: That was very impressive. And then when we stopped at – at Ellis Island. And to see all so many people that were there, people in uniforms. That rubbed me the wrong way right away because of where we came from . . .

ALICE: Fright.

LILLIAN: It was terrible. And then you were -- you were put on, on, on, on the, whatchamacallit, this platform. Remember? And then we were put in the building. We had to wait.

ALICE: Right.

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LILLIAN: Right? And this horrible building, this horrible dungy [sic] of a place.
Remember?

ALICE: Yeah.

LILLIAN: It was awful.

ALICE: But what – what I remember was that the, "You're in America." That word
didn't mean anything to me. I didn't know what America . . .

SIGRIST: I was going to ask you, did you even know where you were going?

ALICE: No, or what that even was, what is America? Who knows!

LILLIAN: Who knows? We knew one thing, though, didn't we, Alice ?

ALICE: I never heard that word before.

LILLIAN: We were supposed to see, we were supposed to know that Mother's sister
was there.

ALICE: Right.

LILLIAN: That's it.

ALICE: But she wasn't there on the dock or anything, or, you know.

SIGRIST: So when the ship docked, you were taken to Ellis Island from there.

LILLIAN: Right. Well, they docked her right there, yes.

SIGRIST: And tell me what happened at Ellis Island, why, what actually . . .

ALICE: When we got off, when we got off the boat, they sprayed us first, you know. Like, we were liced [sic] and . . .

LILLIAN: De-liced.

ALICE: De-liced. So they had to spray. We had health hazards, you know? They sprayed us all.

SIGRIST: How did they do that? Do you remember?

ALICE: With those, those cans there was in the old fashioned days.

LILLIAN: Those cans.

ALICE: They just shhhht, from top to bottom. You closed your eyes . . .

SIGRIST: Were you wearing your clothes?

ALICE: Yeah. Just, uh . . .

LILLIAN: They treat us like animals.

ALICE: It's not like it is today, scientific. But they just had -- wanted to get a film over you so you don't spread out all over the place. Getting to Ellis Island to me wasn't as bad as it was for her. Because coming from the concentration camp, that was beyond -- this already was a building, I was used to a mob scene -- to a lot of people, you know, a lot of dirty people, a lot of smelly people, a lot of sick people. And this was the same thing, almost.

LILLIAN: Yeah.

ALICE: But, in all fairness, they tried. You know, there's a multitude of people there, constantly.

SIGRIST: How long did you stay in Ellis Island?

ALICE: I think it was a couple of days, wasn't it?

LILLIAN: Yeah, a couple of days.

ALICE: A couple of days. My sister Inga, she had TB. And she was --

LILLIAN: [interposed] We almost didn't make it.

ALICE: She was a ho – ho – she was the hold up.

LILLIAN: She was the hold up.

ALICE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Oh, I see. She was the reason why you were held there.

ALICE: Held back. Because they get you processed, you know. You have this piece of paper, and da-da-da-da-da, and we were going to an orphanage and it was all legal and proper. It wasn't just my sister Inga. There were a few others who were ill. But she had TB.

LILLIAN: She had a, she had a . . .

ALICE: And we didn't want to be separated because, you know, not that they cared what we wanted, but they tried to keep your families together, you know?

SIGRIST: Right, right. Lillian, what do you remember about being at Ellis Island and, I mean, you keep saying it's horrible, it's horrible, but, I mean, what specifically do you remember about that experience?

LILLIAN: It was dark. It was people who told all the people what? "You go here, you go there, and you stay in this cupboard, and this one stays in this cupboard." And lots of rules and regulations. But you said to yourself what is on the end of all this? You know, it was so, it was so uh, how sh—how can I explain it? Uh, it was so dark and it was so scary. Because these peo-- this huge building with these cubbyholes. Where everybody fits in a different place. Where you had to be this one for this problem, this one for that problem. We had to wait for our twin sister because of the problem with the spot. We didn't know if we were going to be staying, or we're all going to go back. We did not know. It was a very trying experience.

SIGRIST: You mentioned the spot. Can you explain for someone listening to the tape what you mean by that.

LILLIAN: Well, it was like an area of about twelve by ten and there were lots of people in there, desks in there. And people telling you -- you can, you may be -- you may have to be sent back. And they would tell it to us in French or German, right?

ALICE: They didn't mean -- they -- we thought we were going back on the boat, go back where --

LILLIAN: [superposed] We -- we thoit—we thought we were going back.

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ALICE: -- you came from. They just mean you're going to be detained. Now, as an adult you know that's what they meant. But they –

LILLIAN: We thought—

ALICE: -- didn't explain it to us.

LILLIAN: -- right away my mind, I says, "What am I going to do with the two of them? Have to go back to Germany. Where – we don't know where my parents are." That's what was in my mind. Meanwhile, nobody explained anything to you. These were different times than it is today.

ALICE: Oh, sure.

LILLIAN: Today you don't, you're not allowed to do -- what you did those years.

ALICE: The people, yeah.

LILLIAN: Over there you didn't know, because you were Jewish, if they're going to accept you or not going to accept you. And that's where we were, I was terrified with the whole thing. The building was big, the – the -- those cubbyholes were small, it was dark.

SIGRIST: How did they know that Inga had tuberculosis?

LILLIAN: Because they – they looked at you.

ALICE: The doctors, uh . . .

LILLIAN: The doctors looked at you.

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ALICE: They examined you.

LILLIAN: They examined you when we got here.

SIGRIST: Yes.

LILLIAN: And she had like a little spot. But finally we got through it, and my Mother's sister took us, and, uh . . .

SIGRIST: Wait. Don't get off of Ellis Island yet.

ALICE: Okay.

SIGRIST: Um, do either of you remember where you slept at Ellis Island?

LILLIAN: No, it was a dark place and it was a cubbyhole.

ALICE: I don't remember.

LILLIAN: It was a cubbyhole, like, of a dark, small place. I – I don't remember where. All I know we were separated from the other people who got out already.

SIGRIST: They were sort of brought in and out.

ALICE: Yeah, yeah, kind of. It was most . . .

LILLIAN: It wasn't that fast. Everybody had a long, it was a long . . .

ALICE: A long interrogation, yeah. But, hey, they had, it's all this paperwork, paperwork, you know, uh . . .

SIGRIST: Government agencies.

ALICE: And sure people don't, and a lot of people didn't have any paperwork, you know? You got yourself people at Ellis Island who have to process people, and it's not easy.

SIGRIST: What do either of you remember about being examined? Alice, you mentioned about being sprayed down.

ALICE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you have any other recollections of being checked out there, either of you?

ALICE: Yeah. They poked you in there, and they . . .

SIGRIST: The people on the, you know, listening to this tape won't know what you just did. You just stuck your tongue out. (they laugh)

ALICE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: So they're looking down your throat.

ALICE: They're looking down your throat, and they told me I had lice. No – no joke. Yeah. I had lice and I was very malnutrition, you know. And they asked you, they asked where it hurt, and, as bad as I looked, I felt all right, you know? I just needed food.

SIGRIST: Lillian, do you have any recollections of them examining you or the circumstances that surrounded that?

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LILLIAN: I remember a doctor looking at me, and, like, feeling and – and you know, heartbeat and stuff like that. I remember that. But I and I thought, you know, I resented everything that they did over there. But I guess it was -- that's what they did at that time. Uh, I feel that a lot of people who got in and out were very lucky. Because there -- sitting there for a couple of days, and not knowing where you're going to be, that was the most terrifying. That's why for all these years, when they first opened Ellis Island again, you couldn't get me there. You could not get me there. It's my son who took us back to Ellis Island for my birthday two years ago. And I was surprised. I said to him, "Jerry, that's not the way it was."

ALICE: No.

LILLIAN: I said, "You see that building over there? That's the way it was."

SIGRIST: The abandoned buildings you're probably talking about.

LILLIAN: The abandoned buildings, right.

SIGRIST: Can you give me any kind of information about Inga's experience at Ellis Island? Now, obviously she's sort of the one that, you know . . .

LILLIAN: Well, she was frightened.

ALICE: Yeah.

LILLIAN: She was really frightened.

SIGRIST: But do you know what they, how they treated her tuberculosis, or what, I mean, her experience.

LILLIAN: They didn't treat her for anything.

ALICE: But they just wrote down what you had. They couldn't do anything right there.

LILLIAN: Right. And if we didn't have my Mother's sister . . .

ALICE: Sister.

LILLIAN: . . . that would take all the responsibility.

ALICE: Sponsor, sponsor us, yeah.

LILLIAN: And HIAS, who backed us up, otherwise I am sure we wouldn't be here today.

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollection, you just mentioned the HIAS again. Do you have any recollection of having to -- any interaction with a HIAS official when you were at Ellis Island?

LILLIAN: I don't remember. But they -- somebody that was there from them. And then later on we went to, we had a meeting with them. (disturbance to the microphone)

SIGRIST: Oh, you just lost your microphone.

LILLIAN; oh, I'm sorry. You told me I was gonna do that.

SIGRIST: Sooner or later it happens.

ALICE: Yeah, you forget it's there.

SIGRIST: Um, do you have any recollection of dealing with any other officials?

LILLIAN: No. I – I -- I don't know Ellis Island or whatever. But I thought people – people were trying to be very kind, and I thi-- they -- they did as well – well as they could with so many of us. I don't know who they were, or the only people I really know about was the Amer-- is the International Red Cross. Because they made themselves known and -- but I think peo – they tri -- you know it's a state of war. I, my whole thing was just I would get something to eat and stay alive. That was my whole thing.

SIGRIST: Did your Mother's sister come to Ellis Island to get you?

ALICE: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Lillian, tell me about seeing this woman, and what you thought.

LILLIAN: Well, there was this woman, very properly dressed, very, uh . . .

ALICE: Stiff upper lip.

LILLIAN: Stiff upper lip. And you want, she said, "Oh, you're Inga, you're Alice, you're Lillian. You're going to come with me." And, whatchamacall, "I'm your Mother's sister, and I'm so happy to see you, and let's go." And we went. That's how it went. And she was very quiet and very strict about it, and that was it.

SIGRIST: What was her name?

LILLIAN: Uh, uh . . .

ALICE: Helen.

LILLIAN: Helen Gaillard.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that Gaillard?

LILLIAN: G-A-I-L-L-A-R-D.

SIGRIST: I see.

ALICE: That was her married name, of course. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Aunt Helen.

ALICE: She is a very, was a very strict woman. She didn't show emotion easy. She was completely opposite of my Mother. My Mother's loaded with love, you could, you find, you know, rolling off her sleeve for everybody. My aunt was very stand back, you know?

SIGRIST: What are your initial observations of this woman when she came to get you?

ALICE: Uh, she was tough. She and I did not fare well together. Uh, a very hard woman. She -- she knew the respon— I don't know. I don't even know if she wanted the responsibility. But she knew she had to do the responsibility of the three of us. She had two sons, two older boys. They were much older than us. And my aunt was -- she was, she was going to get us through this. She, this was her responsibility. She was going to see we do it right. She was a nut about school, and obviously what did we know about school, or care, you know? She had a very bad temper. She was very hard on discipline.

LILLIAN: She hit you?

ALICE: Many times, hard. And we stayed with her till – till our parents came over.

LILLIAN: 1945.

ALICE: Yeah, '45.

SIGRIST: Where did she take you to live?

ALICE: Astoria, Long Island.

SIGRIST: She took you to Astoria.

ALICE: A nice house. I said, the woman meant well, meant well. But she had no feeling. Oh, we were – we were like animals. We were – we ca—like, food, we'd eat it, and it would be gone, you know? She was trying to teach us manners, and, you know, but she didn't know what she had to work with. We needed help. We needed, in those days you didn't get that kind of help. We needed people to talk to us and be calm and, you know, or, "You'll eat again," and my aunt just didn't say anything like that, or we didn't, didn't, you know, stroke us, which was what we needed, you know, some sympathy, some, you know. But she – she did what was right by us, but that didn't help. But my sister Inga and I didn't fare too well with her because she was just so strict, so strict.

SIGRIST: Um, Lillian, let me ask you. Did you fare better with Aunt Helen?

LILLIAN: I knew how to use her. I knew how to handle her, and I also knew that if you play the game right, you learn after a while what we went through. And if it was getting too bad, I would tell her so. I wouldn't let her hit me or lit—the

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kids -- hit my sisters after a while, because I'd just say, "Hold it. This is not necessary." I just would say, "It's enough, and that's it." And she took on too much. And it's a shame.

ALICE: That's it. She took on too much. We were too much. We were like three animals. We were.

SIGRIST: Was she married?

ALICE: Yeah.

LILLIAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Was there an uncle?

ALICE: He was a wonderful human being.

LILLIAN: He was a wonderful human being.

SIGRIST: What was . . .

LILLIAN: But he never was home, and she took up all the responsibility, and it was too much for her.

ALICE: He went to work, he was a provider. He was a maitre d' at the Plaza --

LILLIAN: The Plaza.

ALICE: -- Plaza Hotel. A wonderful man, very stately, and there was no real love lost between them. They did -- they were married, like a lot of people; yeah, they're married, and nothing. But he brought in the money, and she, exactly

what she says, took on more than she could handle. We were not easy. If she had taken one of us, it would have been easier. We were too much for her.

SIGRIST: Um, Lillian, let me ask you. How, how, in what ways did she try to Americanize you, if she tried to Americanize you?

LILLIAN: Well, she tried to -- the reali -- the realisticness [sic] of it was -- , We weren't here maybe a month -- was it? When we went to work?

ALICE: You went to work.

LILLIAN: She put me to work. She put me to work. And just give you an idea, she put me to work, and she knew somebody in the Woolworth's store. Didn't speak English, I only spoke French at that point. And she said, "Give her a job as a fountain jerk." You know?

SIGRIST: At Woolworth's.

LILLIAN: Just so you know, at Woolworth's. And . . .

ALICE: Is that stupid?

LILLIAN: I didn't have a clue. But the man, the manager was very nice. He explained to me and he was very generous as far as his time. And I learned English quicker that way, but he -- and I made money. But the money I made was to save all the money that we -- I made and my twin sister (finally, she got a job there too} to bring our parents here after they got out of the Concentration. So whatever we did as far as work was concerned, we saved every dime of it in order to put it away. So when our parents get out we had the responsibility, my aunt said, to get -- to pay for this -- for them to

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come to the United States.

SIGRIST: And your aunt is reminding you of this?

LILLIAN: All the time. And we had to do chores at home, and we had, and meanwhile we met children in the neighborhood, because we were going to school, we didn't speak English too well. We had LaGuardia Airport that was there. Remember that?

ALICE: Uh-huh.

LILLIAN: And in LaGuardia airport the planes flew low. We ducked for cover. Children made fun of us. Nobody understood.

ALICE: Of course not. How could they?

LILLIAN: We cried. They – they – the-- "Here the crazy people." You know? We would go underneath the trees, or anything to hide. So that's the kind of thing what we landed up here in Astoria.

SIGRIST: When you went to work at Woolworth's, and you're young to do this.

LILLIAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you, you mentioned the guy who took the time with you.

LILLIAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me specifically some of the things he would do to help you understand.

LILLIAN: He showed me exactly what to do. And what I did is do exactly what he

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wanted me to do, and I was good at it. I took to it like one, two, three. I didn't have a problem whatsoever. I was very good. Later on I went to another department. He just, I learned very quickly.

SIGRIST: I'm just wondering what the teaching process was. Can you describe exactly how he would do that.

LILLIAN: Yeah. He'll give me a glass. Let's say I made . . .

ALICE: An egg cream.

LILLIAN: Or he'll give me an egg . . .

ALICE: An egg cream.

SIGRIST: An egg cream.

LILLIAN: And he would tell me, "Put a little chocolate, put a little milk. Get a little seltzer, mix it around, and then shhhh, some more of the, of the, uh . . ."

ALICE: Seltzer.

LILLIAN: Seltzer in. And I made a terrific egg cream. Or a banana split. Put three scoops of this, put the banana on the bottom. Put whipped cream, or put the chocolate syrup on top, and then put the whipped cream. He was wonderful.

SIGRIST: When he's doing this, was he doing it simply from a visual standpoint, like showing you the banana?

LILLIAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Or was he trying to teach you the English words to it?

LILLIAN: Both, both.

SIGRIST: Do you remember some, like the first words you . . .

LILLIAN: Yeah, banana. He said, "Banana, banana. This is the banana. You put it on the bottom. Ice cream. Strawberry . . ." He showed me strawberry, vanilla . . .

ALICE: Chocolate.

LILLIAN: Chocolate, and that, and he showed me all the way. And after a while the whole thing stuck. It was very, very good. I landed up not even a little later, as a display person, and I did all the displays in the windows. That's how, how I caught on. He says, "Come on, I show you this." I would do it. Wouldn't cost him anything except it was something somebody did he could rely on. Somebody that know that was talented, and I was talented, because I did the window display. Within a year, I did all the windows for the, in that store in Astoria.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what his name was?

LILLIAN: No, I don't, but I remember him as he looks.

ALICE: No kidding. Yeah?

LILLIAN: I don't remember his name, but I remember how he looks. I still remember. He was very, very good, and very, very generous.

ALICE: That's nice.

LILLIAN: In fact, he moved later on into the Bronx store on -- on Fordham Road.

ALICE: Really? See that? That she remembers.

SIGRIST: This is an important man in your life.

ALICE: Yeah, see?

LILLIAN: He was very good.

SIGRIST: Very important.

LILLIAN: He was very important.

SIGRIST: Tell me about your adaptation to this country and how you, you know, experienced America and learned how to . . .

ALICE: I took to it, I think, pretty well.

SIGRIST: You're too young to go to work.

ALICE: Yeah, right. I -- but my aunt had me working at home. You know, she was a fanatic. You could eat out of the toilet bowl, you really could. Clean, clean, clean, clean, clean. I mean, it's one thing that you help, we all do. Our children did, too, had to help. But it was like so-- really like slave labor. My -- my thing was mostly the kitchen. I mean, it was spotless, spotless. It didn't even need cleaning it. She was one of these fanatic people. So I went to school, and I cleaned house, you know?

SIGRIST: Tell me about going to school. When you were first put in school . . .

ALICE: I was terrible. It was terrible. I hated school.

SIGRIST: Tell me about the first day of school.

ALICE: It was horrible. I was in the principal's office. She was a wonderful woman. Mrs. Kent, I think her name was. And she took me in. I was by then I was ten years old, maybe ten-and-a-half.

SIGRIST: Right, because you turned ten soon after you . . .

ALICE: Ten-and-a-half, say, and I spoke no English. Uh, I was scared of everything, and she took me under her wing. She put me in a third, in a second class room. Ridiculous! I was even smaller than the kids that were there, spoke no English, couldn't sit still. You – you -- you're treating a caged up animal like a human being, it doesn't work, you know what I mean? It just doesn't. But she stayed with me in class a lot of times. Uh, I had a terrible time for the first year in school, terrible.

SIGRIST: Tell me about learning English and how that was.

ALICE: It was hard, I'll tell you.

SIGRIST: Why, though. Tell me why.

ALICE: Because no one really took the time, except for this Mrs. Kent, the principal. The other ones had no time. They're teaching a class, and they felt that you're going to get it, you're going to get it. And I didn't get it. It's not easy in words. It really isn't. And my aunt at home, she was busy cooking, cleaning, feeding you or dressing you. She figured you'd pick it up. But I

really didn't pick it up.

SIGRIST: Did she speak English?

ALICE: Oh, yeah, my aunt.

SIGRIST: Your aunts did, uh-huh.

ALICE: Sure. And she had two sons and very bright, especially one of them, and they were trying to help you. But, say, they were at least fifteen years older than we are. So they couldn't come down to our level. You know? To teach us.

LILLIAN: Except for yelling.

ALICE: Yeah. And math. One was an engineer, was a terrific guy, but you can't pound the stuff into you. If you -- I don't, I didn't understand the basics. I didn't understand anything. How I ever got through school is beyond me, I'll tell you, to this day.

SIGRIST: And, Lillian, you mentioned that the older boys were yelling. Does that, am I to believe, then, that there was a certain amount of impatience on their part?

ALICE: Oh, yeah. They didn't -- they wouldn't bother. They're grown men. They wanted to go on dates. They didn't want to bother with us. And the Mother made sure, they gave us so much work to do, and then we should be doing it. And you don't even understand what you're reading, if you could even read. It was, it was really. That was, I found, very hard -- the school, very hard.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the first word in English you learned?

ALICE: I think it was food. (she laughs) I really do. Or eat. Something to do with food, yeah. I tell you, once you've been hungry, real hungry, this is always on your mind.

SIGRIST: Right, that's driving.

ALICE: I kid you not. It is. It is a driving force.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit, in our amount of time {and Mrs. Rosenbaum is going to be calling me at any moment wondering where I am) can, I'd like to talk about your parents coming here. Now, obviously, you know, you're saving up this money, but your aunt is saying, you know . . .

ALICE: Oh, but it couldn't have been a lot. You couldn't have had . . .

LILLIAN: I did.

ALICE: Are we talking thousands or hundreds?

LILLIAN: No. But those years it wasn't thousands, Alice, to come over here.

ALICE: I don't remember that at all.

SIGRIST: Lillian, why don't you, we'll start with you. Tell me what you remember about the process just prior to when they came. What had to be done to prepare for their arrival, and what you knew of their life in Europe?

LILLIAN: Life in Europe wasn't-- was --that already was established. They -- from Concentration camp they went on -- on the boat, and they came here. That's how it went.

SIGRIST: Something must have happened, though, between . . .

LILLIAN: Well, we don't know what happened there.

SIGRIST: You don't.

LILLIAN: Because my Mother and father never told us. They just -- all they're worried about when they get here, what are they going to do? How are they going to survive? Again, it's the same thing.

SIGRIST: Did they ever talk about the liberation from the camp?

LILLIAN: No, no, they didn't.

ALICE: My -- my Mother, we -- we talked about it, yeah.

LILLIAN: What did she talk about?

SIGRIST: Is there anything that you would like to relate to us about what she said to you about that experience?

ALICE: That it was -- it was much the same as when I left. That they were put on buses. The Americans came, they fed them, and they were put on buses. And they went, I don't know where they went. And they stayed in Germany someplace for a while, until they got on a boat. But she reiterated a lot that the Americans, of course, were very kind to them.

SIGRIST: Were they still in Buchenwald right to the end?

ALICE: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: They were never taken to another camp?

ALICE: No, no, no.

SIGRIST: Lillian, what do you remember about preparing for their arrival?

LILLIAN: Well, my aunt took them in for a couple of weeks.

SIGRIST: Before they got here, what had to be done before they came?

LILLIAN: Nothing, really. Nothing had to be done, because we knew that they're going to come. And we knew that we were going to have to get an apartment. Because we knew we couldn't stay with my -- my -- with her sister. So we knew we had to get an apartment. Remember?

ALICE: Right.

LILLIAN: So we got an apartment beforehand. We looked beforehand.

SIGRIST: Who's we?

ALICE: Well, I'm sure somebody helped us. I mean, I'm sure we just . . .

LILLIAN: Yeah, somebody helped us.

ALICE: Yeah, I don't remember who.

LILLIAN: Somebody I think from my Mother's, no . . .

ALICE: Aunt's side, must be, yeah.

LILLIAN: Some . . .

ALICE: I remember how that went.

LILLIAN: Sigfried Moses helped us.

ALICE: That's right.

SIGRIST: Who's Sigfried Moses? Was that a neighbor, or a friend?

ALICE: A cousin.

SIGRIST: A cousin.

LILLIAN: A cousin.

SIGRIST: Sigfried Moses.

ALICE: Moses. A very nice guy.

LILLIAN: He is the one that got us the apartment, the basement apartment in the Bronx --

ALICE: The Bronx, on College Avenue.

LILLIAN: -- on College Avenue. And . . .

SIGRIST: Try not to talk at the same time too much. It will be hard for the transcribers.

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LILLIAN: We just remembered how . . .

SIGRIST: I mean, that's all right, be sensitive to each other.

LILLIAN: Anyway, so -- and so we stayed -- they stayed two weeks with my, with her sister.

SIGRIST: Before they got here, because we're avoiding the actual arrival. I really want to talk about when they, you know, you got the apartment before they got here. Tell me about when they arrived, what you remember, Lillian.

LILLIAN: Let me see. What happened when they arrived?

SIGRIST: Where did they come into? Where did they arrive?

LILLIAN: They arrived in, let me see, where did they arrive?

ALICE: At the boat dock someplace. Um, was that Brooklyn? But anyway I, I was all -- to see my Mother again was everything to me.

LILLIAN: I don't remember when they arrived.

ALICE: I don't either.

LILLIAN: I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what ship they came on?

LILLIAN: No, nothing.

ALICE: Nothing whatsoever.

SIGRIST: Do you know if, and this would be something that they might have related to you later, if the HIAS was instrumental in getting them here.

LILLIAN: I don't remember. Yeah. No . . .

ALICE: Oh, they must have been.

LILLIAN: They must have been. But, no. You know who would remember? Inga.

ALICE: Maybe.

LILLIAN: She would remember.

SIGRIST: All right. Well, so, they arrived. What are, you just were talking a little bit about your emotional response to your Mother.

ALICE: I thought I would never see my Mother again. I thought – I really did that – that it just, that's what I was thinking about on the train going further and further away. I fea—I never saw --- I would never see Mom again. Never, never, never, never, never. Uh, I no longer sleep with that in my mind all the time 'I'll never see Mom again.' And I didn't think that we, I didn't -- didn't -- my father didn't come into the picture, unfortunately. But when I saw my Mother again; it was a whole, a whole new lease on life. It was just like make my day. It made my life to see my Mother again.

SIGRIST: Did they look different in some way?

ALICE: My father really looked his a--. I mean, he was really drawn, and he looked like he'd been through the war. My Mother, I thought, looked pretty good.

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LILLIAN: I have a -- I have a watercolor that somebody did in the concentration camp.

ALICE: Yeah. My father fared very well for a long time, yeah.

LILLIAN: A great watercolor that he had.

ALICE: He had an interesting face, very.

LILLIAN: Yeah.

ALICE: Very distinguished looking face.

LILLIAN: Very distinguished.

SIGRIST: You mentioned this watercolor. This was painted by one of the prisoners?

LILLIAN: Of the inmates.

SIGRIST: Of your father?

LILLIAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Oh, that's interesting.

LILLIAN: Oh, it's a wonderful piece, wonderful.

SIGRIST: It sure is. You're very, very lucky to have something like that.

LILLIAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing your parents, Lillian?

LILLIAN: No.

ALICE: Coming off the boat, you didn't see them? No?

LILLIAN: I don't remember. I don't remember that at all.

ALICE: Oh, I do.

SIGRIST: Who went with you to greet them?

LILLIAN: I'm sure it were my – my aunt.

ALICE: My aunt. And one of the boys, must have, to drive.

LILLIAN: Yeah.

ALICE: The three of us were there. All I saw -- visual, tunnel vision -- my Mother and nobody else was there as far as I was concerned. That's just who I saw, my mom.

SIGRIST: Tunnel vision.

ALICE: Tunnel vision.

SIGRIST: Just your mom.

ALICE: Just my mom.

END SIDE A, TAPE TWO BEGIN SIDE B, TAPE TWO

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SIGRIST: Do you remember where you went? What was the next, when you got them at the dock, then what happened?

ALICE: Didn't we go to a restaurant?

LILLIAN: No, no. We went right home to her house.

ALICE: Oh, did we?

LILLIAN: To Auntie's house. She had everything prepared. Don't you remember?

SIGRIST: What did she prepare for you girls' arrival?

LILLIAN: I remember, red cabbage, I remember.

ALICE: Really!

LILLIAN: Red cabbage. And I, yeah, I remember that. I remember also sitting in that terrible kitchen that she had. Do you remember, she squeezed us all in there.

ALICE: Yeah, sort of like a booth affair. Yeah, is that right, yeah. But, and my Mother and -- my Mother and her sister -- they were not, they were completely opposite.

LILLIAN: Opposite.

ALICE: Yeah. My aunt did the right thing for us, but it was much more than she could take.

LILLIAN: Handle.

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ALICE: It was much more than anybody should have to take, three -- I mean, one, unruly, wild type of children.

SIGRIST: Lillian, you were a little more sort of in tune with your father when you were a child. What were your reactions to your father now? I mean, you've been away from him for a long time at this point. What was your interaction like?

LILLIAN: Nothing. I just, I just saw this very older gentleman, and you knew you were going to have to help out somehow to help them. Right?

ALICE: My father was short on emotion.

LILLIAN: Yeah.

ALICE: He was.

LILLIAN: Oh, no, he had . . .

ALICE: A stiff upper lip type, like my aunt. He was, yeah. So he was very emotional. He was.

LILLIAN: And it was nothing really. And I just, just how can you help them, and that's it.

SIGRIST: Of course, he's well into his seventies.

ALICE: Yeah! Well, well.

SIGRIST: Isn't he?

LILLIAN: Almost eighty.

ALICE: Yeah. And my Mother sort of treated him like a -- like a child, one of her children that you had to take care of. And you . . .

LILLIAN: My Mother right away had to look for a job. Right?

ALICE: That's right. That's right.

LILLIAN: She had to look right away for a job.

SIGRIST: All right. Well, tell me about that, Lillian. Tell me about . . .

LILLIAN: Well, she got a job right away. She got, through somebody in the family that lived in the Bronx, (coughs) got a job, and, uh . . .

SIGRIST: Doing what?

LILLIAN: Started to work. Uh, nurse's aide.

ALICE: Nurse's aide. That's the thing. That's what she's good. She did the same thing in the concentration camp.

LILLIAN: Yeah, and she liked being with people.

ALICE: She was good with that.

LILLIAN: And as long as, and she made good money. Even those days, she made. And she was very caring, so people really responded to her much. They gave her clothes, right? Remember?

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ALICE: Yeah.

LILLIAN: And stuff like that.

ALICE: And food sometimes, yeah. No, my Mother, my Mother picked up right where she -- my Mother had that knack.

SIGRIST: Who adjusted to the new country more easily?

LILLIAN: My Mother.

ALICE: Oh, our Mother.

LILLIAN: My father never wanted to leave . . .

ALICE: Never adjusted. He never adjusted. He never learned the language.

LILLIAN: He hated it here.

ALICE: Hate.

SIGRIST: Now, your Mother was educated.

ALICE: Very much, yes.

SIGRIST: Had she known any English prior to coming to the United States?

LILLIAN: Yes.

ALICE: Yes, yes.

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LILLIAN: A very bright woman. It's just, she never had a chance in life.

ALICE: That's right.

LILLIAN: And that's everything in life, if when you have the opportunity.

ALICE: Right, and take advantage of it. Yeah. She didn't take advantage of it.

SIGRIST: Although it seems that in her way she took advantage of situations that were available to her.

LILLIAN: Oh yeah. No question

ALICE: [superposed] Oh, yeah, that were available.

SIGRIST: Not everyone at Buchenwald who, who was compassionate, had an opportunity to work in the infirmary. I mean, she . . .

LILLIAN: No question.

ALICE: That's right.

LILLIAN: No question.

SIGRIST: . . . managed to do it on her own level.

LILLIAN: No question. No question.

SIGRIST: Tell me some of the ways that your parents couldn't adjust to the United States. Your father didn't want to try.

ALICE: No, he didn't.

SIGRIST: What was difficult for your Mother about life here?

LILLIAN: Not really. My Mother fitted in.

ALICE: She did. Because my Mother saw the situation and dealt with it.

LILLIAN: Dealt with it.

ALICE: That's what it was. This is how it is. I'm here, the kids are here. I have to take care of the old man, that's it. She went on about her business. Very basic and, you know, she didn't whine, she didn't. She wasn't, "Oh, me, I'm a Jew." No. This is the way, I'm that way. Take. This is what it is, do it -- or do something else.

LILLIAN: It didn't change her.

ALICE: Yeah. She worked with it. She -- my Mother was a terrific woman. (a telephone rings) My, my father was just an old man, and he wanted to go back to Germany. In many respects he felt that -- that Hitler was right. That's . . .

SIGRIST: Shall we pause now and, um . . . We're going to pause just . . . [pause] Did your father ever seek employment in the United States?

LILLIAN: No.

ALICE: No.

SIGRIST: Not even like a cottage industry at home?

LILLIAN: No, nothing.

ALICE: No.

SIGRIST: Nothing.

ALICE: He was too proud for that. He really was a proud man, and he . . .

LILLIAN: Stood tall.

ALICE: That's right.

LILLIAN: He never wanted to do anything. Thought this was such a minority here in the United States. Didn't like it at all.

ALICE: No, he didn't like it.

LILLIAN: Did not like it at all.

SIGRIST: Did he even want to come to the United States?

ALICE: No.

LILLIAN: No.

ALICE: He wanted to be sent back to Germany.

LILLIAN: Germany.

ALICE: But it was my Mother's call, he was an old man, you know?

LILLIAN: And somebody's got to take care of him.

ALICE: Take care of him, and the government don't want you, you know?

SIGRIST: Alice, can you talk about your father's desire to go back to Germany a little more specifically? Like when did this start happening, and how was it dealt with within the family?

ALICE: Well, it had nothing to do with us girls, because he hadn't, didn't send, you know? But it was just -- he told my Mother before she came over, he didn't want to stay in the United States. He wanted her and him to go away. Instead of coming to the United States, they ought to go back to Germany. He didn't realize what went on. He was just really out of it. You couldn't, he didn't have many friends he could talk to about it in the Bronx. Because these were all people that had been here. They were Jews but had no--. If you hadn't been through anything, how do you know what it really was about. So, yeah, he made the best, you know. He took his walks, he had his schnapps, and made the best of it. He made a few friends, old people, and he just went on, you know?

LILLIAN: He just didn't have a life.

ALICE: He didn't, no, when he came here. He was very proud. He was a veterinarian in Europe, and he was nothing here, so.

LILLIAN: Nothing.

ALICE: He wanted recognition, I guess.

SIGRIST: Lillian, talk about your Mother's social life, which I'm assuming may be a little

different.

ALICE: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did she make friends? Did she . . .

LILLIAN: My Mother, it's not as -- I, you call it social. I call it the survival. She networked with a lot of people. And she tried to be in touch with family, especially family. You remember?

ALICE: Yeah.

LILLIAN: Wilmington, and, uh . . .

ALICE: We had cousins throughout.

LILLIAN: All over.

ALICE: We didn't know about them, or they know about us.

LILLIAN: She knew about it.

ALICE: Yeah.

LILLIAN: And that's what she tried to do -- the networking, and trying to keep the family together. And also tried being with us, the children, and getting to know them again and all their problems. Getting married, we got married as soon they came. We got married in '51, right?

ALICE: Right, right.

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LILLIAN: All of us. And, so. And then all the problems with different children -- siblings, and stuff like that. She survived very well, very well. And she got re-married years later.

ALICE: Yeah, he's a wonderful man.

LILLIAN: A wonderful man she married.

SIGRIST: And what was the name of the man she re-married?

ALICE: Hess. What was his first name?

LILLIAN: Samuel Hess.

ALICE: Samuel Hess.

SIGRIST: And is that Hess, H-E-S-S-E?

LILLIAN: No, H-E-S-S.

ALICE: Right. And he was the same type of person that she was.

LILLIAN: Like my Mother.

ALICE: Loving, caring.

LILLIAN: They got along wonderful.

ALICE: And he had to die. Five years later he died. It's too bad.

SIGRIST: That is too bad.

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ALICE: He was a wonderful man. They were so happy, and they were such a good a good relationship.

SIGRIST: Um, just for the sake of the tape, since we do have to end soon, I want to get your own family life in here. Lillian, let me begin with you. When did you get married?

LILLIAN: '51.

SIGRIST: 1951.

LILLIAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And the gentleman that you married?

LILLIAN: Norman Rabinowitz.

SIGRIST: Children?

LILLIAN: Two children, a daughter, Cory, and, Cory Rose now, and Jay Rabinowitz. And they're both wonderful children.

SIGRIST: Alice?

ALICE: I also got married in '51, to William Israel Fishman, and we have two children, Wendy and my son Gary, who have children of their own. And my husband, unfortunately, died early in life. I mean, he was forty, of a heart attack. And we go on.

SIGRIST: What are you the most proud of in your life? When you look back on your

life, and you've been through . . .

ALICE: That I survived.

LILLIAN: And that everything that people think is so ridiculous in the United States, that if they only would know that, how everything can be taken away from you.

ALICE: So quickly.

LILLIAN: And how your life can be just turned around the other way, and you never realize it. That's why our attitude of bringing up children, living in a society, appreciating society and what can happen to anybody. Never mind Jews, anybody.

ALICE: Anybody.

LILLIAN: And it can happen at any time.

ALICE: Any time. True, very true. But you have to be a survivor.

LILLIAN: To realize it. But it's very hard to convey that to people, because people feel it's a movie. It's not a movie. And to try to tell that, what really happened and how, what should have been your life -- is turned around into something that's completely different. Not that the United States is not a wonderful place to be -- but that -- and the opportunities are fantastic. And you realize that very early on in your life. The opportunities can take you anywhere here in the United States, which is so important.

ALICE: But talking about a movie, I'm telling you, it should be mandatory for anyone that's alive to see Schindler's List. That is so real, so factual. I, nothing has

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ever moved me like that. It is -- the man, Spielberg, ought to get all the glorification, and he has. It is so real, so true.

SIGRIST: When we're done, I'll tell you a story about when I saw that movie. It curdled my blood.

LILLIAN: I wouldn't see it. I wouldn't see it.

ALICE: It should be mandatory.

LILLIAN: Yeah, she said, Alice says . . .

ALICE: Three times. It comes around, [not understood] .

LILLIAN: I would not see it. I would not see it.

SIGRIST: Nor have you any interest in going to Germany, as you've said before.

ALICE: I -- I was back a --

SIGRIST: Alice is the traveler.

LILLIAN: You know what it is? I think what bothers me the most with all of it, they took everything away. And I don't want to be reminded of this --

ALICE: [superposed] I think they took away your memory of it. That's what's bothering you. You just blocked the whole business out, and you can't get it back. That's five, ten years wasted of your life.

SIGRIST: It's not necessarily true that you can't get it back.

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ALICE: I don't know.

SIGRIST: But you may choose not to get it back.

LILLIAN: That's right.

ALICE: She seems to . . .

SIGRIST: There's a difference.

ALICE: She seems not to want to.

SIGRIST: Ladies, thank you very much. This has been a privilege spending a couple of hours with you. This is a wonderful interview. There's terrific stuff. There's, you know, great history, there's great psychological insight. It's been really, it's just wonderful, and I really appreciate you . . .

ALICE: Well, bless you for being so interested in all this. That's great. Great society.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist, signing off with Alice Fishman and Lillian Rabinowitz on Thursday, May 16, 1996, in Teaneck, New Jersey.

ALICE: You got it.