Nina Lederkremer Transcript

FREEDMAN: This is an interview with Nina Lederkremer. It's May 24, 2001. We're in Baltimore, Maryland and I'm Jean Freedman recording for the Jewish Women's Archive "Weaving Women's Words" Project. Okay. Well, I always start out every interview the same way, and that's by asking the person to tell me their full name and when and where they were born.

LEDERKREMER: I was born in Poland in the city of Nieswiez.

JF: Okay, and when was that?

NL: In 1920, March the 2nd.

JF: Okay, and could you tell the recording machine your full name?

NL: My maiden name?

JF: Ya, maiden and married name.

NL: My maiden name was Nachama or Nina Kaczanowski.

JF: Okay.

NL: And my married name is Lederkremer—L-d-e-r-k-r-e-m-e-r. Okay?

JF: Okay, thank you. Now, we were talking earlier. I know that you have been interviewed about your experience prior to coming to the United States already. So I don't want to make you repeat yourself and so we had decided that we would start the interview with the circumstances of your coming here—

NL: To the United States.

JF: To the United States.

NL: Okay. I arrived to the United States in April the 7th, 1951. It was a big storm, a snowstorm and the boat could not enter New York. I had to spend an extra day in Halifax.

JF: Oh! [laughs]

NL: And when I arrived to New York two of my cousins were waiting for me. It was before Pesach and my affidavit was for Erie, Pennsylvania.

JF: Why was that? Was that—

NL: Because they had to give papers that somebody's going to take care of me. See? All the people that came had to have an affidavit that somebody's going to take care of them.

JF: And so you—

NL: And my affidavit was from people from Erie, Pennsylvania but I had two cousins in New York, one in Brooklyn and one in Manhattan. And they knew that I am arriving so they waited for me at the boat and they took me home to their home.

JF: How long had it been since you'd seen them?

NL: I hadn't seen them for—one, I was a baby when they left our town and everybody was crying when they left [laughs] Europe, when they left our town. And the other one left—she met a man that she went to marry in America, and this was about maybe 15 years before or 10 years before. I don't remember exactly. But both of them came and when I came to New York they started to tell me, "As a Hebrew teacher, there is no use

for you to go to Erie, Pennsylvania. Remain here in New York. New York is a big city with a lot of Hebrew schools and you'll find yourself a place here sooner. And a lot of my previous acquaintances were already here in New York and they told me the same thing, and I decided that they were right and I gave up my going to Erie, Pennsylvania and I remained in New York. To make the story less complicated, so I had a letter from a big scholar from Israel that used to come on my lessons in Munich, Germany, and he gave me a letter to Professor Scharfstein (Svisofshtein). And Professor Scharfstein was a big wheel then in Hebrew education, and he told me that if I'll need help I should try Scharfstein and he'll be helpful for me to start my way in the United States. So after Pesach I went to visit with him and he was very impressed with me, and he wanted right away I should write my story. When he heard what I went through he was very anxious I should write my story, but I was not in the mood yet. It was too raw and I could not get myself to do it, so he gave me my first job in the United States, and I worked in Camp Masad, a Hebrew-speaking camp.

JF: Where was that?

NL: In the Pocono Mountains and it happened that I came at the end of the school year, so I couldn't find a job right away. And I felt very bad about it because I came penniless and my cousins were not big millionaires and I didn't feel like to be on their support.

JF: Were you living with them?

NL: For the first few weeks I lived with them, ya. They were very nice and very supportive be I myself was a young girl and I didn't feel that I should impose on my family because they were struggling people themselves. One was a [unclear] assistant in a colored neighborhood and the other one had a stationery in [unclear] Avenue, and they were very—struggling themselves to make a living in [unclear]. And I felt that I have to—so I tried out something that I have to share with you.

JF: Ya.

NL: I went to—through a protection. Somebody gave me a job in a factory where they are—had to sew labels on the ties.

JF: Mm-hmm, where was this?

NL: In New York someplace. In New York someplace. And this was for me such a sad experience because I had never been to a factory before and I didn't know what factory life is like. So it was a terrible experience for me. I came to this place and there was a woman sitting in—for 10 years and doing the same thing, and there was a formal lady that was so skinny. So I felt so sorry for her that she had to work under these circumstances with the light and the machines and [unclear] [laughs] that I felt sorry for them. And after that day ended the boss came over to me. I tried my best. And he says, "I'm sorry, my child, but you don't belong in here." So I didn't mind so much for him to let me go. [chuckles] Like I cried for the people that lived all their lives like this, and I came home to my cousin, Mania, and I said to her—and I—so she bawled me out. And she gave me a lesson and she said to me, "You don't know everybody can be a teacher and everybody can be a professional. And these people without this job could not have bread for their kids on their"—and she gave me a lesson about—that until today I have [laughs] a lesson. You don't mind me telling it?

JF: No, no. That's a great story.

NL: It was a great story because I cried, not for that, that they let me go, but for the destiny of these people. And she gave me a lesson of what life is all about. I didn't know anything. [laughs] And she tells me, "These people could not have bread for their people to eat without this job," and thank God that they had this job and so she taught me a lesson. And another lesson my other cousin taught me that I have to share with you too, because they were very clever women, my cousins, really. One cousin, I asked her,

“[unclear], tell me, how is your life?” And she told me something that I quoted her since. She says, “My child, life is what you make of it.” And you know, these are lessons that I had to learn. I didn’t know that you have to make the best of life. I thought that you can dream about who knows what and fly in the sky, and they put me down to earth. And they taught me great lessons that I’m still quoting them now, I’m telling you.

JF: That’s great.

NL: This was great lessons. “Life is what you make of it,” she says. “You can have a lot and be unhappy or you can have a little and be content.”

JF: That’s very true.

NL: And these were lessons of life that you acquire unwillingly, just going through life.

JF: That’s true.

NL: And these are lessons that later on I quoted and I taught others.

JF: That’s very—

NL: Because I—it was philosophy to me.

JF: Mm-hmm, definitely.

NL: It was philosophy. You see, I didn’t know the rules yet when I came out from home. I was from school into reality and I didn’t have no time to grow up really under normal circumstances. My whole life was abnormal. As soon as I finished school I was faced with disaster, with ruining and not knowing where I’m [unclear], losing everything and everybody. It’s a terrible thing so I had to learn later in life through other experiences. [chuckles] See?

JF: So what happened after the job in the factory ended?

NL: After the job in the factory ended Professor Scharfstein came into the picture and he told me in [unclear], “You go to the camp and over there you’ll meet principals. You’ll meet American youth and you’ll find out it’s different in the European,” which was very true, and it was—“It will be a good adjustment for you.”

JF: And the camp was during the summer.

NL: During the summer—the two months during the summer and I—they didn’t have a counselor’s job for me so the gave me a canteen—to be a canteen manager.

JF: Canteen manager?

NL: Ya.

JF: Okay.

NL: So they did have all the counseling jobs already filled and they gave me this canteen job in [unclear]—Masad [unclear]. And I was there for a few summers. I went there for a few summers and it was the first summer that I got my teaching job there. I met a principal who invited me to come to teach in his school in Talmud Torah on Pennsylvania Avenue.

JF: In—

NL: In Brooklyn.

JF: In Brooklyn, okay. Brooklyn, New York?

NL: Brooklyn, New York, and in the mornings I became a traveling substitute teacher through all the yeshivas and all the schools, Kineret, [several words unclear]. So in the mornings I used to be a traveling substitute teacher through all the boroughs.

JF: So you would go from school to school—

NL: From school—

JF: —whoever needed one?

NL: Ya, whoever needed a substitute teacher. So this was my mornings and in the afternoon I had this afternoon school on Pennsylvania Avenue. Tiferet Israel was the name of the school.

JF: Can you tell me about that? What was teaching there like? How was that different also from teaching in Europe.

NL: Oh, in Europe we didn't have no discipline problems whatsoever. The teacher was—you come into the class. The children get up and give you an honorable ovation, [laughs] you know? It was different and you had to concentrate only on how to give the more material, more—it was no other problems. It was not—you see, the kids in Europe were taught that learning is struggle and in America learning was fun. It was quite a difference.

JF: So what were—

NL: It took me a long while to get adjusted because it was a different ballgame altogether. When I used to go into a classroom in Europe I didn't have a problem of keeping the kids quiet or having their attention. Their attention was there. I had to give them only more material to prepare them or—with a lot of stuff.

JF: And what did the students do in Brooklyn?

NL: And in Brooklyn, you know, the kids come after festival—I learned later in the afternoon school it's very difficult for the kids to concentrate. After a day's work in public school they come tired and here I teach them a subject that is far from their age, and they don't—their father doesn't know it. Their mother doesn't know it. What do I want from

you? That was the attitude.

JF: Do you have any particular memories of specific students?

NL: Oh, sure. I have a lot of memories of—but are you interested to hear? I have a lot. I had—

JF: Maybe one or two.

NL: Okay, I had a student the first year that I came here to Chizuk Amuno. He's now an eye doctor and he told me—he came over one day and brought me a report card—all A's. So I said, "Richard, [unclear], why don't you give me your ability?" He said, "Mrs. Lederkremer, I use my brains until four o'clock and then they need a rest." And this was so—he gave me the answer to my problems, you know? I used to come, prepare the lesson plan and I don't get nowhere. And I used to blame myself, "What's wrong with me?" And he gave me the answer. I still quote him now. We go together now to learn Talmud with him in the same class. [laughter] Richard, I quoted him since. And the first year after my experience and you're asking a student—I was teaching then at I think this Brooklyn School—another school. I don't remember which one. But after the year one student [chuckles] came over to me. He says, "You know, your English improved a great deal." [laughter] I'll never forget that. I said, "I wish I could say about your hearing the same thing." [laughs] It was—you know, what kids say is unbelievable. You know, sometimes they'll tell me things, like, "God saved you for a purpose. You know, you should tell us all these things." Things—children tell you things that's unbelievable. I had once a child, I taught him the dietary laws and [laughs] he was a real brave guy, because nobody, in the 50 years that I was teaching I never heard of it. He says, "Mrs. Lederkremer, you don't know what you're missing" [laughter] because I taught that you're not supposed to eat crabs and you're not [unclear] and all this seafood. And he says, "Mrs. Lederkremer, you don't know what you're missing." [laughs] What kids say, I'm telling you, it's unbelievable.

JF: [chuckles] That's—

NL: I went—I had an operation and when I came back from the operation the kids were always asking for the books, write books about your survival and about your Hebrew teaching experiences. And I come to the door and as I—jumping, "Oh, I am so happy to see you! I hope you're going to write the books!" I'm telling you.

JF: That's great.

NL: From kids, you don't know. You can write a book, only from the kids what they say and what—

JF: That's true. [chuckles]

NL: I'll tell you. I took over a class in high school in Munich and it was—I was a young teacher yet then and I wasn't tall. And I—and the principal tells me to take over a class that a teacher who knew all the Talmud and all the great scriptures and everything, take over class after him to teach the prophet. And I was afraid because I never took a class after such a learned man and I was still young. So I said, "Professor Graubart," which the name of the professor—"Professor Graubart," I say, "I don't think I can do it," when he approached me I should take over this class, and he said, "Don't worry. I'll help you. Don't worry. I'll help you." So I didn't have a choice and I had to take over and it was a class of 35 students, and they were all taller and bigger than me with a few heads. [laughs] So I come into the classroom and I don't know what to do. You wouldn't believe what worked for me. I sat on the table and I took the roll of the kids twice and I knew them all. They [unclear] there; they were like that, [unclear]. I didn't know why but they became my best friends. [chuckles] And they gave me all their attention and everything. Later on, they told me that the great professor that taught before me, he was very learned but he didn't know the names of the kids.

JF: So that did it.

NL: That did it for me. I'm telling you, you never know what works.

JF: So what worked in Brooklyn? What worked at the Talmud Torah?

NL: In the Talmud Torah I learned—I had supervisors who came and helped me and told me that if they don't get it, don't get excited and take it easy. This is a different ballgame; it's hard for them. And they helped me, the supervisors who came. You see, I had supervision for three years because I had to make my license, so they sent supervisors to me to help me. And the supervisors helped me to adjust, that this is a different ballgame, you understand. It's after—I have to take it easy and in some classes it's just like a cripple. You have to take step by step, and I learned.

JF: How long were you there?

NL: Three years I was in New York.

JF: Three years, and you were teaching—

NL: From '51 to '55—I came in Baltimore because that's when I married my husband.

JF: So how did you meet your husband?

NL: Well, this is a—also a very interesting story. We were in the same places in Russia. I didn't know him. Then we were in place in Bindermichl in Austria. I didn't know him and he didn't know me. And we had to come to America to meet and it is funny. I got the invitation for Pesach, to go for Pesach. I had friends here in Baltimore and I had cousins in Bridgeport, Connecticut and I had friends in Lakewood, New Jersey who invited me for Pesach. And I asked my lady that I lived with—Mrs. Perl was her name—[laughs] I say, "Mrs. Perl, from all the invitations, where should I go?" She says, "Here you can go for the weekend. Here you can go for the weekend. Here, Pesach is eight days. Go to Baltimore." [laughter] Life is so unpredictable. You just don't know. And I come to

Baltimore and my friends say, “What is she going to say—do with us old people here? Let’s make her a date.” And they made me a date. They didn’t even know him. They knew his sister. They went to night school together to learn English. So they knew his sister and they called him, and he’s a very funny guy, my husband. He says, “What’s my fault if you have a girl?” [laughter] That’s exactly what he said. “What is it, my fault?” And the moment he came in and saw me he said, “Why didn’t you call me before?”

JF: Oh, that’s lovely.

NL: That’s how it happened. So, it’s stories—it’s stories of—and a matter of fact, it was bashert because I’ll tell you, I had a principal in Munich who was very interested in me, and his name was Kremer. So when my friends found out that I married a Lederkremer they was joking, “Kremer was not enough for her. She needed a Leder one.” [laughter] So it’s funny. Life is very unpredictable and I didn’t think that anything is going to come out of it, but he got so involved. The people—to be in Baltimore and not to see Washington was unheard of in those days. So my friends here that I met in Germany and they were living here in Baltimore, they offered to take me to Washington, and from Washington you go to New York after you—and this was their arrangement. But when he started to come he already didn’t let anybody to take me to Washington. He took me to Washington [chuckles] and he carried my valises and spent a few hundred dollars in those days.

JF: Wow!

NL: And he was a big spender [laughs]—that I felt terrible because when you meet a man the first time and he’s so gallant and so very—and I came to my cousin. I say, “I’m going to send him the few hundred dollars back.” I felt awful. She says, “You don’t do things like this.” [chuckles] My cousins helped me around a lot, how to behave. [laughs]

JF: So what happened after you went back to New York? Did you think you'd see him again?

NL: He's—I didn't think so but he followed. He came to New York once and then another one with flowers, you know, with perfumes, you know that. It was meant. And then we met in Pesach on Shavous. He brought me here to introduce to his family and we got married the 29th of August.

JF: And what year?

NL: In 1954.

JF: 1954, and what is your husband's name?

NL: Jacob.

JF: Jacob. And what did he do here?

NL: What did he do? He was doing [unclear]. He came from a family that were well to do in Poland. They had a brewery and they were sent by the Russians to Siberia, but he escaped with the whole family, with his mother and father and sister. So it was hard for them but it was easier than for me because I was all by myself—all alone. So—and after the war he came here and he didn't have no profession. He worked in, you know, the factories and he did everything, and at the end he remained a salesman, and that was his profession when he came to Baltimore. So at first we thought that we make—going to make our home in New York, so for a year we lived in New York. But then his father passed away and he couldn't find peace in his heart to leave his mother and sister alone, and that's what brought us to Baltimore.

JF: So where did you live when you first came to Baltimore?

NL: In his house.

JF: Where was that?

NL: On Park Heights Avenue but lower down they had an apartment.

JF: In the city?

NL: Ya, in—also in this section but it was lower down then.

JF: But in the county or in the city?

NL: It was city.

JF: In the city.

NL: It was the city, yes. It was the city and we didn't have a car; we had to walk around. [chuckles] And we used to walk and—you know, how you come. It's very hard. It was very difficult.

JF: Tell me about that. Tell me what it was like for you coming here, a young bride, to a new city.

NL: It was very difficult. First of all, Baltimore looked to me like a big village after New York and after München and after all the big cities that I was after the war. And I was in Munich. I was in Vienna; I was in bigger city and New York three years. And I loved the operas and I loved all the symphonies, and I used to run all over. I was young. [laughs] And I wanted to take, you know, the museums and everything when I was in New York. And I loved New York. I got to love it. We used to go—in those days with the subway I could go anyplace.

JF: Where did you live in New York?

NL: At first I lived in [unclear] Avenue.

JF: Okay, in Brooklyn.

NL: In Brooklyn. And then I got a job before I got married in Long Island and we had to start there. But his father passed away so I couldn't take the job there anymore and we moved to Baltimore in 1955 in September. The matter of fact, the board of education here gave me the employment before they saw me by my credentials.

JF: Tell me how that happened. That sounds like a good story.

NL: Ya. You know, I sent in my credentials.

JF: This is for the public schools or for the—

NL: For the Chizuk Amuno.

JF: For the Chizuk Amuno.

NL: For—no, it—I didn't know it was [unclear]. I sent it in for the Board of Hebrew Education.

JF: Board of Hebrew Education, okay.

NL: It was the Board of Hebrew Education and they invited me to Chizuk Amuno and I got my contract. When I came to get my contract I said to my principal—it was Mr. Shay then—I say, "I hope I'm not disappointing you because you didn't see me when you took me in without seeing me even, just by my credentials." [chuckles] Okay, I had my license already established in New York, so by my license and by my story and everything they took me in with no problem. And I taught at Chizuk Amuno then. They didn't have this building yet.

JF: Where was Chizuk Amuno at the time?

NL: It was on Whitelock Street—on Eutaw Street.

JF: On Eutaw Street.

NL: Eutaw Street. But in Eutaw Street there was not enough classrooms, so they rented a cottage on Whitelock, and that's where I started to teach. And then it was on [unclear] Avenue. As a matter of fact, I was surprised in America I should have to teach under such circumstances when I came. I'll tell you, it was a cottage, three stories and it was falling apart. And I had big classes, 28 kids in a classroom. And when that—before I used to get into the classroom I used to say a prayer the ceiling shouldn't fall on the heads of the kids. I'm telling you, and I was surprised. I'm coming to America to the rich country and here I have to teach under such circumstances. Okay, in Germany when I had to teach in the [unclear] camps I understood that's the best I can expect, but to come to America, it was a surprise for me.

JF: Did you start teaching here as soon as you arrived in Baltimore then?

NL: Oh, ya. I had already my contract in September. I had to start—that's when I came here.

JF: And it was an afternoon school, is that right?

NL: Yes.

JF: And what ages? What ages?

NL: What ages? The kids were 12, 10 years old. I had the sixth grade as they were just bar mitzvahed. I taught all the classes and all ages during the years.

JF: Can you tell me more about that? I'd be interested to hear about your experiences as a Hebrew teacher, if there were any particular students that stood out or—

NL: Oh, it was all—

JF: —after—when things changed.

NL: Listen. There was always students who were very, very good and there were students who were struggling, like for instance, I had one here they made of a play of it. I had one year a very difficult class.

JF: What made it so difficult?

NL: The kids were restless. I had a class of 28 boys and every one of them had different energies, and one girl was in this class and this class was a struggle, not only for me but for all the teachers. And the faculty was aging and I was the youngest, so the principal gave me this class for three years. And, okay, the first year you can tell the kids you're going to do that, you're going to do that. But then they see how far you can go and they take advantage. As I say, this boy that told me about the dietary laws, it was in this class, and I had a boy who was a drummer who used to drum and now he's a musician. You know, every child has his inclinations, and this happened to be a bunch that was restless.

JF: What year was this?

NL: This was, let's say, maybe thirty years ago.

JF: Thirty years ago.

NL: And this class here—after I couldn't handle it for three years already, the last year the principal had to teach them, and I used to hear terrible stories. They used to throw their books at him. But it was a very restless bunch. But that's the only one that I had. The last were brilliant. Most of my students were the best during the year—really the best, and they are now in all walks of life. And they are so—even the bad guys that I—that were difficult for me—every child is a [unclear] for himself.

JF: That's very true.

NL: And every child has different—I had a problem once with a child and I didn't know the reason. There was trouble at home. The mother was divorced and she got in with some guy he didn't like and the boy was miserable. And I didn't know it until I bawled him out a lot and another student that I taught in this class that never hears a word that I am teaching says to me, "You teach us not to hate and not to bear a grudge and not to do that. How come you bawling him out like this?" So I went out and I gave him a kiss on his head [chuckles] because I thought he never absorbs anything that I teach this child.

JF: But he was actually taking everything in.

NL: Ya, so you never know. When you teach you just never know where you throw a stone.

JF: That's very true.

NL: At the moment, at the time you think he doesn't know, he doesn't see, he doesn't hear. But be surprised how much they [unclear] about my experiences with teaching. I had a year [chuckles] I'll never forget in New York. I taught high school girls in a very religious school in Bais Rifka (Beth Rivkah) [unclear]. And I taught there and the best girls—they came from Canada—13, 14 year-olds. It was high school grades. And I taught them literature and I taught them [unclear] story.

JF: And this was in addition to teaching at the Talmud Torah?

NL: Yes, this was extra in the mornings.

JF: Okay.

NL: Ya, this was an extra job in the morning. I taught wherever I could get something, you know, for how long. They didn't have money to pay me. [chuckles] I gave them a donation of a few months teaching without nothing but it was an experience for me, the high school girls. They were adorable. They were just adorable.

JF: And these were Lubavitch?

NL: That's Lubavitch; Bais Rifka School. We had a Rifka school in Brooklyn at seven—what's the—Park—what's called the name. I have—you know, I have some paper that I'm going to give you home—

JF: Okay, great.

NL: —from—this is going to be interesting for you to see about my experiences a little bit. I prepared a whole [unclear]. You're going to take it.

JF: Oh, thank you.

NL: Ya, you're going to read it and going to see who you're dealing with. [laughs] But these girls taught me also a lesson. You'll be surprised, I was teaching Friday and I came Sunday the same outfit. This girl says to me, "Weren't you home?" [laughs] And that's when I learned that I have to change around everyday when I come to school, you know?

JF: Because they notice.

NL: Huh?

JF: Because they notice.

NL: They noticed everything. I came Friday. In Europe you could wear the same dress all the time. Nobody will notice a difference but here in America was different.

JF: That's interesting.

NL: See, that's what things—little things that you learn as you involve yourself with children or with kids, with—about this boy that I told you. I found out later on that he had these problems. If I would know I wouldn't bawl him even out—

JF: Right.

NL: —at the time. Sometimes we are faced with things that we don't know as teachers, and it's very challenging. If the principal would tell me that this is a problem at home I would handle the whole story differently, but sometimes the principal don't tell you nothing.

JF: That's right. That's right.

NL: And the teachers get burned because if you know you handle things differently, like I had a student who came to my classroom and I was teaching for Pesach. And I wanted him to learn [unclear], to be able to lead a whole seder and everything. And he gets up and says to me, "Mrs. Lederkremer, my father doesn't know it. My mother doesn't, and my grandfather doesn't know it. What do you want from me?" "Oh," I said, [unclear]. "Thank you very much for telling me all this. Now, you're going to learn and you're going to lead a whole seder and you'll teach it to them."

JF: And did he?

NL: And it worked.

JF: So what was your curriculum in teaching at Chizuk Amuno? Were you teaching—

NL: I was teaching the Bible and I was teaching prayers and I was teaching language, reading. The most important thing was the reading and holidays and observances and all this stuff.

JF: So quite a bit?

NL: [chuckles] The kids used to say, You can be a chazzan and you can be a [unclear]. [laughs] That's what the kids say. "Mrs. Lederkremer, you can be a chazzan," because I taught them the prayers to sing, and in the kids' mind if you sing the prayer you're a chazzan." [laughs]

JF: Were the kids who were in your class—were they also members of Chizuk Amuno or—

NL: Most of them, yes. I had very good cooperation with the parents. The parents were very cooperative in most of the cases. In some years, I taught the parents too. It was some cases that the parents had to learn together with the kids for a few years. And it was very successful. I have an eye doctor whom I taught and I taught all his kids. You see, it's a family—all families. That's why at Chizuk Amuno—when I come I have to tell you that—my husband says, "When you come to Chizuk Amuno you're like a mezuzah. Everybody kisses you." [laughs] So it was a—it was an experience and I laughed every moment of it. Chizuk Amuno was a very nice congregation. I worked for pennies in those days. It was a very bad paid job but I loved to teach. This was my life and I—and my kids, most of them were better in Hebrew than in English. Some of them I have now parents. You know, they are bringing their kids and it gives me a pleasure. That's my whole life; when they come and bring their kids, it gives me a lift. It's very—a wonderful feeling and my whole life wasn't connected with the school, and then I joined all the Jewish organizations, Hadassah and Amit and Naamat. And this was my life. I didn't have my—kids of my own so this fulfilled me.

JF: Okay, well, I want to hear more about that. Let me ask you just a few questions more about Chizuk Amuno. Were you and your husband members of a congregation?

NL: No, but I was offered to come to services on a regular basis but I never went here because we are orthodox.

JF: You are orthodox, so did you belong to another congregation?

NL: Yes, we belonged to a small congregation in the neighborhood where my husband goes to daven every morning and we go there to services.

JF: And when did you join? Did you join that right away as soon as you moved to Baltimore?

NL: What is it?

JF: The synagogue?

NL: Chizuk Amuno?

JF: No, the one where—

NL: No. First, we went to another shul, an orthodox, in the neighborhood. But then we moved—for the last 25 years—the shul—a small cottage that my husband goes to prayer group every morning and we go to services over there, because it's—we don't ride on Shabbat. So it's in a walking distance.

JF: I see. I see.

NL: Oh, ya, [unclear].

JF: Okay.

NL: But I did for Chizuk Amuno the most I could, as loyal as I could be. [laughs]

JF: Did you find it difficult to be orthodox in Baltimore, different from being orthodox in Europe?

NL: Well, listen, it is—I didn't have really a normal life. It was kind of, for me, so young that I couldn't even—I know that my husband is always complaining that the kashrut is here not as particular as it used to be—the—you know what kashrut?

JF: Mm-hmm.

NL: The dietary laws is not so observed as it used to be—

JF: As it used to be.

NL: —in Europe. The dietary laws, even the ones that they give [unclear], he doesn't believe that it's really also kosher. [laughs]

JF: So he's very strict.

NL: He—we are comparative. We are comparative. He doesn't ride on Shabbat on I don't ride of Shabbat, and we observe as much as possible. [chuckles] Let's put it this way.

JF: Can you tell me about your—how you celebrate the holidays and how you celebrate Shabbat? Did you do it with his family, with friends?

NL: We used to. Now, his parents are perished and his sister is [unclear] here and he's only me and him, and we do the best we can. It's sad when you don't have children [unclear] you don't have family, it's not much of anything.

JF: Can you tell me about—

NL: Like I say, for us it's very painful—very painful because we don't have family and, for instance, I used to make a sedar and invite some Russian people to the seder. And it's

not—and as you grow older, it's getting—

[end of side 1, tape 1]

NL: —it's getting harder. So I don't do it anymore as I used to.

JF: Can you tell me about some memories of past seders?

NL: Oh, past seders. Well, listen, [chuckles] we live with the past with what was and that's all, and at home was so glamorous, the holidays, that here in the United States I never felt like that. I'll tell you the truth.

JF: What made it so special—at home, meaning in Poland.

NL: In Poland.

JF: What made it so special?

NL: Well, [unclear] it was—the whole life was surrounded around that. You know, you just lived from one holiday to another holiday. Like I say, for Pesach we had a special room with all the dishes, with all the silver [unclear], the beautiful china and everything and came Pesach [unclear]. And you put it all out and it was yomtov. I didn't experience this here in my house, unfortunately, because I didn't have a family.

JF: So how did you—

NL: If I would have children maybe, I would try to do—but not having my own children, I never got into the spirit of it really. It was very sad every yomtov for me to—it's a sad day because I live in the past too with my holidays. And I remember what we—at home. I

cannot even start to compare. You see, those people who had families here, they adjusted and they made it just as good. I have an aunt who make beautiful seders and [unclear] and beautiful things because they have kinderlach and they have grandchildren. They have—so it makes a big difference. But in my case it is very sad and I'm telling you the truth. I don't know if I should say it but—

JF: Absolutely. The truth is—

NL: But I'm telling the truth. In my condition that it's me and him and he and me. It's not a yomtov, I call it, you know. A seder is an order in Hebrew. When [unclear] a seder, in my house it's a [unclear] seder. It's not order. Unfortunately, [unclear] I am openhearted and I'm telling you the truth how I feel about it.

JF: Okay.

NL: Because when you don't have kids—they made the holidays. The kids make a holiday and without kids it's no holiday. And unfortunately, we are without kids and without family. You know, I—my only family that I have is in Israel.

JF: I see.

NL: My brothers had families. My—both brothers perished already in Israel. They died but they brought up beautiful families there. One has two sons—had two sons and he got married and had grandchildren, so they have beautiful families in Israel. They come to see me, my nephews and my nieces and one is a doctor—one in Israel. They are very nice established now in Israel and I pray to God [unclear] they should [unclear] real well.

JF: These are—so you had two brothers who went to Israel?

NL: Yes, I had—both of my brothers settles in Israel.

JF: And was this right after the war?

NL: Right after the war. One went to the [unclear] aliyah and he was in Cypress. And the other one—the first opportunity they had to go to Israel—he didn't want to go to any other countries anymore. He didn't want to go to a diaspora. He wanted to go to Israel. Both of my brothers decided that they had enough of diasporas. They didn't want any.

JF: But you didn't—

NL: But they had the chance to—and I was meant to go to Israel too.

JF: You had decided to go to Israel too?

NL: Ya, it was decided but with me it was my brother—one of my brother's situation in Israel was very difficult then.

JF: How so?

NL: They didn't have food.

JF: Oh.

NL: They didn't have food. It was very difficult. And he wrote me, "My dear sister, if you have a chance to go to America [unclear] before me. So you go to America. From America you always can come to Israel." And that's what I did. And this Kremer, the principal that was so much—he took everything that I possessed in Germany to Israel. He—

JF: How did that happen?

NL: He was a rich guy and he took care all these [unclear] things when he moved to Israel, and he thought that maybe he'll take my things I'll follow. [laughs] But the things that he took came very handy for my brothers in Israel.

JF: Where did they settle? Where in Israel?

NL: One in Nahariya and one was in Kibbutz Eilon—Kibbutz Eilon.

JF: And did you visit them frequently?

NL: Oh, ya. I was seven times to Israel. I went seven times to Israel and I am very much involved with Israel because I think that as long as we have Israel we can live all over the world. But God forbid, something should happen to Israel there's no place for us in anyplace.

JF: And when you say—

NL: That's how I feel.

JF: When you say you're very much involved with Israel—

NL: I'm involved. I'm trying to talk to people about Israel all the time. Whenever I have a chance I promote Israel.

JF: Do you give talks to—

NL: Sometimes, if I have a chance whatever I teach, wherever I—in Hadassah, in organizations. I speak six languages.

JF: Wow! Which ones?

NL: Polish and Russian and German and [unclear] and Hebrew and a little bit of English.

JF: A little—you speak a lot more than a little bit of English. [laughs]

NL: Ya, thank you. So two languages I made good use of. Hebrew I taught for 50 years and Russian I am now a translator.

JF: Really?

NL: Ya.

JF: What do you translate? Books? Art?

NL: It's for the Russian Jews who came. I help a lot with the Jewish Family Services.

JF: And what do you do?

NL: I go with them to doctors' offices because they don't speak the language and I am a translator. I go to social services while they have to apply for anything so I help them. And I do it for the last 28 years and at the beginning nobody here spoke Russian in our town. So I was the link with Russia to let them out, to let the Russian Jews out. And I was involved in translating and talking [unclear] with the translation here in English.

JF: That sounds very interesting. Do—

NL: Yes. Listen, that's what I say. These two languages I use—well, I use four languages everyday—Hebrew and Jewish, read the papers in Russian and English. We read all the time, me and my husband. But use four languages all the time. [laughs]

JF: I'm impressed. I'm very impressed. Okay, I'd like to ask you a few more questions about your teaching, and you say when you started teaching it was in rather primitive conditions.

NL: Yes, yes.

JF: And how did things change over the years?

NL: Oh, it became much more—listen, we built such a beautiful building.

JF: When did that happen?

NL: This happened in—we have it on there—'58 or '59. I'll have to look on the [unclear]. [chuckles] I forgot already. And that's when we moved here. This was a great move. It was not as big as now. It was just one section of the building. The building now grew very big during the years but first it was just a small park next to the synagogue on top there. Now, when I come here I need roller skates. [laughter] I really mean it. It's a beautiful place now. There's a day school now. The day school's already 18 years old here.

JF: Did you teach in the day school or—

NL: No, no.

JF: No. So you continued teaching in the afternoons.

NL: Afternoon school.

JF: And did the—how did the curriculum change or the students change?

NL: The curriculum changes all the time. For instance, there's a Melton research that now they are teaching adults. When I was teaching they wanted me to teach my kids Melton research and it didn't work. I struggled for three years with kids to teach them the Melton research method of teaching the Bible, but the kids were not ready for that. The curriculum—

JF: Can you tell me about how that worked?

NL: The curriculum changed. You see, Saturday the Melton research [unclear] you have to have some kind of a background to—able to do—the whole is based on inquiry. A young child doesn't know how to inquire.

JF: So how does the Melton research method work? I'm not familiar.

NL: The Melton research work, they give you a topic and you have to inquire about this topic, and according to the topic you go to the essence of the whole—the whole importance of the chapter, and all important lessons of the Bible. A young child doesn't know how to inquire. You have to give him a little material then to be able to inquire. And for three years I struggled until I told the Board of Education that this is not for the kids, that this is a good method for adults who have a little background and knowledge anyway, that they know how to inquire. Kids don't know how to inquire. You have to give them material to inquire later about. You have to give them the basis.

JF: And did they accept that?

NL: And then they started to teach the old method and the old method was different. The old method, I gave them the whole ideas and then I read a few verses from the Bible to emphasize the importance of this chapter. And that's where—how we discuss it and that's how we bring about to teach the children to understand it. You understand? But if you don't bring them nothing, they cannot inquire.

JF: Right, they have nothing to inquire about.

NL: Inquire about.

JF: Right.

NL: And for three years I struggled with this method. I tried. It was a fourth grade and a fifth grade and a sixth grade that I tried it with and it didn't work. And I told them I'm wasting the time and it happens in teaching that sometimes they try a method and it doesn't work.

JF: So did you always teach the same age or did you ever teach—

NL: No, all ages. But the first grade I never had until I retired. [laughs]

JF: Until you retired. [laughter]

NL: When I retired they started to call me to sub sometimes in the first grade too. [laughs] But all the other grades I taught through the years.

JF: Did you teach adults as well?

NL: No, I didn't have a chance to teach—okay, I teach adults sometimes, you know, in our organization. I teach them a lesson in Yiddish, a lesson in Hebrew or I give them something about holidays, but not regular adult education.

JF: Right. How did the students change over the years.

NL: I'll tell you, it changed a lot. I think now we have too many mixed marriages and it affects the kids.

JF: How does it affect them?

NL: Listen, I, thank God don't have to handle it now. I'm glad I don't have to teach it anymore because it's not easy, because I had a child who said, "Oh, I celebrate [unclear] Hanukah and I celebrate Christmas." Oh, the kids are mixed up. It's very difficult. All—I had children that suffered terrible. I had—one girl came to me on a Sunday morning and she was in tears. "My—I don't know where I'm going to be today, where I'm going to eat and where I'm going to stay." They were three times remarried and the child didn't know where it belongs. It's a lot of difficult situations that you face and some children are suffering. Some children are suffering and you don't know what's going on and you don't—but it's not a healthy situation. The mixed marriages and the—and the divorces are a disaster for kids. Okay.

JF: That certainly is on the rise.

NL: Hmm?

JF: That certainly is on the rise.

NL: Unfortunately, these mixed up families is very difficult. It's getting harder and harder for the teachers. When you have—when you have a normal family the child knows where it belongs and the child doesn't have this whole pain in their [unclear]. And this, you don't know how the child reacts to every painful situation.

JF: How would you deal with that?

NL: Hmm?

JF: How would you deal with that?

NL: I don't know. It's a very difficult situation. I just don't know. I don't know. It's very difficult. It's a big problem. It's a big problem and our generation's going to suffer from it. Unfortunately, it's a big problem and I don't have the answers. I just don't have the answers. I wish I would have but I just hope—you know, every generation goes through their pace and it comes a new generation and they start new pace, and that's how things go.

JF: Each generation has to work it out for themselves.

NL: Ya, and I'll tell you what keeps me going is one thing, that Nezach Israel lo yishaker. That's what keeps me—because there's so many problems but I believe the eternity of Israel is an eternity, and that's what keeps me going.

JF: So that's your—the [unclear].

NL: That—this thing keeps me going and this thing I hope and pray that every generation will settle their problems and they'll survive and it's going to go out because it has to. We as Jews—we have a special message in this world, and I used to tell my kids and I'm telling it whenever I have a chance. I have to talk. [chuckles]

JF: Please, that's what I'm here for.

NL: I think that after 2,000 years if we lived to survive all that went through, the Jewish people in Europe—through all the generations—my grandparents prayed for Israel to come back to Israel, to come back to—although they didn't live to see it. Our generation is a very special—I think we are very lucky generation with—in spite of all the difficulties with the Holocaust, with everything, we came back to Israel after 2,000 years, and this is a great event that we don't know how to appreciate. Unfortunately, we take it too easy and a country—oh, this I have to give you. I have to make a copy of something.

JF: Okay, put this on pause.

NL: Can I interrupt for a second. [tape turned off/on]

JF: Okay, we are recording now and we were talking about Israel and the message that you want to give to younger generation.

NL: To the younger generation I'll say it's a very big world and if you think that if you can take care of the world you're mistaken. Take care of your own backyard and let's see that we can take care of ourselves first, and if we properly take care of ourselves the world is going to benefit because we are really something the world is afraid of for a very important reason. We are the conscience of the world and if we are going to be ourselves and worthy of being ourselves then we can help the world. That's my message and that's how I feel about this rather strongly. Because we are a small people, we are nothing in comparison with the big world, so don't try to clean up the world. Clean up your own backyard. Don't take something that you can't bite and be yourself. Try to be yourself and don't care what anybody tells you. If they like us or they don't like us, they never liked us and that [unclear]. When they destroyed that they didn't like us. When we give in they don't like us, so don't really put too much emphasis on something you don't have no control.

JF: What do you think is the best thing that we can do?

NL: The best thing is to be proud Jews and knowledgeable Jews. As long as you're going to have the knowledge as a Jew it's going to be a big accomplishment. The biggest enemy is ignorance. The biggest enemy of our people especially is our ignorance. You are—I had once a cousin who sided with the Arabs all the time, and she's a very intelligent young lady. She finished college and has all the degrees but is very, very ignorant in her own Jewish history and her own Jewish past. And for us Jews, we cannot allow this luxury. For us it's a luxury to be ignorant Jews. We have to be knowledgeable Jews. We have to study and study and study and study because the Torah is a best seller and we don't know it. Okay? The Tanach is the best seller and we don't know it, and they falsify it and they try to do with it all kind of stuff.

JF: In what way?

NL: In what way? Look at the New Testament. There's so many unreal stuff in it. You don't have to go far. So we have to know our Old Testament and we have to know our own—we have a big, big library and you don't touch it. And this is terrible for us because if we're going to be learned Jews we'll know what's good for us and we'll know what's good for the world. But if you're going to be ignorant you'll know all the philosophies and you'll know all the meshugas that are in world, but the basis you don't have. And without the basis you cannot survive. Like a tree cannot live without roots, that's how Jews cannot live without their roots. That's my message.

JF: Okay, that has definitely given me a lot of food for thought.

NL: That's what my message is. Kinderlach—you have to learn. You have to learn a lot and there's so much to learn. That's why our grandparents and great-grandparents used to sit days and nights and learn, and they didn't get to all the knowledge that they had and we don't even touch it. But we try to make up [unclear] that it's not really there about

our past and about our present and about our future. So get to the roots.

JF: Is this what you would try to impress on your students?

NL: Always.

JF: Did they—did it work? Did they—

NL: Some of them worked. You see, they bring their kids to school. That's my—that's what I'm asking them. Kinderlach—it worked. So they say, "Why do you think we bring our kids here?" In some cases it works and some it doesn't. You cannot say it worked all the way.

JF: Well, nothing ever does, does it?

NL: Oh, yes. But some would become and they'd lead and they'd try to be Jewish organizations and they tried to be—the Hadassah, they tried to be here and there and they are involved and that's what counts. I hope some—you know, if one of a thousand gets out is also good—better than nothing.

JF: Do you have particularly strong memories of any stories in particular that you want to share about your students?

NL: About my students, there's a lot. I had once a class. I taught them about the Yeminite Jews and they made a play and until today [chuckles] they walk around with these memories of this play. [laughs] It was about the Yeminite Jews and they learned a great lesson. And now I have another one I started—that this is a book that is good today too. There's a story that I taught a class. The name of the book is "Chaim Pumpernickel" and it's a funny story but it's still true. The Chaim Pumpernickel was a little boy who was born to a [unclear] and didn't have too much to give his son. But he gave him the knowledge of the Bible and he carried it under his hand always with a loaf

of bread, “Chaim Pumpernickel.” [chuckles] And the kids were so impressed with that. What was the message? The message was that he was looking for Isaiah’s verse that will bring peace in this world. He was searching for this verse. And he kept searching and searching and he couldn’t find it. But meanwhile, the [unclear] came and the presidents came and everybody got involved to look for this search, this verse. [laughs] And it was really cute. And see, it’s a story that didn’t go out of style yet. We can teach it even today. You know? [chuckles] But as long as they were sitting and looking for it they were not fighting. And this was the message [laughs] that they were looking for the verse in Isaiah, how to bring peace about. And the kids remember it now, their parents, “Mrs. Lederkremer, where do you get the book “Chaim Pumpernickel?” They still like the book of “Chaim Pumpernickel.” [chuckles] It’s still good of all times. Sure, it’s a good book. We’re still looking for peace and we couldn’t find it but as long as we search for it, at least we’re not going to fight. So the presidents got involved and all the [unclear] got involved and all the—from all walks of life. [chuckles]

JF: That’s lovely.

NL: The message is—you know, like this—as I say, there’s so many different things that’s happened when you teach that you cannot foresee and you cannot predict. Kids are very, very spontaneous. They—you see, I was a teacher that I couldn’t teach step by step like other teachers. You know, you have to have a step, one step to—never could teach like that.

JF: How did you teach?

NL: I am spontaneous. I am a spontaneous—I could prepare a lesson plan and I come to the class and I see the children are not ready for it; I switch to something that they are ready for.

JF: What was the best of teaching? What was the best part of teaching?

NL: The best part of teaching is having the chance to give to kids what they don't know and to help them to find themselves really in the right places and get through life okay. That's the main goal of a teacher.

JF: Okay. And when did you retire?

NL: I retired officially in 1986.

JF: Now you say officially but you mentioned that—

NL: Ya, they called me. They called me later on to substitute and to tutor, so I worked another 10 years like that. [chuckles] Okay, and I'm still, you know, involved. Let's put it this way.

JF: Do they still call you to sub?

NL: I told them not to—

JF: Not to.

NL: —because I think the young people need a break. You have to give the young people a chance to be tutors. You have to give the young people a chance to come into a classroom and to see how to teach and they cannot build on me anymore. I'm not important anymore. It's important to bring the young generation in, and it'll come to [unclear] if you'll come to—maybe who'll get involved more. And that's what I told my principal and I think that's what they are doing now and I'm very happy that they do that. I don't need it anymore. [chuckles] I did my share when I had to and now let the young people take it over. They need it more than I do.

JF: Okay, well, I'd like to ask you some things about the other parts of your life here in Baltimore. You mentioned being involved in various Jewish organizations. Could you tell me about that?

NL: Okay, we have here Hadassah.

JF: Mm-hmm, when did you join Hadassah?

NL: Forty years ago. [chuckles]

JF: Forty years ago?

NL: Yes, I'm a life member of Hadassah and I'm a life member of Amit Women and Amit Women is the religious Zionist organization. And Naamat, that's the working women.

JF: Okay, can you tell me something about the difference between these three groups?

NL: [unclear]

JF: Ya.

NL: Yes, Hadassah is working very hard to keep up with the big project that they have in Israel. They build hospitals and nurseries and schools and they have a big, big project that they need a lot of money, and that's what Hadassah's involved, to collect a lot of money to keep the organizations in Israel working and—

[end of side 2, tape 1]

JF: This is disk two, the interview with Nina Lederkremer. It's May 24th, 2001. We're in Baltimore, Maryland and I'm Jean Freedman recording for the Jewish Women's Archives "Weaving Women's Words" Project.

NL: That's a very famous organization.

JF: Yes, and you were telling me about the difference between Hadassah and the other organizations.

NL: Yes, Hadassah has the big projects for the hospitals and technology classes, and now they have started something new with the genes research, and they have a lot of great projects that's going on to help humanity. And Hadassah is really doing a lot of things now even in the United States. They have a—they check mammograms. They teach the young—they teach to—young women to check on their breast cancer. They are involved in many, many projects here in the United States too—Hadassah. Naamat is having schools that teach kids who are—oh, the parents can't provide for them or they are homeless or something, kids who are really in need and they have special schools for them in Israel. And they also are teaching them religiously. See, they try to give them a religious background, the Naamat—the Amit Women. And I'm trying to support them too as much as I can in any way that is possible for me physically and materially. And now, Naamat is having a lot of kindergartens that they support the Israeli children.

JF: In Israel?

NL: In Israel. They have a big, big—in every city there are a lot of Naamat kindergartens, and now they have another project with the abused women. They help a lot in Naamat. And so I'm trying to be everywhere as much as I can under my circumstances.

JF: And what has been your own part in these organizations?

NL: My own part, I participate in their meetings. I participate in their—whatever I have to support with something, like, for instance, I am in [unclear] Israel for a meeting. It cost me a hundred dollars a year. [laughs]

JF: And what does that do?

NL: It gives—I support.

JF: So it's a donation.

NL: Donations.

JF: I see.

NL: And I support with my being there and my trying to influence others to belong, you know. And that's as far as I go. I am not a leader in any of these organizations. I'm just a participant.

JF: Have you been involved in any projects that were particularly rewarding [unclear]?

NL: Okay, I used to—Hadassah, for instance—there was a time when they wanted me to teach them Yiddish. So I taught a Yiddish group. Or sometimes they'll call me to make a [unclear] party or something like this so I participate. And we have a lunch on [unclear] so I share with them my knowledge whenever they call on me. [chuckles]

JF: Now, you mentioned you have five languages and—

NL: Six.

JF: Six, excuse me.

NL: Ya.

JF: And you said that Hadassah asked you to teach Yiddish. Do you teach or translate in any of these other languages?

NL: Just, as I said—I only use Hebrew as a teacher [chuckles] in teaching and Yiddish occasionally when they call me to teach them something about Yiddish. So I gave them a course of Yiddish, what Yiddish is all about, because they didn't know, the Hadassah

ladies. So I gave them the knowledge where Yiddish came from and just in a general few lessons, not more than that. Okay?

JF: Okay.

NL: Okay, in order to not forget my languages, four languages I use all the time, as I told you—but Polish and German I don't use so often. So I made my business I read at least one book a year not to forget. [chuckles]

JF: That's very impressive.

NL: Interesting, that's all.

JF: Okay. Now, I wanted to talk about your physical home where you told me about where you first moved to Baltimore. You lived in Park Heights but in the city.

NL: Yes.

JF: And when did you move?

NL: We moved—let me see, we came here in 1955. A few years we lived with my parents—with my husband's parents. Then we rented an apartment not far from there on [unclear], and then we bought a little house.

JF: Where was that?

NL: On Ingleside Avenue. It's also—all in the same vicinity—a little farther up—a few blocks here and a few blocks there. And we lived in our own little house about 12 years, and then the neighborhood changed.

JF: In what way?

NL: The colored people started to move in and this was in Baltimore a disease. If colored came in you have to move out and that's how it went. So the whole street turned colored so I—we sold our house and we moved to an apartment higher on Park Heights. [chuckles]

JF: And that's where you're living today?

NL: No.

JF: No?

NL: It was another one.

JF: Okay.

NL: No, we lived in another one 12 years and we had a beautiful apartment just like a house. And then the landlord sold the house and another landlord came and he made out my apartment two. So that's why I had to move. It was—ya, I had a very luxurious apartment. It was with a built in library, two full beds and a separate dining room and a separate kitchen. It was a very nice apartment but it was like a house with an outside lawn. And my husband likes to garden so he had a garden there, and for 12 years we lived in this apartment after we sold the house. And after 12 years, as I said, a new landlord made two apartments out of mine, so I had to move again. [chuckles] So then we moved to this one that we live here already 15 years.

JF: Can you tell me what your impressions are of Baltimore and living in Baltimore?

NL: Baltimore is a beautiful Jewish city, has a very nice Jewish community and it has a lot of Jewish schools. Baltimore is a very old Jewish center and the organizations are very well organized. We have associated Jewish charities here and we have Baltimore Hebrew University here, and we have Sinai Hospital here, which is very nice. But when I

moved in, I told you, it felt like a big village because I used to—going in New York with the subways in the middle of the night so many years ago. Now you couldn't do it. And it's a—we have a lot of synagogues for everybody, for orthodox and for reform and for conservative. It's a lovely Jewish community and lovely schools. We have a few yeshivas. We have the Ner Israel Yeshiva, which is a famous one. And Baltimore is a very well known Jewish center and Baltimore helps a lot Israel—you know, with the exodus boat was bought in Baltimore. It has history.

JF: Oh.

NL: It has history, a lot of history. And Ben Gurion came here even before the state was established and Baltimorians were involved in establishing the state of Israel. So Baltimore is a very, very important Jewish center in the—and we had now here—Ehud Almort came to celebrate with us Yerushalayim. See? So Baltimore is a very organized—well-organized Jewish center and Jewish community. And a lot of people come from—who have small children—they find Baltimore a very good place to raise their children here. We have a lot of people who came from out of town from other cities because of the well-organized community. The [unclear]—there are some religious centers. Well, when the colored people move in they don't like it [chuckles] and they move out because of our religious people who have also a lot of children. And it's wonderful. [chuckles] And it's wonderful—keep the—another thing in Baltimore, you know, it's like a Jewish ghetto here. Park Heights [unclear] is like old Jewish and all the Jewish synagogues and all, it's like a self-made Jewish ghetto really, in a way. And we have kosher food stores, which is helpful.

JF: You reminded me of something I wanted to ask you. I wanted to hear about the synagogues that you belonged to.

NL: Hmm?

JF: I wanted to ask you about the synagogues you belonged to.

NL: The [unclear]?

JF: Well, since you've been in Baltimore.

NL: There was first—the first one my father-in-law helped to organize [unclear] Rabbi Taub and his Arugat Habosim. This was the first synagogue.

JF: What was the name of it?

NL: Arugat Habosim. And this was an ultra orthodox.

JF: And how did you like that?

NL: See, we adjusted to it. Very [unclear]. My father-in-law helped him to organize a shul. The rabbi had eight kids and he was a poor man and my father-in-law felt like to help him. So my father-in-law [unclear] helped him to build a shul, and after he built a shul, so when we came from New York we went to this shul to pray. This was our prayer. So then we moved from this neighborhood into upper Park Heights here and it was far for us to walk to Arugat Habosim. So we landed up in what is it called? Center Synagogue is called our shul now. It's on Park Heights Avenue.

JF: Oh.

NL: And it's a few blocks from us so it's in a walking distance. That's why we belong. It's a small shul and in a cottage but my husband likes it because he likes to come—he goes to services at six o'clock in the morning for the first [unclear]. And that's how he likes it. So—and I go along. [laughs] I am a goody-goody. [laughter]

JF: Is there an opportunity to meet other women and to make friends at these synagogues?

NL: I'll tell you, they are mostly young people now—

JF: Really?

NL: —with a lot of kinderlach. They come to shul. It's a nachas. It's six kinderlach and seven kinderlach. They have a lot, a lot of young women with a lot of kids, and, okay, they are very friendly with me when I come and they treat me very nicely but I am above their age [laughs] quite a bit. Our rabbi just passed away and his wife passed away a few years ago, so my husband misses him very much and his whole synagogue Ner Israel [unclear]. And they have study classes there for the yeshivabocherim and they themselves lead the synagogue now because the rabbi just passed away, and my husband misses him very much because he was also very instrumental in helping us finish the Sefer Torah the he brought from Europe.

JF: Could you tell me a bit about that Sefer Torah? I think that's interesting.

NL: The Sefer Torah's very unique. I'll tell you my husband's father started to write it in their hometown in Poland, and they got to the middle, to [unclear], to Genesis and Exodus and half of Leviticus. And when the war started they took it with them to Russia. They smuggled it into Russia and it was with them all the years in Russia, the half of Sefer Torah. And when they came back they tried to find a scribe who should match the scribe that wrote it up [unclear]. It's not easy to find. So he sent it then to Israel. He had a cousin. And they couldn't find a scribe and they sent the Sefer Torah back to us here in New York, and I went to many places in New York to look for a scribe and I couldn't find a scribe that could match the same script. And it was laying around, the half of Sefer Torah, until we came here in Baltimore and Rabbi Vitsak (Vitsick)—the Rabbi Vitsak was our rabbi here from the shul—Rabbi Vitsak has a daughter, [unclear], and she found a scribe to finish it. So if—we sent with the money and everything, you know, [chuckles] the Sefer Torah and he finished it. And then when I was in Israel I saw it finished already and I met the scribe, and we put the Sefer Torah in a synagogue in Bayit-Vgan. In Bayit-

Vgan in Israel, that's where the Sefer Torah—it took 40 years for the Sefer Torah to come back. [chuckles]

JF: That's lovely.

NL: Ya, it was—it was a story. Forty years it took to finish the Sefer Torah. It went through all the—you know, it wasn't easy to smuggle the Sefer Torah through Russia and through all the borders and through every place but we made it. [chuckles] Thank God. And now it has a home.

JF: Okay, I want to ask you a few more questions about life in Baltimore. You mentioned that Baltimore has a very rich Jewish life and a very—a large, important Jewish community. I was wondering if you have much contact or many friends amongst non-Jews.

NL: Me personally, no. I don't even get to meet any.

JF: Is that through choice or just the way things happened?

NL: Just how it happened. You see, when my husband was a salesman he used to but I never had a chance really.

JF: Do you belong to any community organizations that include non-Jews?

NL: No.

JF: No.

NL: No, it's a separate world here now. We have here a separate world. Okay, if you work in a place and you meet two people of other religions you get involved, but I didn't have the chance. I just didn't have—I was always Chizuk Amuno and my home and my kitchen—Chizuk Amuno and the family [unclear] all the Associated Jewish Charity or

Hadassah. It's all Jewish women.

JF: You were involved with the Associated Jewish Charities?

NL: Ya.

JF: Could you tell me about that?

NL: Oh, ya, the Associated Jewish Charities is a very important organization in Baltimore.

JF: Yes.

NL: They help a lot. They have a Jewish Family Service that is helping a lot of the newcomers, the Russians. They came here. They really established themselves very well. We have about maybe 10 or 12,000 Russian families established here in Baltimore, and in this I was instrumental.

JF: Can you tell me about your part in this?

NL: My part was that I used to help them to go to—groceries and to learn how to shop because they don't know. It's a different ballgame altogether. The Russians, when they come, they don't speak the language. They don't know what food to look for, what what is, so I had to introduce them to a lot of—how to shop and how it looks in America's supermarket. And this was very important. For a long while I did that and then I used to—until now, whenever somebody has to go to a doctor and be able to speak the language, so I am the translator for them. And the blessings that they give me, if just a small part will come through I'll be in good shape. [chuckles] They appreciate it very much. When you don't—come to a country and you don't speak the language and they are mostly not the young people—it's mostly the older people. The young people learn very fast and they adjust very fast and they become Americanized in no time. And they

are a big asset for America. They buy the nicest homes and they like the nicest things. They have good taste and they make good money. A lot of them are computer programmers and they became leaders in computers here. A lot of them are doing very, very well, and so the young people are busy and they accomplish very well. But the older people, they are doing well too because they provide them with good housing here and they—if they don't have enough food they give them food stamps. So I am involved in going with them to accomplish all the food [unclear] for them and social services that they have to get as a [unclear] or whatever it's called, their Social Security and everything. So that's what—I am instrumental for them because I speak the language and I help them with Russian. That's my Russian part of it, that I can help them. And they appreciate very much, but the Associated Jewish Charities is really helping a lot of disabled people here and there are a lot of hungry people in Baltimore—hungry Jews—and be surprised, it helps.

JF: That's very important.

NL: Ya. And Baltimore, in this respect, has a very well organized helping organization.

JF: That's good.

NL: Yes.

JF: It's very important.

NL: It's very important because listen, nobody knows what you—a day brings.

JF: That's right.

NL: And you have to be relying on yourselves. So the Jewish [unclear] in Baltimore they get about 32—$30 million a year that they spend.

JF: That's excellent.

NL: Ya, and I'm involved so when we have our Associated—the [unclear] Associated meetings they called me. I go to all these meetings of the Associated and to volunteer—volunteering for the Jewish Family Service. I'm still trying to do the best I can. [laughs]

JF: Good for you. Okay, well, we've talked about—

NL: I say if I would be younger I would do a lot more. If I would be younger I would now—about Israel I think we have to get more involved.

JF: What do you think—

NL: I think we have to go to the president. We have to demonstrate to—in Washington we have to organize all the Jews because Israel is now in a bad situation. The Arabs want to destroy Israel and they are open about it, and we don't believe it and we better believe it. We better believe it. Hitler said he wants to kill the Jews and that was his motto. We didn't believe it and now the Arabs are out to do it to us and we again don't believe it, but we better believe it that we have to be on guard. Very much—I am afraid that we have to be on guard very much and if I would be younger—I just said it to my cousin's son—I would knock on all the doors and organize all the Jews in all the schools and everybody to go and demonstrate in Washington and all over, not to make the same mistake that Roosevelt made with the Nazis. We should be very much alert. We should—we shouldn't be sleeping like the Jews in the days of Roosevelt slept and let six million Jews perish.

JF: What do you—

NL: We didn't believe then too. Listen, what can I say? While refugees came to my house from Poland I still didn't believe that all these atrocities had not occurred. Who could believe such things happened? It was—you know, when I was young and I had—went to the Polish Gymnasium and I had to choose what other language should I

take, German or French, and I come to my mother [unclear] and I say, “Mama, what should”—and my mother, [unclear], said, “What’s the Frage? What kind of question? German is the most cultural language in the world.” And such a cultural world could do such things. Who could ever believe? My mother would never believe it. Nobody wanted to believe it. Nobody in his or her right mind—a psycho like Hitler should be able to make so much trouble. Sixty million people were killed—six million Jews. Sixty million other people were killed because of his desire to kill the Jews and we are—I’m afraid to say that we are facing the same situation now with Israel.

JF: What do you think can be done?

NL: What can be done? We have to write to all the senators and to all the—all who can have a hand to do something to stop these atrocities. They want to kill us. He’s talking from both sides of the mouth, this Arafat. I don’t trust him a bit. We can not trust them—nothing. They are liars. They falsified the full Jewish history. Jerusalem was never nothing to the Arabs. If you learn the history you’ll find it out, and they blame every—they want all Israel to give—they build up an Israel. It was sand and stones and nothing there. Now, everything is built up, give it to them. And they want to throw us in the ocean and we better know it. They mean it. It’s not only that they say it. They mean it; they want to destroy us. The Arabs are now our biggest enemy and those who are trying, even our leaders, who thinks that they are going to change them are in illusions. That’s how I feel about it. I hope I am wrong. I hope and pray that I am wrong but, as I said to my—if I would be young, I wouldn’t be sitting idle. I would try to open all the doors and open their eyes for the world because it’s a disaster not only for Jews. The Arabs are a disaster for Americans the same way. Look how many Americans they are killing. Whenever they have a chance they kill Americans so it’s not only a Jewish problem, it’s a world problem. Okay. [chuckles]

JF: Okay. Oh! [chuckles]

NL: I'm sorry to burden you with so much.

JF: That's okay. That's okay.

NL: I am burdening you, honey, huh?

JF: [laughs] That's okay. I—

NL: I bet you didn't expect this. [laughter] I bet you didn't expect that.

JF: I never know what to expect. No, this is great. This is great. You're telling me what you think. That's what we want to know.

NL: I think we have to be on alert. I used to tell it to my students. If somebody tells you that he's going to harm you, believe it because—

JF: [unclear]

NL: —because sometimes we just cannot believe it. We don't want to believe it but you better do, and be very alert who is a leader and check out everybody what for, and check out everything's—because there's so many insane people who make a world insane.

JF: That's very true.

NL: Hitler was a psycho and look what he did. A cultural people like the Germans—how could ordinary people commit such extraordinary crimes?

JF: That's the question, isn't it? That's the question.

NL: And we never know the answer. So you [unclear]?

JF: Yes, that's right. Okay, I've got a few more questions for you.

NL: Okay.

JF: As you know, this project, it's about Jewish women and—in particular sites, and we've talked a lot about Baltimore and we've talked a lot about being Jewish. But we've talked relatively little about how being a woman has affected your life and what you—how you feel about—

NL: Being a woman?

JF: —being a woman.

NL: I'll tell you. I think that we—sometimes I think we shouldn't cross over the bridge too much.

JF: Cross over the bridge? Could you elaborate on that?

NL: I think we have to remember not to hurt our men. Sometimes these women take over too much. They are left with nothing and this is not going to do us any good.

JF: Do you think that's happening?

NL: In some cases I'm afraid it does. And a man cannot do what a woman can. We are so productive that a man can never be. We produce generations and this is something a man can never do, and if you tried to overstep a little bit of their domain it's going to hurt us in the long run. We have to keep them allies. Sometimes we think, oh, we accomplish who knows what? But you didn't. Our mothers were very smart. They did what they wanted but made believe that he did it.

JF: [chuckles]

NL: You know? And this was very important for their ego and they need an ego. For us to be happy they have to have an ego. That's my opinion. I'm not a feminist [chuckles] in many ways. I think it's a wonderful thing. Every woman should have a career, and every woman should be independent, and every woman should know her level. And she

should stand on her feet and she should make money the way the man does. If she doesn't work, the man does, but in the family life be smart. Tell that he did it and do what—and then he'll do whatever you want him to. But make him feel that he's something because if you belittle him you belittle yourself. That's my opinion. What do you think of the feminists?

JF: I think you sound like a feminist to me.

NL: I'll tell you. I think that every woman should have a profession and every—should be independent because you never know what life brings about. But if you have a man in your life, make him important because you have so much things to give that he hasn't, and he has to have something to hold on to. See, and if you take this away from him he's going to be miserable, and if he's going to be miserable you're going to be miserable. For your own sake, that's how I feel about it. I do it in my own life too. My husband knows that I can stand on my own feet but I'll never overstep. I make him feel important and without him I cannot live, and that's true, because a lot of things he sees different than I do. I'm too naive in many ways and he sees things much brighter than I do in many ways. I have my place and he has his place, and that's important to keep, if you want to know my personal opinion.

JF: Yes, yes.

NL: You know, our mothers were very clever and our grandmothers were very clever. He did everything but she did all because she knew that she's the mother of his kids and she's the productive one. Without him it's not going to be a he. Without her it's not going to be a he. [laughs] You understand?

JF: Yes.

NL: So we have the biggest—the biggest treasures in our hands, the generations that we bring up. This is our treasures so you have to share it with them.

JF: Okay. Okay, well, we've talked about work. We've talked about family and synagogues, community organizations. What about leisure time and friendship?

NL: Leisure time and friendship is wonderful. You have to have it. You can't—

JF: What did you do for—

NL: When we were young we went to all the operas and to all the museums and to all the philharmonic theaters, taking in everything that you can. Enjoy life as long as you can because when you get older you become more limited. So when you're young, travel. See the world as much as you can. Don't overdo it, just as much as you do. Don't hop around the ganse Welt. You cannot take in everything. That's my opinion. You cannot be everywhere and you cannot take in every—every [unclear], every stupidity that comes out, you don't have to follow it. But what's important is to see a good show, is to hear a good musical and to—that's how I liked it. When I was in New York I saw all the operas, even—[chuckles] well, this I have to tell you—in Vienna when I was in the transition there was no bread to eat. There was nothing to eat but we got a few people—younger ones. We went to see "Madame Butterfly" and we went to see [unclear] "Tosca" [laughs] in Vienna. We didn't have nothing to eat but when you're young—so even from the transitional place where I was sleeping on a bed with 40, 50 people in the same hole—

JF: So you're a real music lover?

NL: Oh, ya, and me—me and my husband, too.

JF: Do you play or sing?

NL: No, we just like music. We just like music. Music is our pastime. That's what we love. So operas, [unclear] music—any music. Music is—now, what old people do, we read, as long as our eyes are open [chuckles] and we can read, and we listen to music.

That's our entertainment now.

JF: And how about friends? How did you make most of your friends in Baltimore?

NL: I'll tell you, my friends—a lot—I have to say we came here. We were about a few hundred newcomers. So when we were younger we used to have bar mitzvahs and [unclear] and all, so we were all involved. Now, things for me changed because I don't have children. So in a lot of things I can't participate anymore. You see? Okay, we are the best of friends but not as close as used to be. Why? They have their children. They have their grandchildren. They are busy with their own family and I feel like an intruder. See? And I am realist. To make them feel bad I don't invite them too much and they don't invite me anymore too much, because I know I am a burden now.

JF: I—no way.

NL: Ya, but in a way, you know. If I'll come to my friend that I used to be close before, okay, when the kids were young it was okay. Now, she has her own kids and she has her five, six grandchildren and she's involved with them and I don't have this to share. You understand? So it comes a time that you withdraw in a way. Okay, I used to go to all the weddings and all the bar mitzvahs and every simchas and everything. Now, I don't do it anymore because I cannot compare. I don't have my children [several words unclear] have to come. It's a different situation when you don't have children. Now, you have children it's all different and grandchildren and families. That way you grow old by yourself. [chuckles] It's not so easy. See? Okay, I have a lot of acquaintances. A lot—a whole city. If my husband doesn't feel like to go to someplace to a meeting or, for instance, I had now graduation time. So I went to all the graduations, [chuckles] because I have a lot of my former kids who graduated. And I felt like to go, so he'll drop me off and somebody will always bring me home [laughs] because I have a lot of acquaintances but I wouldn't call it friends. You see?

JF: Yes.

NL: And I'm talking to you like to my own daughter. [laughs]

JF: Cute. Cute.

NL: You see, I'm open to you with all my details. [laughs]

JF: Okay, well, my last question is always the same, and that is, is there anything I haven't asked that I should have asked? Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

NL: To share.

JF: To share.

NL: —that you never know in your life, you know? It's a sad story; I wouldn't say it.

JF: Okay. Okay, well, thank you very much.

NL: You're welcome.

JF: This is a continuation of an interview with Nina Lederkremer. It's June 24, 2001. I'm Jean Freedman recording this for the Jewish Women's Archive "Weaving Women's Words" Project and we're in Baltimore, Maryland.

NL: —to a middle-class family. My father and mother were merchants. They had a store and we lived in a city called Nieswiez.

JF: This was in Poland.

NL: In Poland. I was born in Poland in Nieswiez and I was—I had a little sister before me that passed away and when I was born everybody was very caring about me. And then my mother had three more sons and I was the oldest. And I had all the attention in

the world. And my parents, as soon as I was ready for school sent me to the best school in Hebrew Talmud school, which was an elementary Hebrew school that I got my all education in Hebrew subjects, in nature—everything. It was a day school.

JF: And everything was in Hebrew?

NL: In Hebrew.

JF: What did you speak at home?

NL: At home we spoke Polish and Russian—my parents spoke Russian because our city belonged to Russia before—and Jewish. So when I was four—three I had already three languages around me. Polish was the time when I was born was Poland—this country. And then when I grew up and I was quite a good student, so—and after I finished my elementary school I was very much in love with Hebrew and I wanted to continue my education in Hebrew. But there was no high school in our city and my parents didn't want to send me. I was too young to go to Vilna at this time. And they wanted me to continue in a Polish high school that was in the town, a very good Polish gymnasium and certain students they took in. It was quite liberal in those days.

JF: So there was no problem about your being Jewish?

NL: At this time was not.

JF: Was not.

NL: Was not. They were choosing—it was here now you had to have—to pay a lot of money. It was a high school but there were a few Jews in this school and we had our—but I didn't want to go to this school. When I finished the Talmud school I wanted to continue in Hebrew education and I was a little a rebel. For a year I didn't go to the Polish Gymnasium and I—they had Hebrew books. I—

JF: So you stayed at home?

NL: I stayed at home and I didn't want to go. [chuckles] And I read this year 150 Hebrew books and they gave me such a good basis for Hebrew that after a year that I didn't win with my parents and I had to go into the Polish Gymnasium. So I entered the Polish Gymnasium. It was already—I skipped. I got into the fifth grade or something like that, and that time finished the Polish Gymnasium. I got in Vilna in the [unclear] Seminar because of my Hebrew background was so wild that I skipped a few grades, and in two years I got my bachelor's and master's degree in Hebrew teaching.

[end of side 1, tape 2]

JF: Wow!

NL: That's how this year of my [unclear] Hebrew helped me.

JF: Wow! Now, where in Vilna did you study?

NL: In Hebrew—it was a Talmud seminary, a [unclear]. It was called a [unclear] in Vilna, and that's when I finished and just when I finished and I came home the war started.

JF: What year was it that you finished?

NL: 1939.

JF: 1939. Okay, so then what did you do?

NL: And I was already engaged to teaching at school in our city. And meanwhile, we moved from Nieswiez to Baronovitch. That's a long story.

JF: What was the name of the town where you moved to?

NL: To Baronovitch.

JF: Baronovitch.

NL: You see, and meanwhile things had turned around in my family and we didn't do so well, so we had to move to another city. It's a long story. So, but I'm skipping all this. We moved to Baronovitch and I was already engaged to start to teach a Hebrew class in our town and [unclear] get [unclear]. So war broke out and we had to run away from our home. It's a long story. And then we came back because the Russians occupied our city. It was a treaty between the Russians and the Germans that they divided Poland and we fell under the Russians. So it's happened that for two years I was under the Russians.

JF: What was that like?

NL: It was better than under the Germans but it was a big change and it was a—a lot of stories to tell about this period. Of course, all the rich Jews and they took away everything from them, the Russians and they socialized everything—you know, nationalized everything. It wasn't easy but I was very lucky at this time. I don't know. It's still on my conscience. I had a teacher that taught me Russian and White Russian when they occupied our city, and she was very good to me, and her husband happened to be the whole—boss of the whole—they came from Russia and they were occupying our city. And I learned very fast the Russian and white Russian and she liked me. And she introduced me to her husband and her husband helped me to land a new profession. I learned to be a secretary and a bookkeeper and that's what I worked under the Russians. I had to falsify my whole identity that I was a Hebrew teacher.

JF: Why did you have to—

NL: Because in Russia a Hebrew teacher was Siberia. You see? And I had to falsify my whole identity. And I had to say I—not to mention that I'm a Hebrew, because Hebrew teachers were sent to Siberia. [unclear], you heard about [unclear], what happened to him in Russia. So I had to falsify my whole identity.

JF: Could you admit to being Jewish?

NL: Yes. I was Jewish and I would—we did that I was Jewish but I could not study no Hebrew and not be a Hebrew teacher. This was taboo. You see? So I had to learn a new trade. And this man—his name was Shirko—I had to remember his name. [chuckles] She has it in the manuscript. And he helped me to become first a secretary. He was in charge of the Finance, Treasury Department—the Russian Treasury. And he took me into this Treasury Department and for two years I worked under them. I was very successful, a matter of fact. They sent me on courses to become a very—later on [chuckles] during the wanderings I met the man who was in charge of these classes, a communist, a very great man in Russia. And I met him in Russia accidentally and he made me a name for the—I was looking for a job to continue to be a bookkeeper in Russia during the war and he helped me. [chuckles] It was a miracle. I'm telling you, I survived with miracles.

JF: Who was this man?

NL: A Russian. I don't even remember his name. But he was in charge of this course that they taught as a bookkeeping for the finance—for the finance treasurists for the Treasury Department. And I met him in Koibishov in Russia [laughs] and I was looking for a job then. And the Russians couldn't get jobs and I was not considered a Russian. I was considered a zaparinai, that I am not a native Russian. I am from the occupied places.

JF: What was that word? Zapa—

NL: Zaparinai. Zaparinai, we called it in Russian. Zaparinai. They didn't want to—it was a whole story how I survived. This man helped me to survive. It was an unbelievable story. I can't tell you this on one or two—you know? You know?

JF: Yes, well, this is the story that you told—

NL: It has to be published. It has to be published for the sake of my students. My students insisted I should write the story of my survival and my Hebrew teaching experiences. So [unclear] brought a point my story of survival, and I really hope and pray that somebody someplace will find a way to publish it for my students' sake. Really. [chuckles]

JF: Yes.

NL: For my students' and my students' parents' sake because they are still asking for this story.

JF: Yes.

NL: It was some story. As I say, to repeat the whole thing it took—[unclear] it's not three hours; it's a lot of hours. [chuckles]

JF: It's months. Right, I—and so, unfortunately, we won't—

NL: No, we cannot do it.

JF: —repeat that. But when did—well, you can continue. I'll let you—

NL: So that was my professional beginning. I couldn't continue to be a Hebrew teacher and I had to falsify my whole identity. But as I say, this man later on when, you know, the Germans and the Russians, after two years they broke their treaty, and when they broke their treaty they started to bomb our city. And when they started to bomb our city all the

Russians were running home and away from the city whoever could survive ran. My parents left before me.

JF: Where did they go?

NL: They went—my—I had my grandparents living on the Russian border, so the first time when they—when the bombs started we went there. And then the Russians came and we came back home with the Russians. But the second time my parents left and my youngest brother with them, and one of my brothers was already in the Russian Army. They mobilized him and the other brother was working on the Russian television and radio, so he had to run too but he survived in the [several words unclear] by miracle.

JF: In—with the Jewish partisans?

NL: It was all of us who could survive. Yes, they have terrible. They lived two years in slums. I didn't know. But I met my brother after the war and he said to me, "I would never survive if they wouldn't take me and I would run to Russia. And how did I run to Russia? My mother left me a bag before she left for the village on the border." And with this bag she dropped him the [unclear] because I had to stay guard on the telephone. It was such a rule, the Russians. The—after the war started those people who worked in the Treasury Department had an obligation not to move away from the telephones. I don't remember what it was their reason for it, but there was a Polish refugee who came to our town from Poland and lived with—in our town during the Russian's occupation. And his name was Heniek Tennenbaum. I'll never forget his name and my mother left him with me and asked him that he should take care of me. He was a little bit older than me, a fine young man. And she brought me a valise with all my documents and my papers and a few [unclear], some things and all these. And when we were sitting—as he was sitting with me and asked for the telephone in this office that we worked, and it was, you know, the whole army. The Russian Army started to move [unclear] because the Germans came in, and it was such a terrible mishmash. And I was sitting here in the

office and I fell asleep, and I don't remember what happened. But he woke me up and he says, "[several words unclear]." In Polish, he says that it's a very unbelievable silence all of a sudden. And we came down and everybody was hiding—okay, I don't know what fell, a [unclear] or something—was hiding downstairs in this office. They ran away and we got out and nobody was there and the office was not far from a place where we used to [unclear] the parades and everything. It's like a town hall place, and we got to this place and we saw an auto that they say it's taking people to the train and they'll take them to Russia. And we got into this [unclear], me and Heniek with this—I had only my valise with me and [unclear] and the bag that my mother left me was still in the office. I got into the car and I see there's nobody there, just me and him. So I say, "Can you take this valise and I'll bring in the bag." And meanwhile, it started to bomb and the bus left with Heniek with my papers with everything, and I was left with this bag of—that my mother left me, [unclear], my coat and a few blankets and a few nightgowns. Later on I sold it for bread in Russia but at the time—and I was standing on the corner. And I really don't remember details, but I know one thing that this man, Shirko, when all these Russian people passed by with their truck and they was running home to Russia. And he saw me on the corner. I says, "What are you doing here?" And I don't remember what I said but he convinced them—they didn't want to take me because I am not a Russian. But he convinced them and he [unclear] into his truck and they said, "Bye, bye."

JF: But you still didn't have your papers.

NL: No papers. Without papers, no money, no nothing.

JF: Okay, so what did you do?

NL: And oh! Listen. For three days and three nights we were on the truck. I still was hoping that maybe they'll drive by the place where my parents went and they'll drop me there and they are my parents. But they had to take another route because it was bombing all the way. And for three days and three nights I was on this truck until the

Russians brought me to a place where some refugees gathered. And they left me there and they all went home to their homes. And when I came there I met a woman from our town and she was a dentist in our town, and her son was a friend with my brother. And I wanted to go back and I'm going all by myself. I am a [unclear], you know, a young girl without a penny, without nobody. I wanted to go back. And she started—well, we go—she was with two daughters—says, "Well, we'll go. You'll go with us." And they talked me in and we were the fasted [unclear]. They organized a train for refugees and they took us into Russia. Six days and six nights I was on the train. There was not a place for me even to stand. That's how packed it was. It was cattle trains. And I remember on the fifth or the sixth day people took pity on me and they cleaned up a part on the train I should be able to lay down and rest a little bit. So I laid down and I had a bump on my head so big when I got up and I didn't feel it. That's how it—how it was. [laughs]

JF: Did you ever find your parents?

NL: Never. Never. My parents were taken back to the Baronovitch ghetto and then my brothers told me what happened. They were killed and I lost everybody. One of my brothers that survived in the [unclear], he was with them and he wanted to save them. But they thought I am dead and my brother from the Russian Army they felt is dead, so they didn't even want to save themselves, but they want him to save himself. And they sent him away to the woods, to the [unclear]. That's what my brothers told later on. All these horrible stories I found out later on. During the war—[chuckles] it's a long story—I met a lady from my town and she was my support system. And we survived together, she and her daughter.

JF: This is the woman you met at—before you got on the train—the dentist?

NL: No, not—

JF: Oh, this is another?

NL: No, another lady. This dentist, she came. I lay down. We lost track because she went another way and I found a man on the train acted to a panic. It's some story. As I say, it's not for a short—

JF: Right.

NL: You know? And Toby has some highlights. It's not everything. You can't tell everything because you need volumes really to write it. But she has a—the most important highlights that after the war I found out that this train, that Heniek was on it was bombed and no one came out alive. With these you never know. Life is so unpredicted. I found it out after the war that Heniek perished and all those people who were sitting and waiting for the train to go to Russia, the train was bombed and none of them came out alive.

JF: So if you hadn't gotten off that train—

NL: So, you see, it's like I say, I had more mazel than sachel. I had more—God was watching over me every step somehow. I don't know why. My students used to tell me when I used to tell them, "You're a good woman to tell us all this stuff." [laughs]

JF: That's true. That's true.

NL: Kids—you know, what comes out from mouth of kids you just never know.

JF: Well, you wanted to talk about teaching Hebrew after the war.

NL: Yes.

JF: Why don't you tell me how you came back?

NL: When I came back, it was a long story. I had to—my brother, [unclear], came for me and he brought me back to my hometown.

JF: How did you get in touch—how did you two meet up again?

NL: Okay, I'll tell you. After the war they used to say that they fleed the city of Baronovitch. They used to tell it on—the Russians advertised it, that for a long time the Russians were—the Germans were running [unclear]. They came to a point where Moscow had to move to Koibishov, to the city where I was. That's why I couldn't find a job and when I was looking for a job I met this man who made a very good reputation for me and I—he gave me the best job he could in those times. And I got a job as a bookkeeper and I worked through the years in Russia as a bookkeeper—all the years. Matter of fact, in Koibishov, then destiny took me to summer camp and to Alma Ata. Oh, I covered a lot of territory.

JF: Summer cabin and to Alma Ata?

NL: First Alma Ata and then to summer camp. First to Alma Ata and then to summer camp because I met—it's—I'm skipping—

JF: I understand.

NL: I'm skipping a lot of interesting material. [laughs] But it was [unclear] in the unknown. See? You're there and you didn't know what was waiting for you, but when I was in Koibishov I met a man who worked with my brother, and he was also a refugee from Poland. And they welcomed us very nicely, the Russians. They took us to an elegant place and they kept us for a few days to rest up [several words unclear]. And then they took us to the Kolchoz, which is collective farms—to the collective farms, which was called Kolchoz. And when we came there it was on the Volga, a place and this man says to me, "You're not going to survive here and I'm not going to survive here. Let's go to the city Koibishov and try to find jobs." And I went with him—[chuckles] went with him.

We had to take a boat early in the morning to go out with the Volga. I didn't have a penny and I didn't have nothing. But somehow—I was young and the captain took pity on us. [laughs] And he took us and he fed us with fish and with all kinds of goodies. And we were really lucky who brought us Koibishov. And I came to Koibishov and it was miraculous. I walk into the city and I hear my name calling in Koibishov. I turned around. It was a woman. She married a man in my town, Baronovitch, but she came from Koibishov. Her father was a children's doctor and he was sick. And before the war she came to tend him. Meanwhile, she left her husband and her son and she thought maybe I saw them, maybe I know something, so she called on me. And when she found out that I didn't know nothing about her husband and her son, but she took me to her parent's home and they wanted to adopt me, and was going to be with me, was going to be with you. And—but I was young and I didn't know what I wanted. You know, I was looking for my parents. I was looking—and this man said, "Let's go and look for jobs." We are looking for jobs and I come to the Treasury Department and they say, "Today it's impossible because the whole government from Moscow is coming to Koibishov. They are running away from the Germans. Come a few days later." So these few days I probably spent with them—I don't even remember what it was. But later on—I came the next day and I met this professor that taught me bookkeeping and here—and there was a tall, big guy on the—the man that was in charge of the Treasury Department there, a finance minister—the finance minister from Koibishov. And when he made such a scream about me that I was the best student and I was the best worker and all the best, the best, the best, so he says, "Child, where do you want to go? I'll give you anyplace." I said—like now, I said, "I need a place to rest. Give me any place that is quiet and restful for awhile to catch my thoughts." I remember it now and he gave me—for 50 miles—I forgot the name—it was like a resort place—[unclear] 50 miles from Koibishov. I forgot even the place up there. And he gives me the directions to go to this job, but before I go away there was a point where you could meet and find out if somebody saw people—refugees—a refugee point. So I decided, "I'll go there and see. Maybe

somebody saw my parents. Maybe somebody saw my brothers. Maybe I'll hear a word from someone." And I walk and I found—I met a lady that her husband was a teacher of mine in the city of Baronovitch, and he passed away. And she was left with a little girl and she saw me, "Where you go, I go." And we kept together through during the war. She became my war sister so I had to run back to this guy and say that I found a sister with a child, and we became sisters and I had to take her with me. And I took her with me and she was a Russian teacher, and she was a communist. She had a book that she was a communist, and she got a job there as a teacher and I was [unclear] struggled together. Now, it was September. The winter is coming.

JF: What year was this?

NL: '39. No, no, no. it's not—'41.

JF: '41.

NL: It was '41 but it was also like the end of summer and the beginning of—and we stayed there for the summer and then she says, "You see, the war is going—in the winter it's frozen and the Germans are coming. We'd better run." And she got a letter from a teacher who taught with her in Baronovitch and he was now in Alma Ata. And he sent her a letter, said, "You saved your life. Come here because here it's warmer. You don't need the warm clothes. You don't have the clothes and the food is easier. It's not as bad as there." And she started—we have to go. We have to go. So—and they wouldn't let you go. How do you travel during the war? It's not a—such a simple thing to travel in Russia yet. So [laughs] we played games, I'll tell you. She wrote him that he should write a letter that I found my parents there, because otherwise they wouldn't let me go away from my job. And I had to make believe that it was true and I have to meet my parents. And it was a whole story. I'm telling you—lies and lies and lies you had to do and it takes to survive. And it was her idea really. I wouldn't even think of things like that. But she said, "We have to do it. If you found [unclear] you have to go." And it took

me a long while. They didn't want to let me go from my job until I'll train somebody to be exactly like I am. And I had to find a woman that I train—and after a month, a few months—I don't remember exactly—the boss in charge of this [unclear] had a friend in Alma Ata. And he wrote me recommendation letter to this man in Alma Ata that I was an exceptional worker, an exceptional [unclear]—all exceptions. To make the story short, how did we get there? It's wartime. We cannot get tickets and just travel. So we had to go [chuckles] to this lady that I met from Baronovitch with the stories. And she got us ticket as show business.

JF: As what?

NL: As show business ladies. As show girls.

JF: Oh, I see, as show girls.

NL: As show girls and she was a—she could tell good anecdotes and I was a singer. [laughs] And she got us tickets and we had to go on a train—on a military train with all military. [chuckles] It's—you know, it's hilarious. It's just unbelievable what you do when you don't know what you're doing. You just do and you don't know what you're doing, because somebody is scaring you. I believe it, that God carried me all the way, even to jail.

JF: To jail?

NL: I was in jail in Russia before I left.

JF: How did that happen?

NL: From my own money I paid this ticket to jail. [chuckles] It was terrible. You know, and meanwhile—you know, my brother survived. The war ended and I wrote a letter to my hometown if somebody survived they should get in touch with me. And my brother

got this letter. So he wrote me the first letter. First of all, he writes, “My dear sister, you wouldn’t recognize me. I am not human anymore. I am an animal.”

JF: What did he mean by that?

NL: Ya, I didn’t understand. Ya, I said [several words unclear]. This was the Russian words. I became—you know, he had to kill for survival. He had to live in swamps. He was not—he had to use a language he never knew. That’s what he meant. When I met him I saw it. This guy was studying special etiquette in [unclear]. My mother sent him to an etiquette preacher. I’ll never forget it, you know? And this guy now used the Russian slang that I never heard of it, and that’s what he meant that I wouldn’t recognize him. And this was true. This was unfortunately true. He was such a delicate child and all of a sudden he had to kill and he had to survive. Under such circumstances he became a hero. In the [unclear] he used to bomb the German trains. It is unreal.

JF: Yes.

NL: It is stories that is unreal. I’m telling you. When I start to think—and when he found out that I survived and Baronovitch was already taken by the Russians, so he said, “You can come right away,” because they wanted to leave. They didn’t want to stay in Russia. They couldn’t live in the city with so much gulag. And the parents were in [several words unclear]. It was impossible. He brought me there. I stayed maybe a week or two. I said, “If you”—before he brought me I said, “If you don’t take me away from here I’m going to go insane.” It was impossible. Every [unclear] was crying to you. Every place you go through there was [unclear] of relatives, though nobody there—just blood and [unclear]—places that you played and places that you—now, it’s full of—

[end of side 2, tape 2]

JF: This is disk number three, interview with Nina Lederkremer. It’s June 24, 2001. We’re in Baltimore, Maryland and I’m Jean Freeman recording this for the Jewish

Women's Archives "Weaving Women's Words" Project. Okay, so you were talking about after the war you came back to Poland. Right?

NL: Wait a minute. You wanted to know how I got to jail.

JF: Yes, how did you get—this was in Russia.

NL: Ya.

JF: Right? How did you get to jail in Russia?

NL: When the war ended my brother and my—came—my brother sent his wife to see me.

JF: Where were you?

NL: I was already in summer camp.

JF: Summer camp.

NL: [unclear] not how we got to summer camp—it's also a long story. But I keep this story—and you want to know about a jail. It's not easy to tell it because it was so stupid. I had all my documents to get my tickets to go back home literally, because I didn't have to falsify nothing because I—my brother sent me the papers that he want to give me a job in the same bookkeeping department that I had in Russia. And I had all these papers and everything was ready to get my ticket, so somebody came—and my sister-in-law was with me. And she said that they want to leave Poland as soon as possible because they could not live there anymore. And it had to be done in a hurry. So somebody came and said that he knows somebody who can get me tickets right away. I should only pay him 2,000 rubles. And I had the money and I counted it out. [laughs] It's got to be correct. I shouldn't have said it. And this guy happened to be a man who did a lot of tricky stuff to get people tickets [unclear] and I got between them and they were after

him. So they took me off the train. Everybody envied me that I was the first one to leave Russia from all the refugees. And everybody came to the train to say goodbye, and they took off me and my sister-in-law and they brought me to jail. Interesting, you know, going to the train I mentioned [chuckles] to my sister-in-law—we passed by the jail. I showed her this is the jail [unclear]. [laughs] And from the train they brought me to the jail. She went home. They didn't keep her. She had all the—and me they kept.

JF: For how long?

NL: I was sentenced for three years.

JF: For what?

NL: For being accessory, I guess, to this case.

JF: Did you stay there for three years.

NL: I was in jail and this is something special [unclear]. You know, they brought me to jail and I was all dressed up and all ready to go [laughs] and here I come to a cell with all criminals where this killed her father. This one killed her mother and this one stole this and this is bad and I am in the middle. [chuckles] So they had a name for me. They called me [unclear]—somebody who doesn't belong. For her own money, she's in jail. [laughs] So they made fun of me. They—and when the man who comes to ask you questions—what is it called?

JF: Interrogation?

NL: Interrogation. He said, "Nechama, how do you feel?" [chuckles] So I told him—I'll never forget—"How do I feel? I knew this [unclear] I saved from the [unclear]. And now I am in it. So what can you ask me questions how do I feel?" To make the story short, they gave me a [unclear] of three years and they send me to a gulag, and I tasted this too

for a short while until I get—my brother came and they bought me out. And the night before that I had a dream that I have to tell. I dreamt that I was in a—[chuckles] that's why I didn't want to do it here, you know? [laughs] Now you see why. I knew it's my [unclear] it's not going to be too cooperative. We should only be [unclear]. You see? So he came—before this I told you I had this dream the night before he came. My dream was that I was in a tuberculosis quarantine. And it was big, tall buildings all around and I was searching for a small place to go out between the buildings, and somehow I found this very narrow place. I came out and a [unclear] opened and my brother came next day and took me out. Wasn't it something unreal? I could never forget it.

JF: So you went back then?

NL: And when my brother came then they told me then that they had to—a lot of my friends gave money and they had to bought me out.

JF: So what happened then?

NL: Then I went with my brother back home to Baronovitch. They took me already [unclear], and when we came home I found out all what happened. I lost the whole family, and I lost my parents, and I lost everything and everybody, and all my friends—nobody. And I survived by a great miracle. Just a miracle because I wasn't any smarter than them. I wasn't any more intelligent than them and I was nothing special, and I don't know until today why me, of all people.

JF: It's an impossible question, isn't it?

NL: We don't have the answers, unfortunately. We just don't have the answer. But you always wonder. It stays with you and you wonder and you just hope and pray that you—everyday I pray to God that nobody—nobody should ever have to experience what our generation did, because such a Holocaust should never happen to nobody. It was something unreal and that's why my wish is that our young generation should learn and

to pay the big price for our newborn state, and we should know how to evaluate it and how to treasure it, because it—and people without a homeland is not people. And our parents and grandparents suffered plenty in the diaspora. And our generation was very lucky in a way. We paid a big price but we got a homeland. And we have to be very alert and very strong and know how to appreciate what you've got, never lose it again—to never lose it again. And only—the way we're not going to lose it, if we're going to be a knowledgeable Jew and a proud Jew. That's going to help a lot. If you're going to be knowledgeable you're going to be ready to do sacrifices. You're going to be ready to do a lot of things that, without your knowledge of your roots, that your heritage does not [unclear]. That's how I really think about it and that's why on my education I taught wherever I could all my kids, and they felt that I was sincere because I [unclear] no works of [unclear] with so much love and so much appreciation that I think something got into them. I used to tell them, "You are going to be the Jewish leaders of tomorrow." And this is very important. They should know that they are going to be the—on their shoulders lays the responsibility of the continuation. And we are a people with a special message for the world and we have to live up to it. And all the difficult—is not easy—not easy tasks. The world is so big. I had once a student and he said to me he was going to clean up the world. I say, "Clean up your own backyard first. Leave the world to its own. If you clean up your own backyard you are already doing a great deal for the world."

JF: When did you start teaching again after the war?

NL: Right—after the war? That's a good question. You see, when we started our wanderings from Baronovitch—so we went with my brother, my sister to a Lodz, Poland. And from there there was a—connections that my brother made. I really don't know. It was underground stuff in those days. We had to smuggle borders and we came to Bratislava and from Bratislava they brought us to Vienna, and I was in the transition place, which was called a [unclear].

JF: A what?

NL: [unclear]—the hotel or [unclear], I think it was called in Vienna as a transit. And from there they took me to Vels in Austria and in Vels a general from the Israeli Army met me and he mobilized me.

JF: What did he do?

NL: He found out that I was a Hebrew teacher and he said, “It’s your obligation to organize the youth and organize the children and teach them Hebrew and prepare them for the [unclear] aliyah.

JF: And this was in—

NL: In Vels.

JF: In Vels.

NL: And then I came to Bindermichl, also in Austria, and over there I had organized the youth to go on the [unclear] aliyah in groups.

JF: And you were teaching them Hebrew.

NL: And I taught them Hebrew, yes, and we organized a Hebrew school because the kids could not speak between themselves. The kids came out from the woods and from—and they from Romania and from Hungary and from Poland. And they could not speak between themselves so they learned Hebrew in no time. In no time did they learn Hebrew. It was a miracle. And, you know, I didn’t have books. I did have no materials. I had to teach them from memory and I used to prepare my own lesson plans from memory, history and the Bible and Israeli geography. Everything I had to remember and teach from memory. And that’s why my kids, when they heard it, they said, “You have to write your experiences,” because it was unreal. Later on, we started—when I came to

teach in Germany it was easier because there you had already organized schools.

JF: When did you go to Germany?

NL: Oh, when I was in Bindermichl I had—in the morning I taught school, and then I lived with a group of youngsters that I prepared them for the [unclear] aliyah. Then I had to speak to them in a cold hall and I lost my voice. I lost my voice and they were so good to me. They did everything. I had to write my comment and they did everything for me, the children. I'll never forget. They really tried to keep me alive and they brought Wiesenthal to me, and Wiesenthal brought the biggest doctors [chuckles] to save my voice. And when my brother found out that I lost my voice he insisted I should come to Germany, and he was already in Salzburg—in Salzburg—no, not in Salzburg, in—I just found—let me take a look. I have it; I found it in a book where I was—[unclear] here.

JF: Let's see it.

NL: In—

JF: Landsberg?

NL: Is it Landsberg? Ya.

JF: There? Landsberg?

NL: Landsberg Concentration Camp. It was a camp—Landsberg, yes. I found it, you know, because that's the place where my brother was. And when I came there I was a short while with them and then I got my job in Neufriemen, and in Neufriemen was already an organized school.

JF: And Neu—

NL: Neufriemen.

JF: And Neufriemen is what you wanted to talk about in particular.

NL: Yes.

JF: Right? Okay.

NL: And in Neufriemen was already an organized school. They had a few teachers. They had a teacher for math and for history and for music. It was an organized school and I taught there for two years in Neufriemen. And in Neufriemen it was the time for the [unclear] and for the [unclear] that Eisenhower came to our camp, and in this camp we organized place—put in place and all kind of holiday celebrations for the kids. And we taught them already regular class works. It was already organized classes, and that's what I wanted to tell, that during my stay in Neufriemen camp, that's when Eisenhower came. And the Jewish—all—I showed you the picture—with [unclear]—we demand a Israeli state.

JF: This was when Eisenhower came?

NL: Yes, for Eisenhower it was displayed all over that we paid with the price of six million Jews and we deserved to come to our ancient homeland, that we had our share of tragedy. And the time came and that's when Truman next year and the UN [unclear] proclaimed the establishment of the state, so it didn't come easy. All the camps in—not only our camp—whenever Eisenhower came it was demonstrations and it was demands and it was [unclear], you know—[unclear] the loudspeakers. And we demanded that we paid the big price of six million Jews. It's more than any nation in the world ever paid for their homeland, and our homeland has a deed from the Bible that this land was ours and now nobody can take it away from us. We just—that God gave us forever and all these pictures [chuckles] we put on and loudspeakers, and I think that's what helped a lot.

JF: Where were you when the state of Israel came to be?

NL: I was in Neufriemen.

JF: You were still in Neufriemen.

NL: Oh, no, no. I was already in Munich.

JF: In Munich. So how did you—

NL: In ’48 was I—I was in Munich.

JF: —happen to go to Munich?

NL: The camp—in Munich they made the high school. And all the kids from the [unclear] camps became students in the high school and they needed me as a teacher. So I went to teach in the high school in Munich.

JF: Teaching Hebrew?

NL: Hebrew and Bible and Jewish history. And it’s interesting. You know, they used to send us from Israel from the board of education visitors. And they used to come to sit in on my lessons and they never believed that I never lived in Israel. That’s how my Hebrew was, better than theirs. They used to say that my Hebrew was excellent.

JF: I believe it.

NL: It was really—even now when I open my mouth the Israelis never believe that I never lived in Israel. [chuckles]

JF: Did you think about going to Israel?

NL: This was my plan to begin with because my brothers went to Israel and I was on my way to Israel. But when I was ready to go the situation in Israel was very difficult, and my brothers, as much as they wanted me to be with them—they said, “Go to America if you

have a chance. From America you always can come to Israel." And they needed my help. All my things that I accumulated during the years of saving, you know, a dowry, dishes and silverware and crystals and whatever they gave us for food—I had canned foods and [unclear] that a boyfriend of mine took to Israel and thought that I'll follow. [laughs] [unclear]. And what—one of the principals from high school fell in love with me, and he went to Israel and he took at least a whole list—a big list, and he took all my stuff to Israel. He was thinking that maybe I'll follow but I never followed because my brother said that the goods that I send there helped them a great deal through the troubled times. Even my war sister get a part of it. [chuckles]

JF: Did she go to Israel?

NL: Yes, she went to Israel with her daughter. And I remained in America and I was still planning to go to Israel, but my husband—and I married him—his mother and his father was here with him and he didn't feel like to leave them. And that's how I start—get complicated. You never know where destiny takes you. That's the story, honey.

JF: Well, thank you very much.

NL: I think now my message—

JF: Yes.

NL: My message is, as I said—I'm going to repeat myself.

JF: Please.

NL: The young generation has to be knowledgeable Jews. They have to be proud Jews and they have to remember that Israel is our homeland forever. God gave this to us and the Gentiles know it from the Bible, and we have to remind them about it all the time and not to forget. This is our duty. We have a deed from the Bible that Israel belongs to the

Jews forever. Though we were exiled for 2,000 years, but that's it. No more exiles, and we should do anything in our power, wherever we are—if we're not going to have an Israel there is no place for a Jew in anyplace in the world, and every Jew realizes. As soon as—and all the new philosophers that come up now with ideas and falsify history—we have archeologists and we have big professors, who for careers, do a lot of wrong. And we have to stop that because they are ruining themselves. They are ruining themselves. Our Jewish false philosophers—professors who are falsifying the Jewish history and trying to minimize our destiny are doing a great wrong, and we have to watch them and we have to [unclear] them in any way we can, because without an Israel we have no place in this world. And we are a unique people with a unique history and unique circumstances that we have to obey and fulfill. This is my message to our young generation. It was when I was teaching I was preaching it, or call it whatever you want, and I still think so that, first of all, ignorance is the biggest enemy. If they would be knowledgeable they wouldn't talk like this and they wouldn't falsify like this, but they don't know anything and they think they know it all. And that's what happened. People who know—who think they know it all know nothing. They are our trouble because knowledgeable Jews will never do what they do. Just ignorant who wants to become a—make a career of nothing and make—falsify statements. This is a dangerous [unclear] and we should be very careful and watch them and not to follow them, because there are all kinds of people. For money they'll do anything. They'll falsify their own father and mother. There are and we'd better be very, very careful to watch everybody's [unclear] because this is our future, and without this we're not having a future. Without roots we cannot grow, the same thing as [several words unclear]. Without our heritage, without our big, great history that the whole world learned from—the Bible is the bestseller and our kids don't know it. I had once a student; I'll never forget it. He wrote me a letter from the army, "Mrs. Lederkremer, now I see what you tried to teach me. My Gentile friends know more about Jewishness than I do." And this is tragic. See? That's our tragedy, that the Gentile friends know more about his Jewishness than he does, and

ignorant [unclear]. Ignorant—you can tell them anything and he'll buy it, but a person who is knowledgeable, he knows how to defend it. He knows the sources. And that's why knowledge is the basic of our survival.

JF: Thank you very much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]