Cecillia Etkin Transcript

Pamela Brown Lavitt: This is the oral history interview of Cecillia Pollock Etkin. We are in her home in Seward Park in Seattle. Today's date is June the 14th. The year is 2001. It is a Thursday afternoon. And before we—Oh, this is Pamela Brown Lavitt [laughter] and I am the oral historian for the Jewish Women's Archive's "Weaving Women's Words" Project in Seattle. And before we begin I just want to make sure that I have your permission to record this interview.

Cecillia Pollock Etkin: Yes, you have my permission.

PL: Thank you. Well, it's lovely to meet you. And I am very excited to be here to interview you. So I think we'll begin—perhaps, why don't we start at the very beginning. Tell me when you were born, and where you were born.

CE: Okay. The other day was my birthday—39 plus 40. [laughter]

PL: Is that right?

CE: Yes, I was born in 1922.

PL: What was the date of your birthday?

CE: June 12, 1922

PL: And where were you born?

CE: In Sighet, Marmarosh [Romania].

PL: How do you spell Sighet?

CE: I think it's S-I-G-H-E-T.

PL: And what is Sighet? And what is Marmarosh?

CE: Marmarosh is like a state, like over here. And Sighet was the capitol of that state.

PL: Can you describe what Sighet was like at the time?

CE: Well, when I grew up, it was a beautiful city. Most of the people were religious there. I didn't know of anyone who wasn't religious. We went to—I went part of the time to public school. And then, we went to a rabbi called the Jewish *mezayske far zamlung* [phonetic]. So we did—we went for three days a week to learn, you know? But learning about Judaism – not Judaism – the Bible and so forth. And my father ordered a tutor for the girls. So we learned how to *daven* [pray]. And I know how to read and write, fortunately, Yiddish. And my parents had 11 children – four sons, and seven daughters.

PL: So, where were with within the eleven?

CE: I was the sixth daughter. Let's see, after me, came six children. Four? Let's see, I think four – three brothers and a sister. My youngest sister was 11 when Hitler took her. My youngest brother was six. And there was a 14-year-old son and a 16-year-old brother. They were all gone there. Not one of them are alive.

PL: Well, we'll get to that.

CE: Yes.

PL: I would like to hear about the situation that caused such tragedy in your family. What do you remember? What are your earliest memories of Sighet as a child or of your family life there?

CE: Well, I remember *Pesach* was the most beautiful holiday. And we were about 21 children of our own – grandchildren, sister-in-law, brother-in-laws. And my father felt very rich with the children. Financially, we were not rich. But he felt like a king. He was very proud of the children. My brothers were religious. They went to *cheder* until they were 16, and then they had to learn a profession, a trade so to speak. He used to say—my father would say, "You take your thimble, and your scissors, and your needle and you can work anywhere." So, all of us worked in the shop, in my father's business – except for one sister. She didn't want to be an apprentice. She wanted to get paid right away. So, [laughter] I don't know if she's on the pictures there. She was very good. She married a Yeshiva *bocher*. All he did was sit and learn. And she carried on the business. She had two boys. And we had a good life. We had a good life, basically.

PL: You said your father was a tailor.

CE: Tailor.

PL: He owned a business. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

CE: Well, he was a tailor – one of the best in the city. He was a religious man. And his clientele were officials, high officials, and they came from out of town. And they would come very early in the morning with the train. And they would come and my father would do for them—they would order suits or whatever. Like I say, they were officials from offices – lawyers and whatever. High officials. And they would [come early in the morning]. He was a very good tailor. And he believed the children have to learn. First, they have to learn the Talmud. And then, they learn their trade. And they were very good.

PL: When do you remember first picking up a needle and scissor, and working in his tailor shop?

CE: Well, I wanted to learn something. And I used to come into the shop and I saw what the boys were doing. And I sat down, and I started to sew. So, my father said, “This is not a place for a girl. It’s man’s tailoring.” So my brother, my older brother who was the manager, he said, “*tate, zi vet nemen a man a tailor, a shnayder.*” [laughter]

PL: Can you translate it for the record?

CE: So she was telling—he was telling my father, “Don’t worry, she’s going to be marrying a tailor.” And I was very good. Really was good in the business and I learned how to tailor men’s clothing. The first thing is—I started working on pants, men’s’ pants. And then, you make overcoats. And you make jackets and the lapels and the collar. And those things were very difficult work. But I learned to do it. Later on, my father felt that I could be a good tailor and he brought me to his friend who was a woman’s tailor who made coats and suits and I worked there. And his name was Shlomovitz. And I learned to tailor ladies’ coats and garments and everything.

PL: What age were you when you started to work with Mr. Shlomovitz?

CE: Probably about 16 or 17.

PL: Let’s go back, just a little bit. Because I’d like to understand. Can you situate me in Sighet? Is it Romania? It’s Romania. Who was the governing body? What is the—what do you remember about what the streets were like?

CE: Okay.

PL: And things like that.

CE: Yeah, well, when I was born it was Romania. And I went to *Romanish* [Yiddish for Romanian] school. And later on when I was deported, it was Hungary. The territories remained the same but the government changed. So, born in Romania and I went to

Romanish school. The streets were Hungarian, so to speak. We spoke Hungarian in the streets. In fact, in school, they were punishing us. We had to pay a fine if we said one word in Hungary. And believe it or not, I don't speak Romanish but I speak Hungarian. And it was—the streets—what they like? The gentiles, the neighbors, were friendly. They used to come and make fire for us on Shabbat, early in the morning. And they were invited to our affairs. They were really friendly neighbors. The peasants especially. There were a lot of farmland a little further. And it was beautiful. There was lots of fruit and everything. We had plenty of everything. We had a garden. A huge garden. And after Passover, somebody would come up and dig up the soil. And we would do the rest with the planting. We lived out of the garden. And we had geese and chickens. In the wintertime we had smoked geese and lots of sauerkraut. My father made the sauerkraut – barrels full of them, and pickles and beets. It was a very good living. Like I say, not rich but we were happy. My father used to say, "The guys came around, and wanted the girls." I had my boyfriend, but I think—and, my little sister was only 11. And they would used to come by. So, my father says, "I have no more. [laughter] I only have the 11 one here. You have to wait for her." But unfortunately, she never made it. So, we had a good life. My father was a happy person. He played the violin. He played by ear. But my older brother and my sister, they were given lessons. And I wanted very much to learn the violin. For years it bothered me that I didn't do it. But we couldn't. Times had gotten bad and we couldn't afford instructor. So, I remember one time he [the instructor] came over and he said, he would buy the two violins. They were very old and expensive. My father said, "He will never—he will never part with the violins." But they took them—the Hungarians took everything just before we were deported. They were glad to have an opportunity to pull down our earrings with the flesh and the necklaces. And everything that was gold, they took. They took everything away. They took the machineries, and everything we had.

PL: Tell me a little bit then – to set this up. What was the Jewish community like? You said your neighborhoods—there were gentiles—that you mixed. But tell me a little bit

about the Jewish community of your neighborhoods?

CE: Well, we have many *shuls*. We—my father davened across the street. And the shul, it was called the *Kahan udvar* [Hungarian: garden apartments].

PL: Can you spell that?

CE: The Kahan udvar was the name. “Kahan” was the udvar. How should I say? The street—it’s not the street. It’s a complex. But it was called the “udvar” and there was a shul. And of course, there were different places, different shuls. And we used to go there. Girls did not go to shul like they do over here. We would go to Kol Nidre. We would on Yom Kippur Eve, we would go to shul. That’s what the girls do. But other than that—girls did not go to shul, the way they do here.

PL: So, then, how did you begin your Jewish learning? You said your father wanted his children to understand Talmud—

CE: Mmm-hmm.

PL: —so, where did that begin if you were only going to shul on Kol Nidre?

CE: Well, we had a strictly Orthodox house, in my house. And there were others like us. And we learned in the home. And basically, we used to go to shul to see how my mother was doing on Rosh Hashanah. But we did not—in Europe they did not believe that girls have to know the Talmud like they do over here. We can learn *Gemara* [Talmud], *Chumash* [one of five books of Torah], *Rashi* [great Torah commentator] and Gemara now – but not in Europe. That was forbidden.

PL: Do you remember how you felt about that? Because—do you remember how you felt about that back then? And even how you feel about it now?

CE: Well, at that time, there were a few girls, my classmates. And we wanted to establish a *bes yakov*[Hebrew: religious parochial school; also *bet or beth yaakov*]. And that's where we felt that girls should go. But it was not available. Money was tight and there were no teachers to teach the girls. Here you have women teachers – highly educated. At that time they didn't have them. And we wanted very much to organize something like that. But it never came about. It was just too short of a time before we were deported.

PL: Tell me a little bit about your mother. You haven't mentioned her yet. And I'd like to know about her.

CE: Well, my mother had 11 children. And she was beautiful. She looked like one of the sisters. We used to go for walks on Shabbat and she would go with three in the front and four in the back. That wasn't including my mother. It was just "the girls." She was—she was a very warm person. An excellent cook. And she felt like a queen when it came on Shabbat. She didn't do anything. She was sitting at the table and the girls would bring everything to the table, and my father would do the serving. But she did—she did cook. And do other things. She was also very handy. She would do things – making slippers for the kids. Everybody sewed [laughter] as the kids were born with a needle in their hand – my mother and everybody. Well, I have a picture of them if later on—if you want to see them.

PL: Yes.

CE: I'll be glad to show them to you.

PL: I am going to pause this for a moment.

CE: Yes. [Pause in recording] Well, my mother always had something boiling on the stove. Something hot. My father would go out in the street in the wintertime. It was bitter cold, and there were a lot of poor people. And he would send them into the

house. He would say, “My wife has some hot soup for you,” or whatever. He used to pack away barrels of cabbage. He would buy a whole wagonful. And they would make an afternoon out of it. The neighbors would come and they would clean the cabbage. Look it over. There shouldn’t be any worms. And he would shred it. And he knew how to do it. How to make it—preserve it for the wintertime. And we had that. And sometimes we—my mother would have smoked geese. But cabbage, potatoes and borscht, that’s what my mother did. There used to be a woman who had quite a few daughters, and she was a thief, very poor. But she came. She stole everything under the sight. [laughter]

PL: She came into your house?

CE: She came into our house. And she used to say my mother was her best friend. But she stole. Well, one time, you know, we had an iron in the kitchen. And there we were using coal—not coal, wood. And we had those old-fashioned irons. They were heavy. And I think my brother was home and he wanted to iron something. And he looks for the stick to take it out. And it’s gone. But there was nobody in the house except Sheyndele. So, he was not lazy. He went into a house. He walked all the way to the house. And sure enough, that stick was there. But there were tons of stolen things – up to the ceiling. So what do you do with a woman like that? You throw her out? You don’t let her come any more? Or you have *rakhmones* [Yiddish: pity] on her. But we didn’t know what to do. I remembered one time, my mother was salting the meat. You know, you have to salt the meat to kosher it. And she looked away and then the meat was gone. [laughter] And she laughed. She was a tall woman, and all her daughters were tall. They were all mixed up. Her husband left her. He went away. Anyway, that was my mother. We never insulted anybody even though my brother was furious.

PL: You mentioned – I think it was in your previous interview that you did, at the University of Washington, Jewish Archives – that your house, you said, “Our door was

always open. So we would always have a house full of people."

CE: Right.

PL: Now, is this just a part of Jewish tradition? Or is this part—was your father and your mother—were they participants in *hachno*—is it *hachno*—

CE: *Hachnosis orchim*. Well, we did it on our own. There was also money—and small change on the windowsill. People would come. And you would give them. You just take up—the kids knew you take it from there and give it to them. There was an incident. There was a person by the name Shmukler. He was from Germany. And he was wounded in the First World War. And he used to just open up the door and walk in. And he was a beggar. Poor as the night. But on Friday afternoon when he came, he had taken his jacket and turned it inside-out. And he stayed for Lekovod Shabbos. Something different. I mean, you could see that was a person who once probably lived a normal life and did something special for Shabbos. And he turned his jacket inside-out. And he was a little bit mixed up. And the people came too—all kinds of people came. And there was also good memories. My father used to bring home soldiers. There was a base and for Pesach they would come.

PL: And these were soldiers in the Hungarian Army?

CE: That was in the Romanish Army.

PL: Romanian Army?

CE: Yes.

PL: And what do you remember about these soldiers? I mean, Jewish soldiers always had a hard time in Europe.

CE: Well, they would let them go at certain times. They were—the Romanians were not quite as harsh as the Hungarians. And they would let them—they knew it was Passover, they would let them out. It used to be so funny. We would make *kiddush* and a soldier would knock on the door. And we would sit down to eat, another soldier would knock. Sometimes you had three or four soldiers. And they would sleep on the floor.

PL: How old were you?

CE: [laughter] I can't remember. I was different ages. I can't remember.

PL: So, can you describe what a typical day in your home was like?

CE: Well, I tell you—well, like I say, my mother had eleven children. And when the children were – all of us were little – she had help in the house. And then when we grew up, we did our own help. We did our laundry. And we didn't have running water like over here. We would boil the clothes. Our clothes were white as snow. It was cooked. Boiled. And then, we would take it to the river to rinse it. And then, we would do it like this. But here you have a washing machine. While you sleep, everything is done. [laughter] But we did everything by hand. On Sunday—every Sunday morning, one of my sisters would get all the laundry together and get it ready for the wash. Once in a while we would get somebody if we had a lot of heavy laundry before Pesach – the tablecloths and other things that we needed. We would get help. Otherwise, this sister, Blanka [Blanche in English], she would get up early in the morning, and we knew that we had to get up. And if you're not up, she would just pull down the cover and we have to do the laundry.

PL: What was your relationship with your siblings like? [Sound of a steam kettle whistling in the background] You know, I am going to pause this because the water's boiling. [Pause in recording]

CE: Okay. We were very close. I have two sisters left. I called my sister the other day in Israel, and I sang “Happy Birthday” to her. She was so excited. We have the same birthday – at the same day, not the same year. So, I sang to her. And at first, she didn’t recognize my voice. But then she was so happy. [laughter] She started laughing.

PL: What language did you sing Happy Birthday to her in?

CE: In Hebrew. And then, I speak to her in Yiddish. She likes to speak Hungarian. And I like to speak in Yiddish to her.

PL: So, growing up, what was the language that you were speaking?

CE: Well, in the house we spoke Yiddish. And in the street, we spoke Hungarian. And like I say, I don’t speak Romanish any more. I can’t.

PL: What does it mean to you to have spoken Yiddish all these years? And your desire to still continue to speak it with your sister in Israel? What does that language mean to you?

CE: Well, it means to me, I grew up that way. And it was my parents’ language. And I just—I feel that speaking Yiddish is important. We should not forget Yiddish. It’s a beautiful language. There were some years ago—there was a woman professor who came to try to instigate the Yiddish language. And she was collecting money to make an encyclopedia for Yiddish. I can’t remember her name. That was many years ago. It has to have been in the ‘60’s.

PL: Did your parents speak Yiddish to you? What happened when they wanted to speak secretly? Did they speak a different language?

CE: [laughter] I don’t know.

PL: What about your grandparents?

CE: I only had one grandfather that I remember?

PL: What do you remember?

CE: And that was my father's father. Well, he was a nice person, an elderly man. He was, I think, 81 when he passed away. And I remember going to visit there. He married my mother's sister—second time. And I remember going there. It was by the water. Right on the water. It was so peaceful and so quiet. All you could hear was the birds.

PL: Where were your parents from? Were they from Sighet? Or did they come from other parts of—

CE: My father came from the vicinity of Sighet called Bistra. And my mother came from Devishovis. It's called Visho de Sus in Romania. And she was born there, and her parents died very young. So, she was raised by an uncle, her father's brother or something. And they brought her up very nice. They didn't have any children. And that's when she got married – out of that house. And the wife of her uncle lived in Budapest many years after that. And after the Hungarians came in, we were able to travel and be in her house with her.

PL: What do you remember about your parents' relationship?

CE: My father had a good sense of humor. I remember one time on Purim, he said, "We need some fresh water." And we had a well. We had to fetch the water with a bucket. And he said, "We got to have for dinner—we got to have fresh water." So, he got out and he came back dressed as a woman. [laughter] He was wearing my mother's blonde *shaytl* [Yiddish: wig] and had a broom in his hand and a funny-looking skirt. [laughter] It was Purim. He was very funny. He would always say—he would say, "I am so busy before Pesach, I don't have time to go and borrow money." [laughter] He was just full of jokes. He was a lot of fun.

PL: Speaking of Purim, I'd love to know how you celebrated Purim as a child. What were the kind of outfits that you'd wear? Nowadays you see kids in crazy things?

CE: Right. The most famous was for the girls. We used to borrow the peasants' dress. We paid them well. And they gave us their clothes, which was very colorful. Romanish—have you ever seen magazines about them?

PL: Can you describe it?

CE: Well, they were—they had big skirts. And they had beautiful designs around it. I don't remember if it was hand-designed. All kinds of rows and also the blouses were like—they were just beautiful. Big puffy sleeves and white as snow. And they were looking forward to Purim so they could hand their garments out. And it was beautiful. Other than that we would wear anything, you know, that you can imagine. Some girls would wear boys' clothes. And only once a year you can do it. Some Hassidim don't agree with it, but we do—we did it. Dressed up in a hat, and black pants, and white shirt and so forth. A tie. And this is the way we dressed. But not like they dress over here. I see they look like monkeys. And it's just not Purim Day. And Queen Esther was, of course, it was famous, like those over here—popular.

PL: Did kids dress up as the Torah and things like that?

CE: Not as the Torah. No. Not that I remember of that. No.

PL: As a young girl, when is the first time that you remember actually seeing a Torah?

CE: When I went to shul. You went to shul and you see the Torah. And the Simchas Torah—it was big. And Simchas Torah they would close the streets from one end to the other. And they would wear torches, burning torches. And they were dancing in the middle of the street – it was beautiful – all night long on Simchas Torah.

PL: Now, I understand that Sighet actually had a fairly large Jewish population.

CE: Yes, yes.

PL: Do you remember how large it was? And when you say “the streets,” was this a Jewish neighborhood that they closed off? Or was it gentile as well?

CE: No, no. It was a Jewish neighborhood. And the gentiles who lived around there, they were cooperating.

PL: How many Jews were there in Sighet?

CE: Well, as far as I know – and as far as I think – there were about 12,000 or so.

PL: And what was the total out of how many people in total?

CE: Well, the gentiles, they lived closer by the lake, the suburbs. I wouldn’t know. I would say the maximum in the vicinity about 50,000.

PL: Were there any particular landmarks, or stores—places that you strongly remember?

CE: Yes, what I remember was what they call the *sukhrasdo*.

PL: Can you spell that?

CE: That’s in Hungarian.

PL: Oh.

CE: It’s like a buffet-type of bakery. And it had the most delicious cream puffs with things. They called it sukhrasdo. So we used to go now and then and buy those things. And on Friday nights in the summertime, we had a park not far from where we lived. We had a smaller park across the street. But a little further we had a beautiful, big park. And

there was a stage. And the military—the Romanish military used to come there every Friday night in the summer. And they would play all kinds of *their*songs, classicals, but also Hassidic *zmires* [Sabbath songs] that they would play for the Jews. And the Jews would walk around Friday night promenading and listening to that music. And it was beautiful.

PL: So it sounds—oh, I'm sorry. Continue.

CE: Yes, I said, they were very friendly.

PL: So, it sounds like from the things that you've described that at this time in your childhood being Jewish in public was something that you could be proud of?

CE: Yes.

PL: When did you notice things starting to shift? How old were you?

CE: Well, when it started to shift—there was some—first they came in—the Hungarians marched in. I can't remember exactly, in '41 or '40. They marched in and they immediately started oppressing the Jews. They put the yellow star on us, and we were not allowed to get married—whoever had gotten married if they had allowed to date. They let us get married, but the same night they would take away the groom. They would take him to the Army or to some kind of work. So there was no way that we could get married.

PL: You're saying that if someone was about to get married and they heard about it, they would [take the groom away]?

CE: Yes.

PL: —literally kidnap the groom?

CE: Oh, they would not kidnap. They would come to the house and take him.

PL: Why do you think they didn't want to permit marriages?

CE: Well, they were antisemites. And they were really bad. They were very bad. And I remember that we had to wear the yellow star, and we could only go out for two hours between 8:00 and 10:00 to do the shopping. And the rest of the time we had to stay indoors. I remember in March 1941, I think. No, I can't remember. 1944, I think it was in March. And they landed in Budapest. The Germans landed in Budapest. Parachuted. And within days they were in Sighet. And on Shabbat, the kids they usually played. It was summertime. March. Running around. And there was a Gestapo walking in the street. And a kid just bumped into him. A six- or seven-year-old little boy. He shot him on the spot, and people became alarmed.

PL: So this was the shot that alarmed everyone?

CE: Right.

PL: This was the first incident?

CE: That's right. That's right.

PL: Did you see this? Or, did you hear about it?

CE: I think I saw it. I was walking in the street. And you don't know what's happening there. And you see that little kid over there.

PL: How did you start to process these changes in your family or with your community?

CE: Well we were—we felt very bad. There was a person—a very pious person. We called him the *maggid*. I don't know if that was his name or that was his status of being such a *Talmud-khokhem*[Hebrew: distinguished scholar] – called him the maggid. We

were forced to keep our stores open as soon as the Hungarians came—opened the stores on Shabbat. But these people, like the maggid and other people, they are not going to stay in the store. So, they incorporated the children – he girls, the boys. Not the boys, the girls. And we were running the business. So, of course, it became very alarming. First of all, to have the stores open on Shabbat. What a terrible thing it was to us. We never experienced anything like it. And then the killing of the little boy. And this maggid had a heart attack walking home. And he had a heart attack. And people started getting heart attacks left and right. And then when the Germans came in, they would go into people's houses and they would drag the men out. And they would take them down in the basement and shoot them. Kill them. These things were just alarming. I mean, you hear about it and you see it, and don't know what to do. So, these are the things that were very, very frightening.

PL: So, you're how old now? You were born in '22.

CE: Yes.

PL: And you are talking about '44.

CE: Yes, that was—yes, that was—

PL: So, at what point did you not feel like a child any more?

CE: When I had a boyfriend? [laughter]

PL: So, tell me about your first boyfriend.

CE: Well, I had several boyfriends. I always belonged to the B'nai Akiva.

PL: What is that?

CE: The B'nai Akiva is a group of young people who are—they are Zionists. And they are trained to go to Israel—*hachshara* [Hebrew: places to work fields in pre-state Israel] I don't know if you know what a hachshara is.

PL: No, you'll have to translate that.

CE: Hachshara. Hachshara means—is when Israel, the pioneers there, they formed like the kibbutzim. And you have to learn how to work the land. And do things for the country. That's called hachshara . And I was 12 years old when I joined. And I was happy. I was always happy, doing a lot of singing and a lot of this and that. Cooperating—whatever. Taking advantage of every possibility.

PL: What were those possibilities? To sing in Hebrew?

CE: Well, we learned Hebrew, to read and to speak. I don't say that I can do it, but we learned. And we would get together on Friday nights on Shabbat. We had a hall. And we would come there, and there was always a speaker—a *madriyekh* [phonetic]. And we were very happy. We would sing and we would dance. And not a care in the world until the Hungarians came in. And they came in, it was the end of everything.

PL: I want to hear a little bit more about this organization. How did you hear about it? And what age groups attended it? Was it all youth?

CE: Yes, it was the B'nai Akiva's Youth. And you see them in Seattle. They have them. If you see girls walk in the street with longer skirts, and more modest not cut out. You know she's a B'nai Akiva girl. And it's the greatest pleasure, when you go to Israel. Have you been in Israel? You go—I don't know where you go. I belong to the Amit Women, and it's a continuation from the B'nai Akiva.

PL: Oh, so that became the Mizrachi women?

CE: Yes, yes.

PL: And that became Amit Women?

CE: Yes, yes. First it was Mizrachi men and women. And then we were separated. Mizrachi – American Mizrachi Women. And now, we're called Amit Women. So there it's a continuation to this day. I work for the Mizrachi Amit Women.

PL: What is the name of the Chapter here?

CE: We'll, we have the Avivah Chapter. And I was heading, running the Bessie Gotsfeld Chapter. The Bessie Gotsfeld Chapter is named after a woman, Bessie Gotsfeld, who was from Seattle. And when she moved to Israel in the early '20's, or '30's, she saw there were kids in the streets. And they had no home. And she started bringing them into her home. And little by little these troubled children had a home. Now, it's big. Now they have homes like that all over for them. And we work with them. If you go there—I was there in 1969 and I visited the first settlement for the Bessie Gotsfeld Chapter. And it was beautiful. And it was small. They were training them to be pilots, to be mechanics. The girls were learning millinery and sewing and cooks – professionals. And all these things they teach them. And now—when I went back there last year, they had their 80th or something – 60th Anniversary – and I went there. I was there—my daughters live there—not far. And I came there, and you see how big it is, and the things that they're doing. It melts your heart. And you know, all these years you worked for that. And here it is. And you see how these kids – Ethiopians, and Blacks, and Whites and Yellow – they're all embracing each other. And they're so happy.

PL: What were the ideals of the—is it B'nai Akiva?

CE: Yes.

PL: What were the ideals, when you first began with this organization? Were the goals to actually emigrate to Israel?

CE: That's right.

PL: Did they—can you tell me a little bit about how you learned about Israel? How were you taught? And what brought about the desire? Did any people emigrate to Israel before?

CE: Well, at that time, in my younger years, you couldn't go to Israel. It was a Balfour *Declaratzie*[Declaration]. You couldn't go. And you had to be at the mercy of England or somebody to give you a certificate to go. But if you went to the hachshara, like I said, for training—and they would select a certain amount of people and send them. They would go. And I always wanted to go to Israel. And that's why I joined. And I enjoyed myself being there. I had a good life. We used to do things together. And we had speakers come to us. And we enjoyed them.

PL: You said you met your first boyfriend there.

CE: No not in the B'nai Akiva.

PL: Oh. [laughter] When did you start dating then? You did mention your boyfriend?

CE: Well, I think I started dating him at the age of 18. What happened—I was in somebody's house. Somebody had passed away. It was a friend of mine – a relative. I can't remember who. And I went over to the house—just not knowing anything. So, they had a *minyan*, you know, for mourning. And there was this man over there, this boy. And I saw him daven, and I fell in love with him. [laughter] And we became friends. And then we would have gotten married. But like I said we couldn't.

PL: Yes. I'd like to hear a little bit about your Jewish upbringing, and how, you know, having so many girls in the home—how you shared in keeping kosher? What were the kosher butchers like in town? Did you go to them with your mother? Can you describe some of the things that the girls did in the home to keep Jewish?

CE: Well, we had—like I say, there was no such thing: "I keep kosher, and you don't." And "this is my pot" or that. There was no such thing. There was one big pot and there was one big kitchen, and that's where we all kept the same thing. Yes, there was for a time, I remember, there was a kosher butcher. And I used to go with my mother to the butcher store. But then I remember at one time when the Hungarians came in they forbid to do—to *shekhtn* the *shekhite* [Hebrew [v, n]: ritual slaughter]. They would not allow people to *shekht.* They said it was cruel. So, there was no meat. So, I used to go to Czechoslovakia. I volunteered for the family to go walk. We walked to Solotvenah [phonetic] – to Czechoslovakia. Over their border. And there they were allowed to slaughter. And I would come home with meat. I would go every week.

PL: How far a walk was that?

CE: It was far. It was maybe four miles. So, sometimes he would come with me. Come early in the morning and we would go. It was a beautiful walk. And go early in the morning. It was fresh air, so it didn't bother me. It was okay.

PL: So, there were a lot of very extraordinary things that you had to do in order to retain your Judaism—

CE: Mmm-hmm. Yes.

PL: —when the Hungarians started pressing down. Are there other things that you remember, where you had to go to similar extremes to keep a kosher home or to celebrate a holiday?

CE: There was no difficulty celebrating the holiday. Above us was a shul. Where we lived, there was a big complex. And above us was – what do you call it – a balcony. And there was two or three rooms. And one of those rooms was a shul.

PL: Do you remember— did it have a name - this particular shul?

CE: I just remember it was *Tserot Tsiri* [phonetic: Young Israel]—I can't remember. I'll think about it.

PL: Okay.

CE: But you know who davened over there? Elie Wiesel.

PL: I read that in your transcript.

CE: Yes.

PL: Tell me about this. You grew up in the same town as Elie Wiesel?

CE: Yes, yes. We just a few streets away.

PL: What do you remember about him? Or, did you have a relationship of any kind?

CE: No. No relationship. I just knew that he was davening up there. And they might have been distant cousins to my mother, the Wiesel family. And they had a furniture store. And that's all I remember about him. And I remember him as a young man. Seeing him in the street. I mean, who would pay attention—Elie Wiesel someday will be a representative of the Judaism, the Jewish people? But yeah, we were there. It was—they used to daven. And it was on Pesach time, especially, we used to keep our door open down below. And they would daven so beautifully – young people. [Unclear?] or something. I can't remember. So—

PL: I'm curious, as well, about—you mentioned in the interview that you did in 1975 someone named Dracula?

CE: Yes.

PL: Who was Dracula?

CE: Well—

PL: Is this folklore or is this really the name of a person?

CE: Yes. There was—Dracula was—he was a crazy guy. Not crazy but mean. And he would walk down the street. And people would run away. He was scary. And guess what? My son was married in Los Angeles. And we went to a studio there, Universal Studio. And there was Dracula. And he followed me. And he came—we got on a bus, on a train. But wherever I was, he was there. I said, "Now, listen here. Enough is enough." I says, "I come from your country, leave me alone. It's enough." He bothered me and I shouldn't be but—I have a picture with him.

PL: Who was he? You described him as someone that looked haunting.

CE: Yes, that's right. That's right. He was haunting. He was that kind of a guy who would haunt you.

PL: Was he Hungarian? This area was called Transylvania?

CE: Yes, Romanish. Yes, Transylvania.

PL: It was called Transylvania.

CE: Right. And I think you can find in the library, you can find about Dracula from Transylvania.

PL: Well, I was wondering since you mentioned him. You also mentioned that there were some other—there was an election going on at the time.

CE: Yes. *Kuso* [phonetic]. Yes.

PL: Can you explain a little bit about the situation. Because the folklore of Dracula, of course, is as a vampire.

CE: That's right.

PL: Now, is this—

CE: That's right.

PL: Are you suggesting that this is related?

CE: Not related. Not related.

PL: So, tell me—what was the situation in which he was such a haunting figure?

CE: Well, I don't know why he was that way. But he is, as far as we know. That's what he was. He was a mean person. And he was, like I say, a vampire. That's what they said. And there was also—there was a guy Manalokh from Sighet. And he would always wear a big, black brimmed—big black hat. And he would wear a cane and the same thing. We were scared of him. His lived in Sighet. [laughter]. Well, I don't know. That's all I can tell you. He was scary.

PL: Who were the *kusostn* [phonetic] then?

CE: The Cossacks? Not the Cossacks. The "kuso" [gang leader], we called them. What happened—there was a group of people who wanted to overthrow the Romanian government. And they would have killed the Jews. They just would have slaughtered them. So, the election came and we were sitting in sack clothes, and with ashes on our

faces. And we were fasting – that something should not—should happen to this guy. He should not be elected. And it so happened G-d was with us. He fell through. He didn't get to be elected. I can't remember who took his place. But the next morning, when we woke up, the Jews went to shul, and they davened *al ha'nissim*. You know what "al ha'nissim" means? Al ha'nissim is a special prayer to G-d for miracles – for things that they were supposed to do to us and it didn't happen. And they were fasting. Anyways, so what happened? 12:00 o'clock at night, when they announced that he was defeated, somebody came and knocked on our window. And he said, "It's all over. Kuso fell through. And now, he can go and chop food for the Jews." And the next morning when we woke up, we went in our backyards, and we saw gallows. They had gallows for every Jew to hang them. And then we really realized what a miracle it was that he did not get to be elected. And that was under the Romanian government. You know, we had a king in Romania. Did you know that? King Carol [sp?], who was married to a Jewish woman. I don't know if you know about that.

PL: No. What did it mean to you?

CE: To me? I mean, when this guy Kuso was defeated, I mean everybody was happy. It was like Purim. Like a *nes* [Hebrew: miracle]. Remember Haman. It was the same thing. He would have killed all the Jews, just like Haman would have done it.

PL: Did you ever learn whether or not, you know, she had anything to do with saving the Jews?

CE: You mean the queen?

PL: Yes.

CE: I don't know. But all I know is that the Romanians were not ready to give over the Jews like the Hungarians did. But did she have an influence on him? They said he was very liberal.

PL: Tell me a little bit about your schooling. Where did you go to school?

CE: Well, part of the time, we had to go to shul on the Sabbath. So, went to a private school, part of the time. And so, somehow it worked out so we didn't have to go to shul—go to school on Shabbos.

PL: What about on the Jewish holidays, as well?

CE: Well, that's why we went to a private school. So that was, I say, complimented for – for what we didn't do on holidays or whenever we did not go to school on the holidays.

PL: How did that influence your bonding and relationships with students who were not Jewish? Did you have friendships with non-Jewish kids?

CE: No. No. Not at all. None.

PL: And in terms of those expectations within your family, were there expectations that you would or would not have relationships other than with Jewish kids?

CE: No, that's right. We only had relationships with Jewish kids.

PL: So, when—if you—did you feel any animosity from other children? Or "misunderstanding" let's call it—where they didn't understand why you were out from school, or—

CE: No.

PL: No.

CE: No, we had nothing to do with them. All I know is they used to come and light the fire for us on Shabbos.

PL: Did you have a name for those who lit the fires?

CE: I can't remember it [laughter]. That's like a thousand years ago.

PL: Did the—before we move on a little bit—is there anything else about Sighet that you would want to describe for future generations, your grandchildren, that you would want them to know about your life there.

CE: I tell you something. I blocked it out of my mind. I never went back. After the War, after it was all over, my two sisters went there. One of them came and opened up the door in our house. And there were Russians living in there, and she fainted on the steps. Fell down. And the neighbors came and picked her up. And my other sister went back to look for things – I told her where I buried certain things – and didn't find anything. And my other sister didn't go. And I would not go if you paid me. I cannot go to see those bloody stones. I know we were friendly with the neighbors, and when it came to drag us then nobody came, and they said, "Well, we'll help" or "We'll do anything." So, I cannot. I don't want to have anything to do with them. I just remember the parks, how beautiful they were. And there were certain mountains that we used to go. My father used to take us certain times of the year and we would go. It was beautiful. It was called the Mill Garden. It's beautiful. The mountains we used to climb and run and being happy. I can't. I just can't. I am not interested in what goes on there. And what they're saying now is that Romania is the most [im]poverished country now. It is the poorest country in Europe, in that area. With the Jews—as long as the Jews were there, they did—they prospered, and they got along. And business was good. After the Jews left, it was not the same.

PL: So, when did the Jews—when were they start to be evicted? When did that happen? And when were you—when did you notice that you were asked to leave your home? Or, that people occupied your own home?

CE: Well, it was in March—soon after the Germans came into Budapest after—I think it was April, not March. It was April when they came one morning, and they said, "All the

Jews line up." And "They have to go to the ghetto." So, we went to the ghetto. We were there three weeks in the ghetto. And pushed into people's houses. Fortunately, we had a friend over there who took us in. But my older sisters—one of my sisters was in Bucharest. And two were in Budapest. And we were pushed in – my sister and two children – we were pushed into somebody else's house. And we stayed there for three months—for three weeks.

PL: What was the ghetto?

CE: Well, the ghetto was just a certain section of the city. And they took the rest—the vacated the whole city into those three streets. And that was the ghetto.

PL: When was it formed, or did you—did you know about it before you were forced to go there?

CE: [No,] we didn't know anything. Nothing. It was done so quietly. Secretly. [deep sigh] In fact, one of my sisters who came back from Budapest, she went there to look for her missing husband. And when she came back, she left two children with my mother. And she came back from Budapest. And they were throwing people out of trains. And she would not have come home had it not been for a detective who she knew from the city. And he knew what was going on and he told her – he found her somewhere – "I'll take you home. You will be under my protection or guardian" or whatever. "I'll take you home. And he came home. Brought her home. And she was happy. And the children were there. And just before – the day before we were deported – this fellow came over on Shabbos afternoon. And I remember very well. He came over, and he told her, "Tomorrow they are going to take you away. I want you to take your children and come with me to my mother's house." But my sister would not go, because he's a man, and go to the mother's house. And she didn't want to leave the parents. What will be with the parents, if I go? She didn't go and she perished just like everybody else.

PL: How old are you when you were evicted from your home?

CE: I, like I say, I was born in 1922. And that was in ‘44. I think, what was it – 20, 21, something like it.

PL: I would like to ask you—since, much of the—I’m very interested in hearing about things that you’ve done in your life since coming to America, since Liberation. But I would like to ask you what parts of your—I’m going to leave it up to you. What parts of the story – from deportation to Liberation – you would like to discuss? And the reason why I precedent it that way is because I know you’ve been interviewed in which you’ve discussed much of this in detail – with the Jewish Archives Project at the University of Washington. So, where would you like to begin?

CE: Anything. I would rather you ask me questions.

PL: Okay.

CE: Because where would I begin?

PL: [laughter] Well, your family at this point is in the ghetto. Are you all together?

CE: Yes.

PL: And what’s happening? What are people talking about?

CE: Well, we were just sitting there. Just like a lame duck. You cannot do anything. It was forbidden to get out of the ghetto. They would shoot us. My sister – the one who came back to her children – she was able to go out once a day from the ghetto. She had a white band. That means that she was a servant of—there helping in the ghetto. And she would bring food and milk for the nursing mothers. And the rest of us, we couldn’t go out. You had to have special permission. What we did—we did that. And we sat. And then, on Sunday morning, they came and they took us. They dragged us

out of our house to the ghetto.

PL: Who was this that dragged you out of the house?

CE: Well, the Gestapo. They came with the bayonets, and everything, and just [shouted], "*Heraus*!"—"Get out! Get out!"

PL: What did they do with you?

CE: Well, what they do? They lined us up immediately. And they were marching us to the trains. And when we came to the trains – open cattle wagons – 70, 80 in a wagon. Pushed us all in. My father couldn't get in the same wagon. Was in the next one. And it took ten days – ten or eleven days to get to Auschwitz. No food. No water. No sanitary facilities.

PL: What—do you remember what you were thinking about? Or how you were preparing for what you couldn't imagine? Do you remember what you were thinking about?

CE: Well, I was sitting next to my mother. What I was thinking [laughter], I don't know. But I remember my mother telling me, "Whatever work there will be, you should always volunteer to get there." And I says, "Mama, you'll come with us and you'll do." And she says—and Mama says, "I can't. They're not going to let me. But you're young." And remember, "Go to work wherever you can. And you'll be all right." And my mother was right. It was the last time I talked to her.

PL: So, ten days you were on this car with her. And—

CE: And my younger sister and my younger brother.

PL: And you arrived. And what did you see?

CE: Well, we came to Auschwitz. Straight to Auschwitz. And we saw the train wrecks—the railroad tracks. And they took us out of there. Immediately they sent us—there was Mengele standing over there. And we were a whole—all of us were out in this field. And if he liked you he says, "*kummin zi her*" [come here]. He would send you either left or right. Well, I was sent to the right. And my mother and the rest went to the left. And what happened? I ran over there to the left. And when I come, I wanted to be with—where my mother is. But when I got there, they say they're going to take us some busses. And I look around, and I see there are a lot of us. And I figure there isn't going to be any room. So, I went back to the right side. And I don't know how in the world that was possible. Because you couldn't go back, but I did. I did.

PL: What do you make of that? What—you're saying that you were freely moving from side to side?

CE: At that time.

PL: What does that mean?

CE: At that time. What it means to me, that G-d let me live. Let somebody live. I just wanted to live – to continue where my parents left off. And I considered this a miracle. But I tell you something, I had guilty feelings all along. Why was I left? [hits table with hand] Why was not my sister, who had two children and she was beautiful and young? And why I left my mother? My mother was *tzedeket*[generous, kind and loving]. Why me? For years, years, I had that guilty feeling. But like I say, I contributed to *Hashem* wanted somebody to live.

PL: So you were on one side and your mother, your father, your younger sister who is 16 years old at the time—

CE: Eleven. Eleven.

PL: Eleven. Who else?

CE: My brother. My youngest brother was with my mother. And my sister, 11-year-old sister. The older brothers, they were in different, in separate trains. And my father was also in a separate train. When we got out, I had a bottle of whiskey that I took along, and I handed it over to my father. He took a sip and they immediately pushed him away. I never saw him again. And he cried. And I never saw him again.

PL: What did you have on you? What were you wearing? What could you take with you?

CE: Well, they told us we can take 50 pounds of whatever we can take. Walking from the ghetto to the train most of it was left in the streets – middle of the streets. Who could carry? We were walking. Weak. Not knowing where you are going.

PL: What did you want to take with you?

CE: I can't remember. You take your personal underwear—whatever, you know, you need. Personal things. I can't remember exactly what I wanted to take.

PL: What about the—your family possessions? Your Shabbos candles and all these things that were in your home? Were they all confiscated?

CE: We had beautiful high candlesticks, you know? Five or six prongs. Mother had to light 13 candles. So, I buried the candlesticks myself. We had a little shack over there. And I dug a hole, and I buried them real well. And, like I say, my sister went back to find them, and told them where they were. And there was nothing there when she came. So, I have nothing from—nothing, absolutely nothing from home.

PL: So, what happened next?

CE: What happened next when we came to Auschwitz, we were sent to left to right. And when we came, I was in the right. And I was—the ones that were healthy were sent there. And the children, they did not separate them from their mother because they didn't want to have a commotion. My sister was young and beautiful held onto two children and she went with them. So, they immediately—we came to a place like a bathhouse and they said, "*ziehen sie sich aus*!" – "undress yourself!" And we took everything [off] – shoes and everything. And they gave us—first they shaved our heads. And they gave us a prison dress – a striped prison dress and clogs. Wooden clogs and socks. One was red and one was green. And that's what they did. They made us look like animals.

PL: What happened over the course of the—you were in the camps for a year.

CE: Right.

PL: So, it was between '44 and '45.

CE: Right.

PL: A year of eternity?

CE: Right.

PL: I understand that you were in seven different camps.

CE: Right.

PL: How—why were you shuffled around so much? What happened that moved you from one place to another?

CE: Well, when we first came to Birkenau – that's in Auschwitz – and we were there until October. The climate was very difficult over there. It was bitter cold in the winter and

bitter hot in the summer. It was so hot that the skin—summer was—the skin started swelling up and separating from the legs, from the heat. And also the Allies started to come in. And Auschwitz, you know, was an exterminating camp. And they didn't want anyone to be found there. So, they took us from there to Bergen-Belson. And was in—I was in Bergen Belson for a few months. And then, they sent us to Bronsweig. Bronsweig was a city where it was completely bombed. And we were there to clear the police department that was somewhat still standing. And we were there to clear the streets and the police department. And I worked for a while in the basement, heating the system with coal. Had to shovel in the snow—the coal. Which I was very glad because I was inside. At least it wasn't so cold. And it was from Bronsweig we were sent to Hamburg [Buchenwald]. In Hamburg there was a munitions factory. And we had to—outside you didn't notice anything. But you came down there—it was like a small little mountain and down there was a hole. And we came—there was a salt mine in there. And in the salt mine there were little carts that you shoveled the salt. And they also had rail tracks, railroad tracks. And in there was a munitions factories. We had to go off at the elevators. And that's where I worked for a while. I worked with a civilian man. Ammunition.

PL: Who was that? What was that like—working with a civilian? Did he understand what was going on?

CE: Oh and how. We were cheap labor. There was—I happened to be with that civilian man. He was a nice man. He didn't say anything. But the other girls, they sorted the things. They did all kinds of things for ammunition.

PL: I want to ask a little bit about the relationships in the camps that you built with some of the other women that you were imprisoned [with] and working alongside. I know that you referred to one woman as your *lager* or camp friend.

CE: Yes. Yes.

PL: At what point did you start building friendships that helped you get through?

CE: Well, when we were shaved our heads, and they took away our clothes. And we had no mirrors. And I looked at her. I knew how I looked. And we knew what happened, you know? So we decided that we are going to be like sisters. From now on, we are going to be like sisters. I will help her, she will help me. And we will be devoted to one another. And that's the way it was all the way to this day.

PL: Who is this person that you are talking about?

CE: Her name is Roszi, Roszi Klein. And she lives part of the time in Sweden and part of the time in Israel. And I went to see her three years ago. I was in Israel. And on the return trip home I stopped in Sweden to see her. And she came here once or twice.

PL: Yes. I just want to make sure that we still have time left on this tape. So, did you know her from Sighet?

CE: Yes. I did. We're from Sighet.

PL: And when you said that you looked at her and you knew that that's what you looked like, and you knew what was going on?

CE: Yes.

PL: Did you talk about it?

CE: Well, you're in it. But first you know, they give us to eat – and you can't eat the food. But after a while you are glad you had. You had something to eat. We couldn't eat for a few days.

PL: Did these kind of relationships build with other women as well? Did you all try to help each other?

CE: Yes. Yes. We did. But more with Roszi. Because I committed myself to be her sister.

PL: Tell me a little bit about that. I mean, there's so many things I know that you've done in a sister-ship way with her that helped you both survive. So, how did that sister-ship help you both survive?

CE: Well, she gave me sort of hope. Like I had a sister. And for her, I was her helper or her savior that got help, because she was always sick. She couldn't take it. It was so difficult on her. At one time she was burning up with fever. She had some kind of a sickness and we had no medication. We had no water. So I risked my life. In the middle of the night I ran to the kitchen – to what they call "organized stealing." It was called "organized." And I went to the kitchen to bring some coffee. We could not drink the water over there because it was contaminated. It was rusty. That used to be a battlefield there – the First World War. So, you couldn't drink the water. So, I went to the kitchen. And above they were shooting after me. And they shouted, "Halt!" And I ran. And I figured, if I cannot help Roszi I'm finished with that—

PL: Hold onto your thought. I'm going to switch tapes so that—

[END OF CD 1]

PL: We are continuing our history of Cecillia Etkin. And this is the second minidisk tape. So, we were just talking about the time that you tried to do "organized stealing"?

CE: Yes.

PL: For coffee.

CE: Yes.

PL: And what happened?

CE: Well, I came through. And she was very sick. The next morning we had to stand *tzilapel* [phonetic]. "Tzilapel" means that we would stand in line – eight or nine of us. And they would come—the Gestapo would come and count us. If somebody was missing, we had to stand the whole day. And Roszi was very sick, running a high fever. So I took her and I wrapped her up in blanket. And I had her stand in line—sit in line. She was sitting on a rock behind me. And the Gestapo—the Capo comes and counts everybody. And then she sees that a blanket was missing in the barracks. So, she started shouting, "Who took the blanket?!" And she was mean, mean, mean. Ready to tear us apart. And I saw—and Roszi was sitting behind me on the floor. And I raised my hand. I says, "I took the blanket." And she looks at me. "I don't have it." So, she says, "Where is it?" And I said, "Roszi, do you see her?" It was a Jewish Capo. I said, "She's sick. And I took the blanket." And she was ready to tear us apart. I says, "You can hit me. Roszi is sick." I lifted her up. And the Gestapo came to count—they should see the head but they didn't see the blanket. So, she had *rakhmones*, pity, and she let go. But she was shouting like a mad dog.

PL: Did she shout in what language?

CE: I think German because that's what it was.

PL: Normally what could she have done?

CE: She could have hit her, because it was not supposed to be missing. They count every day. And she might have hit us—I don't know.

PL: What gave you the strength to do that?

CE: Well, I feared if Roszi goes, I go with her. [sighs] I can't live without her. She's my sister.

PL: Were there other times that you did things like that for each other?

CE: Well, I don't remember if Roszi ever did for me. [laughter] Honestly speaking. Sometimes it was very funny the way we acted. Roszi was always the weakling. And she was two years younger than me. Once we were standing in line to be—that was a different time. She got better. We were standing in line to be taken for experimental things, you know? They ordered all the girls to get out and stand in line. And there was a civilian man came, and he supposedly looks at your hands, looks at your face. And they said they need girls to work in a factory. But that was not the reason. So, the Capo, the Jewish Capo, she always followed us. So, she comes over to me, and she says, "Your sister, how old is she?" And I tell her how old she is. And we started to pinch our cheeks—we should look presentable and wash off the mud from the clogs. And when she heard how old she was she says *farshvund*. You know what that means?

PL: No.

CE: "Get lost."

PL: Explain. What was she saying?

CE: Farshvund in German means "get lost." And when I heard the word "get lost," we were on the other end and over there they were selecting. And I grabbed Roszi and we ran. I got lost. If it hadn't been for her, we would still be in line. So later on we found out that that was an experimental transport. It took the girls for whatever they wanted to do with them.

PL: Were you witness to this medical experimentation?

CE: No. Fortunately not. It's only that we heard about.

PL: Did you hear about it while you were there? Or, is most of this what you know now?

CE: We heard about it because there was a Russian woman whose father was a partisan. And she shared a bunk with us. And we became very friendly with her. Her name was Ruszha. Her father was a Jewish partisan or something. They threw her in camp. So they didn't take the Russians. The Arians they did. They only took the Jewish girls. So when she heard that we were in that transport, she was very upset. And she was very worried. And then, that she knew where they were taking them for. So what happened to us. We were hiding. We went from one latrine to another. Until finally it quiet down, and we didn't see any more girls down there. So we came, we peeked out, and we came to our bunks. And we were hiding. We still were so worried. We crawled under a bed like maybe enough room for a mouse or for a cat. And we were hiding there. And when it got dark, we came up to our bunks. And we came up there, and we heard that Ruszha was crying because she was telling that we were in that transport. And we were not going to come back. And she was crying. And then we heard her cry and when I arrived, I called, "Ruszha, Ruszha. We're here." So when she saw us she was so happy. And she told us, "You know where you were? You were in that transport when they took the girls." I knew somebody in Seattle. She's not alive any more. A woman who was under – I don't know if this transport, this experiment or another – but she couldn't have any children. And she cried all the time. A healthy woman.

PL: How did you stay healthy? Did you get thin?

CE: Yes.

PL: Did you get ill yourself?

CE: Yes. Ill I did not get. Thin, I did. And how did I survive, my food? They used to give us a certain amount of bread—let's say four slices like the square bread, sliced. They gave us that amount every day. And they would give us black coffee for breakfast. No milk. No sugar. Nothing. And a small piece of margarine. Well, I ate

my bread right away. The reason for that was because I was afraid that somebody would take it. And secondly, it could have gotten contaminated. So this time I ate it and that was it. Of course I starved. They gave us—first the food we couldn't eat. And then they would give us potatoes. I ate potatoes with the peels and all.

PL: Those were cooked?

CE: Cooked. But they did—I ate plenty of raw potatoes, at different times.

PL: How did you live your life as a Jew – if at all, could you – while you were in the camps?

CE: No. No. On Pesach – when I found out it was Pesach – I changed my bread for carrots—carrots or beets, whatever was available. The first two days I didn't eat any *chometz*. Didn't know. But when I knew it was Pesach, I didn't eat it. As much as I could. Then on Yom Kippur one day we were marching to work. And it was a long march. And one of the girls couldn't make the march. Couldn't make the walk. So she sat down on the ground. And the dogs were there barking around her ready to chew her up. So, they Gestapo man, he shouted, "*verfluchter jude*?"—you filthy Jews. "Where is your G-d," he asked. "Today is Yom Kippur." So when I heard it was Yom Kippur, the next day I fasted. So that's the way I went on.

PL: Looking back, and reflecting on, you know, the timing is not your own. You didn't know what day of the week it was?

CE: That's right.

PL: —when the Jewish Holidays were. So all the sense of the lunar calendar is in many ways lost to you?

CE: Right.

PL: But what you learned, you did.

CE: Yes.

PL: What does that mean to you now? What do you think about how you—did that sustain you? How was it to be an internal Jew in this horrible situation?

CE: Well, I'll tell you. At one time, they gave us meat. It was horsemeat. And you know, it was good! And if you have to save your life, you're allowed to do it. And not knowing even it was horsemeat, I ate it. Whatever it was, to save my life, I can do it. But when I'm out of there, I'm not there. As soon as I was out, I went back to my old ways. But I was taught to do in Sweden, and here and there—I just continued. If it hadn't been my faith so strong, I wouldn't be here today. My faith was so strong, that someday I will get out of the camps. I always remember Pesach. At the time when G-d took the children out of Egypt. And I says, if He took them out of Egypt, why can't he take us out of Auschwitz? And I believed it. And I only—I wanted to live from day to day [and go on with my life]. Live till tomorrow. And tomorrow's another day. And continue where the parents left off. Because they were religious people. They were good people. And I adored them. And that's why I am what I am. To this day.

PL: When you now talk about your experiences – and you say that it has taken you some time – but you do go when asked and speak about it. What do you talk about?

CE: Well, I always tell them, "Ask me questions." Because I cannot. There is no beginning, no end. So whenever they ask me things like this, like you ask. So I tell them. There was one kid. I spoke at one of the high schools in Renton two years ago. And it was just mostly—there was one Jewish kid there, that brought me there. He asked me if I would do him a favor. He needs to do something. "Will I speak?" I says, "Yes." And there was another girl, finally came over to me. And she says, "My grandmother is Jewish." I says, "From what site?" She told me. I says, "Well, did you

know that you are Jewish too?" She didn't even know she was Jewish. Well, anyway, when one kid asked me – a non-Jewish kid, "Mrs. Etkin, all the things that you went through, when you were religious—do you still believe in G-d? I says, "Of course. If I wasn't here—if I wouldn't, I wouldn't be here." And it's true. Because it was very difficult to go through that. And I was with Hungarian women from deep Hungary and they were not used to things like this. And they went to sleep and didn't wake up. And I wanted to wake up. I knew I have Roszi I have to take care of. And I knew the other people—the family was gone. Except for the three sisters. Two sisters were in Budapest under Aryan papers—hiding.

PL: Your sisters?

CE: Two sisters, yes. And one sister was in Bucharest, Romania, which was not deported. And I was hoping – even though I didn't know about them for a while – but I was always hoping that, at least them. And I had two brothers who were frozen to death—the 15- and the 14- or the 16-year-old. Just frozen. And my older brother, there with his wife. He exploded in the mines. They sent him there to pick up the mines. And so did my brother-in-law. [deep sigh]

PL: You mentioned when Sylvia Angel [Jewish Women's Archive-Seattle Community Advisory Board Member] came to talk to you—

CE: Yes.

PL: —you said that you wanted to talk about the sorting process. The kinds of work that you did and how you survived. And one example—and I'd like you to tell me about it—is when you would find pieces of gold?

CE: Mmm-hmm.

PL: Tell me why you wanted to talk about that story? Why is it important to you?

CE: Not really, except that Roszi was with me. And that was a night shift. And we marched to work.

PL: Which camp are you in at this point?

CE: At Auschwitz. And we came what—we worked in a place that's called Brezhinka. It's a Polish word. I don't know what it means. But it was right by the railroads. When they came in, the people like me, they dropped everything there by the railroads and then they brought it into a big place, a room. And they sorted everything. And we found money in the shoulder pads, dollars and brilliant diamonds. And name it—all kinds of things. We found them there. And we were sorting the clothes. And there were big crates. If you had gold. It went in the crate. Diamonds in another crate. And dollars in another crate. And everything was sorted. But Roszi couldn't do the work. But she had to go. If I would let go of her, she would be taken away and that would be the end. So, I dragged her as much as I can. I took her to work. And at night I would cover her up. I would put her to sleep. Right next to me. I was working. And she was sleeping there. I covered her up with clothes and everything. Nobody should see her. Like she was a bundle of *shmates* [Yiddish: rags], you know? And so, that is the only significance about that I have to say. I don't know anything else. It didn't need the money. You couldn't buy a piece of bread or anything. You couldn't. There was no way. [At times] there was a girl, a Capo – a Jewish girl. So she said that she knew that we wanted to get out of Auschwitz so much. I just couldn't stand the stench of the crematoria. We wanted to leave. And she says to us, "You know, there is a place in Gleiwitz" – which is not far from Auschwitz – "and there is a factory over there. And they need girls to go there. If you can bring us some gold, I can arrange for you." Now that I look back, "I can arrange for you to go there with a transport to go and work in that factory." So, we started bringing in gold. But how did I bring in the gold? I took my portion of bread and I made a hole in the middle. And I covered it with [a rag]. I put the gold in there. Whatever I could find. Put the gold in there, in the middle, and covered it with a white paper napkin,

[rag] or whatever napkin. If I had a shmate or anything. And when it came for checking us to see if we'd taken anything, I turned it upside down. And all you could see was the bread on the other end. So, we come in and we give her the gold. So we wait and we wait. And there's no transport. [laughter]. So, I don't know what she did with it. I don't think she could have done anything with it because there was no place to hide nowhere. You couldn't hide anything. So—but she tried. She tried.

PL: Those Jewish girls that were part of the Capo.

CE: Capos.

PL: Was everyone offered a—I hate to—I don't even want to say the word "opportunity." Was everyone offered this "position"? Was it only particular—

CE: To be a Capo?

PL: Yes. How was that distinction made?

CE: Okay. The Capos were there years before we were there. There was a little girl, 11-year-old, who was there for five years. So when our transport came from Sighet, there was a middle-aged woman. She must have been in her 50's from my hometown. Lerner, Mrs. Lerner. So we were there a few days and she needs to go to the bathroom. The latrines were outside. So she goes to the door and wants to go out to the latrine. And this little girl who was a Capo tells her, "You cannot go." And she didn't understand her. This girl was German or Polish. Polish and she speaks German. And Mrs. Lerner didn't understand. And she pushes the door, and wants to go. And this girl tells her, "You cannot go. It's *block sperre*" – because there are planes flying, observation planes. And we don't want them to see us.

PL: What's means block sperre?

CE: Bloch shperre means that the barracks—what you call it? The barracks are locked. We cannot go in; we cannot go out. So she beat her up so hard. She almost killed her. An 11-year-old girl. And people started hollering. I says—her name was Leah. I started questioning, “What is this?” And I was told that she was there five years from Poland. And how she survived is another thing. So they were made to be animals. Like animals.

PL: Is this the same girl that you saw davening in Sweden?

CE: No. It’s not in Sweden. This girl was davening in camp—it was Shavuot. Magda. Magda barked like a dog. She used to march us to work. And she would shout, “*Arbeit! Arbeit! Arbeit*!” She would always: “Work, work, work!” and shout like a dog. And she—I says, “Who is Magda?” So one day I saw her. It was *Yontif* [Holiday]. She was davening. And I inquired, “Who is Magda?” She was there five years or so before from Czechoslovakia.

PL: Where was she davening?

CE: Where she was davening? There was a little corner there, and she—apparently, she got a little *siddur* [prayer book] from somewhere. I don’t know. I was told her father was a *rov* [rabbi]

PL: Not only could you daven publicly?

CE: You mean?

PL: In the camps—could you express your Judaism in that way?

CE: Well, we were all “our type.” I don’t know. I don’t know. I know we tried to light the Hanukkah candles. Made the candles—the strings, the shoe strings. Something like. And I remember being a watchdog for them so the Gestapo shouldn’t come.

PL: Wow. So it was a Hanukkah, and you tried to create a menorah?

CE: Yes. And we were singing also – “Moaz Tsur.”

PL: Mmm. What was that like?

CE: [sighs] Listen, there is an expression: “When does a gypsy sing? When he’s hungry.” And what else can you do? What else can you do? How we knew it was Hanukkah? I don’t know. I can’t tell you.

PL: Did it give you some joy?

CE: Yes, it did give us some joy. Yes.

PL: What did you think about when you saw Magda davening?

CE: Well, what I thought that there is a human being in there. Magda is made to look like an animal. Be like an animal. And I felt sorry for them. Because they were there so long before. Much earlier than we. We used to have—there was a lot of young people in my hometown who were Communists, became Communists. Like I say, I was a Zionist. And there were some that were Communists. And they were very persuasive to go their way. They worked on me for a long time. But they didn’t have any success with me. But they did work on other girls and even boys that they should join the Communist party. And they were smart. Smart, young people. All of a sudden, this one disappears. That one disappears. They just disappear. And then we came to Auschwitz, there they were. There were the girls and there were the boys. Yes.

PL: Do you remember whether or not there were any agitators in the camp or people who talked about retaliating in any way?

CE: There was no way. First of all, we were so weak you could blow us away – like a fly: “muzelman”[phonetic; sick like a ghost]. Who could do anything? I was 75 kilo

when I got out of camp. Seventy-five pounds not kilo.

PL: So, it's very interesting that the advice that your mother gave you, which was—

CE: Work.

PL: Work. Work. It's scary and it gives me chills to think of what the phrasing is that, "Work will set you free." But in your case, it did.

CE: Yes. And the day after it was over, it was horrible. What do you do now? You're free. Where do you go? How do you live your life? What is your future? Who have you got? And all these decisions, you know?

PL: Where were you, when you learned that you were free?

CE: I was exchanged for prisoners of war. For 3,000—we were 3,000 girls. And we were exchanged for prisoners, German prisoners. And the Red Cross freed us. I was in *Buchenvald* at that time. And they came to *Buchenvald*. We were ready to be shot where they landed us—in the "*vald*." A vald is a forest. And there were machine guns all the way around. Aiming just to get in order. So, like I say, G-d helps. He took the Jews out *Mitzrayim*, he'll take us out. And we were—all of a sudden we were sent to go to the trains. "Come to the wagons. Stand over there until further orders." And we faced—like we faced the wall. And we wait. Then I hear—I hear boots, you know, walks. What you call it—those steps. So I look around. I turned my back, and I saw there was men with white band on their arms. So that I knew there was something going on. So soon enough they ordered us to get into the wagons. And this time it was already almost nightfall. And the trains started taking off very fast. So Roszi was very tired. So she's sitting on the floor and going to sleep. And it got dark. Pitch black. And as we were sitting there, I couldn't sleep. I just saw that we were going somewhere. The train is taking us before we had no destination. And the train was going back and forth. And this time we are going somewhere. And when I was sitting and it was getting dark. And

I heard one of the Gestapo telling the Capo girl, "*Heute gehen ihr zur freiheit*"—"Today you're going to freedom." And I started shaking Roszi. I says, "Roszi, wake up!" And she picks up her head. And I says, "Roszi, we're going to freedom." She says, "You and your stories." She says, "We are not going anywhere. They're going to take us somewhere and they'll kill us over there." Well, anyway, we came to Padburg.

PL: Where is that?

CE: Padburg is in Denmark. And we come there, and it was May 1st in the morning. They tell us, "You're free."

PL: Does it have any significance for you that it was May 1st?

CE: No. Not really. No. It just was—it was May. A *mazeldike tog* [Yiddish: lucky day] That's what it was.

PL: [laughter]

CE: Yes, I'll never forget that. I was so hungry. The girls ran out of the wagons. They opened up the doors. The Gestapo opened up the door and there were a lot of Aryan women there. They—the ones who were political—for political reasons. And they shouted, "We're free." And I don't know what happened to them. They just disappeared.

PL: What do you mean "they were political for political reasons"?

CE: Well, they were not there because they were Jewish. They were there because somebody in the family or they must have committed something that they threw them into the camps. Like Ruszha. Her father was a partisan. And they took the family and sent them to camp.

PL: So, everyone ran out of—

CE: They ran out of the wagon. And the girls, the Jewish girls, they ran. There were little houses. They ran, ran. And there was a bakery on the side. And they ran into the bakery to get the bread. They just befelled them like flies. So, the people from the bakery, they took everything out and put—set it in the middle of the street. And like vultures they came. And then they ran into the houses to get milk and this and that. It was a horror. And I was always sitting in the back and waiting. I was always worried that—well, anyway, I didn't go. But I did go down the side by the wagon. And an officer came by me and said, "Are you *hozinsi*?" [phonetic]—"hungry? Are you hungry? And I said, "Very." So, he stuck a cigarette in my mouth. I never smoked in my life. [laughter]

PL: Did that cigarette taste—

CE: It taste good too.

PL: [laughter]

CE: Nothing else. I was really—I was always hungry. But I did not eat any clean things ever.

PL: You mean "unclean" things?

CE: Unclean things. I would eat potato peels, but they had to be cleaned. From the kitchen I would take the potato—sometimes we were going there.

PL: Because they served you unclean food in the kosher sense?

CE: No, no, no. They're dirty. I mean they did not serve us dirty food. Whatever they gave us was clean, but there was a lot of contamination. If you put your bread under your pillow. I was always worried for that.

PL: What organizations were helping you out at this time? You said before, you were, "Okay, what do I do? Where do I go?" So, who helped lead you?

CE: Well, we were supported by the Red Cross. And I understand—now, I understand that they were helped by the Jewish committees in New York. But basically, as far as I knew at that time, it was from the Red Cross. When we came to Sweden they deloused our space, scrubbed us, disinfected us. They gave us new clothes. And it was—it was a beginning of getting back to health. They kept us in quarantine for three weeks. And checking out who was [sick]. Roszi became ill with TB. She was five years in a sanatorium. She was sent away and I was left. My problem was crying. Physically, I was all right. But mentally, I was just crying all the time.

PL: So, how did they help you?

CE: Well, like I say—they first—they gave us good food. We were always in a group. And they gave us—first they put us in quarantine for three weeks. And after that, one was sent here and one was [there]. It depended, you know, on their illnesses. And then we were sent to convalescent. They gave us good food – very little at the time. In the beginning we were very sick from the food.

PL: Because you were eating too much at first?

CE: We were eating too much. And throwing up. And went to Sweden and they had to give us first like children. And we—I was very, very skinny.

PL: When did you first cry?

CE: Well, when I saw, "I am alive. And where are the rest?" And I had a guilty feeling, all the time. Why me? Why not my mother?

PL: Did other people talk about this guilt?

CE: Not that I know of. I don't know. They might have. I just felt that I—I was guilty for being alive.

PL: People talk about survivors feeling that guilt, and that many people felt that way. At what point did you deal with it, or how did you deal with it?

CE: Well, they had to give me a special room away from the others because I couldn't [stand it]. Things bothered me. Like for instance, moral behavior. They all behaved. But I just felt that I can't take it. So, like Roszi got involved with a non-Jewish man. And I begged her. I said, "Roszi we're alive now and we don't have to do this. They killed us. And what would your parents say after all this?" There was nothing that I could do for her to change her mind. Until she got sick. She got very sick and she was taken to a sanatorium. Then she realized and she gave him up. And I cried all the time.

PL: Do you remember what you thought about when you were crying? Was it your family?

CE: My family is not here and they won't come back. That's why I don't speak Romanish any more. I wrote the last letter to my sister in Romanish. I had to tell them what happened. Since then, no way.

PL: How then did—I guess I know that you had mentioned in your other interview that, at some point, you did seek help. And I would like to ask you if you want to discuss that?

CE: Sure. Why not?

PL: Okay. Because I think that's very unusual and very courageous. And I'm wondering, at what point in your life? You're—how old when you—you were 22 years old and you were in Sweden. At what point did you first see someone that you could talk about these feelings with?

CE: Not in Sweden. There was no one there. It was just—I mean it was just us. And there were some helpers. But there was nobody who could come out and—like the Jewish Family Service. We didn't have that. The only time I went to the Jewish Family Service was when I wanted to go back to designing. I wanted very much to become a designer. And I did go to the Jewish Family Service for *zamlung* [Yiddish: collection for helping the needy] – what they call the *"geminde far zamlung"* [Yiddish: organization for helping the needy] for example. Something like it.

PL: Can you translate that?

CE: I don't think I can because it may not be correct. But it is like the Jewish Family Service. And I told them, "I would very, very much like to go to school. Could they help me?" And they said, "Yes." They immediately got all the tools that I needed. And I think that the reason that I didn't go is because I was scared of the Swedes. They were crazy about a woman with black hair. And they sometimes—they would follow me. And I was scared of that. And I would have had to go travel there at night. Because I didn't live far from Stockholm, I would have had to go there by bus or rent a place which I couldn't afford. So I gave it up. But they were very willing to help.

PL: What was it about a dark-haired woman that they just—you were very unusual? You were very pretty?

CE: Because they're all blonde. And my hair didn't have hair for a year. I mean it didn't grow. And when it came in they looked beautiful. And I was still young – the prime of my life. And I just don't say it's me. I mean, it's generally speaking. There were a lot of Jewish girls, unfortunately, who married non-Jews. They married Swedes. Roszi wanted to marry one. And I was scared of them.

PL: So you said you that you were, you really—were you diagnosed from all this crying with depression or—

CE: Yes.

PL: A condition? What did they diagnose you with?

CE: Well they—depression. They gave me medication. I took the medication but still, I cried all the time. And they gave me a separate room, away from the others. We were in the same barracks but my room was towards the end and there was only one bed for me.

PL: At what point did you feel yourself lifted from this?

CE: Well, like I say, I was always a believer. I was always in a Orthodox camp, kosher, and of course Shabbos. I keep Shabbos.

PL: Are you talking about a DP camp?

CE: Could be.

PL: Did they call it a DP camp?

CE: No. No. We were just recuperating. And there were possibilities there. And I went back to my old ways—the way that I was used to. And I associated with girls who were like me. And I was a believer, a strong believer in G-d. And I guess that got me out of it. And I wanted very much to leave Sweden. I was there for two years. And there was a Rabbi Wohlgelernter who used to be in Seattle.

PL: Can you spell his name?

CE: Wohlgelernter. Let me write it down.

PL: You can write it down for me after. I'll make sure to put it in the transcript.

CE: Yes. Okay.

PL: So what did the rabbi do?

CE: So, the rabbi came to our camp. And he made our first Shabbos Friday night, like home. We did all the things we usually do on Shabbat, Friday night. And at that time we asked him to help us kosher the kitchen. We made a kosher kitchen. And we had cooks which were not-Jewish, Swedish cooks. They were very nice but we wanted our own. So we did get our own girls, amongst our own, and they were doing the cooking. And little by little, I got out of it. But Wohlgelernter started to expedite boys to a Yeshiva in New York or Baltimore. And I realized that they're coming as students. And if—why can't I come as a student? And I worked on that. And I had a cousin who was a president of a *bes yakov* in Brooklyn. In Eastern Parkway. And they sent me papers to go to that school.

PL: Was that a difficult thing at that time to get papers to enter the United States?

CE: Yes. I had a Romanish quota. And I would have had to wait ten years. So this way, I came as a student. I was here in four weeks from the time I got the visa.

PL: Wasn't there some hope that you would go to Israel at this point?

CE: Yes. I wanted very much to go to Israel. In 1946 there came a delegate to Sweden to organize a group to go illegal. And I signed up for that. And it just so happened that, in the meantime, I found out about my sisters. And I had an uncle in the Bronx who found me in the paper. I get—I went to the Jewish World Congress in Stockholm and I asked them to help me find my relatives. And they found—they put it in the paper in New York and my uncle found me. So, immediately after that I got a telegram.

PL: Do you know what paper in New York that your name was published in?

CE: I have no idea. At that time I was glad that I have somebody.

PL: It's just a fascinating—

CE: Yes.

PL: Again, a miracle, that he—it sounds like he found your name—had you met him? Whose relative was he – your mother's, your father's?

CE: He was my father's brother—his younger brother. He sent him away. And he was supposed to send papers to my parents. But it was too late.

PL: So you learned that your sisters were alive. How did you learn about that?

CE: I used to write letters to my sister in Bucharest. And to the others. I used to correspond with them. And I didn't know about the sisters. I was just hoping that my sister in Bucharest was not deported. So, I couldn't remember the address for the life of me. Then one day there was a Swedish woman came to the gate. I was in quarantine. And I asked her to do me a favor. I says, "My sister lives in Bucharest. Do me a favor. Send her a telegram. Tell her I'm alive. And return address to the consulate – to the Romanish Consulate." She did that. And within days I got an answer from my sister that she— the first thing she says is "Come home." That was the first thing. "I'm glad you're alive. Come home." But I never really wanted to go. So, then, little by little, she telegrammed me—that the other sisters were alive. So, that's how I found them.

PL: Did you see them before you left for New York?

CE: No, I wanted to go in 1946 to Czechoslovakia. That's where my sisters were with their husbands. But when I came to the consulate, they told me, "We'll be glad to give you a visa but we cannot guarantee it that you can come back." And I didn't want that. I didn't. My brother-in-laws wrote to me, "Anywhere you want to go—but don't come home. It's a crazy world over here." Young girls were getting married to old men just to have a home. And it was just crazy. They didn't want me to come and I didn't want to

go.

PL: Rabbi Wohlgelernter—

CE: Yes.

PL: —was from Seattle?

CE: Yes, he was a rabbi over here.

PL: Do you know at what synagogue?

CE: At Bikur Cholim

PL: So, it turns out that he's at the synagogue that you have gone to since you've lived here?

CE: Right.

PL: Did you learn about Seattle? Did he tell you about Seattle at that point?

CE: No. I had no idea about Seattle until I met my husband.

PL: What did you know of America?

CE: Well, like I say, I always wanted to go to Israel. America was the furthest thing in my mind. But then I realized, my uncle sent me a telegram, "We will send you an affidavit. And don't make any plans." And then, I realized, listen, I come from a concentration camp. And Israel is not a state. And struggle again. If I have a choice to go to America at this point, I would rather go there. I would have some peace of mind at that time. And I figured, you know, I've been in Israel 17 times. It's like—it's home. And I hope some day I will be going there.

PL: We will talk about—

CE: Yes.

PL: —your decisions to make *aliyah*.

CE: Right.

PL: But I think for now, I want to hear now about your travels to America. And your life that you've made here. And I'd like to talk a little bit about that and maybe lead up to the point at which you met your husband and your decision to move to Seattle? So you had a sense of purpose at this point. You knew you were going to America. And you were going to study as a student?

CE: Well, that was the only way I could get here. I came to—like I says, I'm a religious person. And I fitted in right away with the school that I went to. I went to school day and night. In the daytime, I went to bes yakov. And in the evening, I went to public school to get learning about English and the Constitution and so forth.

PL: Where was this? This was in New York?

CE: In Brooklyn.

PL: Brooklyn? What part of Brooklyn.

CE: Let's see—Williamsburg was the place. And South Eighth Street. That was the bes yakov. And also, in the evening, I would go were I lived in New Lots Avenue with my Aunt and Uncle. And there was a school for English, an evening school. That's where I went to learn English.

PL: Did you come through Ellis Island?

CE: Yes.

PL: What do you remember of that experience? And even the ship that you took over?

CE: Well, the ship—what do you mean, took over? [laughter] That I came in?

PL: That you came on, yes.

CE: Well, it was a very good ship. It was rough, like, you know, on the sea. But I remember eating very little. Mostly hard-boiled eggs and lots of grapefruit. I learned to eat grapefruit on the ship. And then when we came to Ellis Island, we had to go to a certain procedure. Make sure that we're not thieves or whatever. So I was there for a few days. And there was a couple who came from Australia. And they were very wealthy. They looked so rich. They had fur coats and jewelry, everything. And they took a liking to me. They followed me wherever I went and were talking to me. And they were telling me that they were coming to New York. And they want to see me and so forth. Well then, when we came to New York and we parted, he gave me his card. And I showed it to my relatives. I met some people, and they says, "Oh no. We don't want you to talk to him. We don't know who they are." And they might have been right. Maybe not. I don't know. But they were—they spoke Yiddish. And they were very wealthy-looking. And I remember that one of their relatives came. I think a woman. She was very elegant. I don't know.

PL: When did you see your uncle? Did you know what he looked like?

CE: Listen, I have a hundred stories like that. When we came out of Ellis Island, and there was a place in New York—I can't remember where and for what purpose But we came there with my cousin. And we came there to be picked up. And in walks in this little fellow, short man. And I tell her, "You see this man over here? He's our uncle." And she says, "You're crazy." I took out a picture. I think I had a picture. Yes, I had a picture. And I looked at him, and I says, "That's him." And she still didn't believe it. And that was him. My uncle came to pick me up. And they took me to his house. My

aunt was my mother's sister. And I stayed there till I got married.

PL: Okay, so how long did you live with your uncle? And what are your uncle and aunt's names?

CE: My uncle's name was Taub. Isaac Taub. And my aunt's name was Chaya Taub. And I lived with them until—let's see. I came in July and I got married in March. March 1948. Not so long after that. Seven months or so.

PL: So what were you doing immediately, when you arrived? Were there already other survivors that you were meeting and talking with? Or was your life kind of wrenched from your previous experiences?

CE: There were my cousins who also came at the same time. The boys were sent to the Yeshiva. And—but the cousin – her name is Chaya Rivka – and we were taken to my relatives immediately. I had another uncle in the Bronx. This one was in Brooklyn. And they came together. And the one from the Bronx had a Bungalow in Far Rockaway and he invited me to stay there for a few months for the summer.

PL: That's where my grandparents lived.

CE: In Far Rockaway?

PL: Yes, on the beach.

CE: Well, I remember 84th Street. [laughter] Right? 84th Street then, in Far Rockaway.

PL: So, what was that—yes go ahead. What was Far Rockaway like? You were recuperating there?

CE: Recuperating, that's right. My aunt and uncle were very good to me. And they had a daughter, Irene. And she was very friendly and very helpful.

PL: How did they deal with your grief and your experiences? Were you able to talk with them about it? Or was there a barrier? What was it like?

CE: It was—at one point I remember my aunt in Far Rockaway. I was sleeping with her daughter, Irene. I guess it was a bungalow. Limited space. And I remember [my aunt] saying to her, “Why do you sleep with her? She’s a sick woman.” I’ll never forget that. And like I say, the only sickness I had was my brains. I was never sick one day in the camp. That was fortunate.

PL: In New York were there services to aid survivors at that point? Or was it really family that helped you?

CE: Not that I remember. Who helped me was my husband, my late husband. He was a very kind, understanding person. Even though he was an American-born, he was very [understanding]. He was also a believer. We believe that marriages are made in heaven. And he was a very understanding, kind person. And he was the one who helped me.

PL: Where did you meet him?

CE: Where? In New York.

PL: How did you meet him?

CE: How? I went to a meeting. An B’nai Akiva meeting. [laughter] The first meeting that we had. There was a girl – a friend of mine – who was a neighbor of my aunt and uncle. And she came from Hungarian parents. And they did not know English. So she spoke fluently Hungarian. And I became friendly with her. So she took me to that meeting. The first, it was in October. And that’s where I met my husband. He’s not B’nai Akiva, but he’s a religious person. And we had a lot in common.

PL: So indulge me here. What was it like when you first laid eyes on each other? When you first felt the spark?

CE: Well, I went to that meeting, B'nai Akiva meeting. And there were guys and girls. [coughs]

PL: Do you need to get a sip of water?

CE: No, that's okay. So there was another girl, a survivor. She said, "I'll introduce you to my boyfriend." And she introduced me to her boyfriend. And next to him was the other fellow. And I spoke with him just maybe a few words. Just a few words. And I got lost in the crowd. There was a crowd of people there. And there was a young man who entertained me all evening. And it just happened that he walked me home. And he asked me if I would like to go with him to the opera. He has two tickets. Would I go with him? And I says, "Yes, I would. But I'm not sure." I says, "I'll let you know. Call me." So, he asked me for my telephone number, and I told him, "I didn't know the number." I had just come there. "I didn't know the number, but I give you the name, and you can look it up." And the name that I gave him was my uncle's name. Now, the telephone number was under the daughter and son-in-law's name. [laughter] He's probably still looking. [laughter] So, anyway, he didn't call. In the meantime, I get a call from my late husband.

PL: What was his name?

CE: His name was Nathan. Nathan Etkin. Okay? And I get a call and he says, "Remember we met at that affair? And I'd like to make a date with you." And I made a date with him. I says, "Okay." I figured it was the other guy. And I tell my aunt and uncle. And I tell him this-and-this-person is going to pick me up. And he's so-and-so and his parents had a store in Sutter Avenue in Brooklyn. Do you know where Sutter Avenue is? Had a jewelry store. And I tell—I describe him to my aunt and uncle. And

they were pleased because they knew the family. Okay.

PL: They knew the family even though he was from Seattle?

CE: No, no, no. The other fellow was supposed to come.

PL: I see.

CE: When he called for a date I thought it was the other guy. [laughter] So, anyway, when I describe him, “He’s husky, heavy” and so and so. Anyway, in walks my husband. He’s skinny as a toothpick. [laughter] So my aunt comes into my dressing room and she looks at me, [laughter] And I says, “Tanta Chaya, what’s the matter?” She says, “Nothing, nothing.” And she walks out. Then he goes in. She asks him into the living room. And my uncle asks him, “How come you are going out on Saturday night? Jewelry business is supposed to be so busy.” [laughter] Well, anyway it was the wrong guy. Then, I walk in. And I see [laughter] —I’m telling you, I was shocked. So finally we get out of there. And on the way out he said, “Listen, I see there is a mix-up over here. Do you still want to go with me?” [laughter] Well, I wouldn’t embarrass him. At that point, he didn’t sweep me off my feet but I wouldn’t embarrass him. I says, “Okay.” We went to a play, a Jewish play or something. And on the way home, back home, he said, “I would like to take you out on Thanksgiving but I already had arranged for another date with somebody else.” And I was glad because, as I say, he didn’t sweep me off my feet. So then he calls up. He didn’t go on another date. He went to my cousins to find out who I was. And that’s how he found out. So then he comes. This time it’s around Hanukkah. And he calls up: he would like to come for Shabbos – stay over, sleep over. So [laughter] I got kind of upset. I says, “You can’t come to my house to sleep.” He says, “Why not?” And I says, “We just don’t do things like that.” [laughter] Well, my aunt heard the argument, what was going on. So she comes and grabs the phone, and she says, “My son, you are welcome to come.” And he did. So, that was it. I was shocked. Anyway, he came Friday night, and we went out—the first

time on Friday night. And they liked him; he made kiddush; and he did all the things that they like. And they like him, okay. So I go with him and the first question he asked me, "Do you know about the *mikveh*?" [ritual bath]. [laughter] So—

PL: That's the first question he asked you?

CE: Yes.

PL: When?

CE: When we were—

PL: When you were in private?

CE: Of course, when we were walking on Friday night.

PL: What did you make of that?

CE: So, I says, "Of course I know about them. But why are you asking me those things?" He said, "If we have children, would you agree to give them a Jewish education?" I says, "Listen, I don't know who you are. [laughter] And you don't know who I am. And I just come from a concentration camp. I have nothing to give you." And you know, with an *Amerikaner* [Yiddish: American] you've got to give them something. Well, he said, "I know about you. I know a lot about you." And in other words, he proposed. So I was shocked. I honestly was shocked. But he had a terrific sense of humor. He would say things always. So, here we are five children, grandchildren.

PL: Well, at that moment, when he proposed to you, what did this mean? Here—where you have come from. Was he proposing to stay in New York? Was he proposing to leave and go somewhere else?

CE: Well, at that time there was no discussion about leaving New York because he liked New York. He had a small business. He liked New York. The reason we came back here was that he had a brother who was killed in the war, Second World War – was shot down in France. He was a navigator. And he was shot down. And the parents only had a daughter, another daughter. And we came back because of the parents. But there was no discussion about coming back to Seattle.

PL: When did you, in your mind, did you decide that you wanted to marry him? And what it meant for you?

CE: Well, we had everything in common. And he was a very honest person. He was not a wealthy man. But he was very honest. And we had everything in common.

PL: Such as?

CE: Well, I mean, the beliefs. Beliefs. And these are all the things that he asked me. Would I go to the mikveh? Of course, no question. I wouldn't marry someone who would not want me to go.

PL: Had you been to the mikveh already at that point?

CE: If you're married—not married, you don't need to go. You only go when you're married. And like I say, having Jewish children, of course. And Jewish education. These are the things that I wanted. I wanted a man who would do these things. And things have changed with me and my boyfriend because things have changed. I became even more religious when I was in the camp. Because I saw what I came from. I saw the horror and I could have been there just like all the other millions. And my belief was strong, that it's Hashem who is doing all these things.

PL: You said that he helped you more than anyone else. Was this immediately, that he was a good listener?

CE: He was. He was—he sort of, I would say, had rakhmones on me – pity. He wanted to help. And he didn't ask for anything. When I told him I had nothing – "I have nothing to give you only things I have on my back." I didn't bring anything from the camps.

PL: Was there a tradition, somehow, Celia, that you would have things to give him? I mean, I think of the tradition of, you know, of dowry.

CE: Yes.

PL: Was that still—was that what was weighing on you at that point?

CE: In Europe, we used to have a dowry for every daughter. And we would—it's just the way it is. Just the way you do things. Well he didn't care. And I wanted a big wedding. And he says, "Even just in the back yard would be okay." For him, it wouldn't matter. And he was a wonderful man. He was—see this picture over there?

PL: Yes.

CE: He was very good-looking too.

PL: He's very handsome.

CE: He was a very educated person in Yiddish and Hebrew as well as in English. He knew everything.

PL: So, did you immediately start making plans to have a wedding?

CE: Well, not immediately. When he said, you know, he wants to do these things. And I says, "I need time." I [laughter] was just so shocked. And I didn't know what to do. So he was very smart. He knew that it was difficult for me to make up my mind. And I used to cry a lot. I cried for my parents, my mother's. Just cried. And he was very understanding. And it's just—he went to my aunt and talked to her. And he said,

it's—he sees that it's important that we get married as soon as we can. And they made arrangements. So one day I come home from school and my aunt hands me two dates. She said, "These are the dates that we have arranged for you to get married." One was March 13th and one the other was March 26th or something. And I says, "Tanta Chaya, is anything wrong with me?" "No," she said. "*Nisht mayn kind*. *Gornisht is nisht* wrong—*shlekht*." "But nothing is wrong." But what is it? Do I have to get married? I said, "What is it? It's so rushing." She says, "Honey, he's a good man. And he wants to get married. And you should do it." So, my cousin – their daughter of Helen who lived in the house – she was nagging me all the time, "Where did you go? Nu? What are you doing?" And she says, "Where are you going next?" I says, "Next time we're going to Niagara Falls." He told me, "Tell her, we're going to Niagara Falls." And she started dancing and clapping. And I said, "What's the dancing for?" She says, "Over there. That's where the honeymooners go over there." [laughter]

PL: Did you know that Niagara at that time was a big honeymoon spot?

CE: No, I had no idea. But I would tell him that my cousin is nagging me. He says, "Tell her, next time we're going. We're going to Niagara Falls." Okay. [laughter]

PL: So, here you are, an engaged woman. It's Thanksgiving.

CE: Yes.

PL: You know you're about to get married. At what point—how did you prepare for your wedding? Where did you get married?

CE: We got married in a hall. And I think we had about 175 people.

PL: In New York City? In Brooklyn?

CE: In Brooklyn.

PL: Do you remember the name of the hall?

CE: Dumont Avenue. I don't remember the name of the hall [Mantel Manor]. And I don't remember the rabbi. But my two uncles and aunts, they got together and they made me the wedding.

PL: Did you—

CE: And he paid for certain things: the music, the flowers.

PL: Did his family from Seattle come out?

CE: Only the mother. The father was ill. The mother came.

PL: What do you remember about your preparations for the wedding?

CE: The only thing I did was alter my wedding gown [laughter] – that one over there [pointing to wedding photograph on the wall].

PL: Oh, so you had—where did you get your wedding gown from?

CE: It was my cousin's – one of my cousin's – who had just gotten married. But I needed alterations on it, so I did it.

PL: You did it yourself?

CE: Yes, of course. I didn't do anything else. They made me a bridal showers—my friends and my cousins.

PL: What was the tradition of the bridal shower? You know, in this Sephardic context there are very particular things that people do for a bridal shower. In your situation what was a bridal shower?

CE: The only thing I remember was an umbrella. It was an umbrella and they invited me to come to a friend's house. And I come in and they shout, "Surprise!" And they were all my friends were there and the cousins. And I got very good gifts.

PL: What's the umbrella?

CE: The umbrella is, I guess, for the shower or something. [laughter]

PL: What kind of gifts did you get?

CE: Well, linens and some pots which I still have. A pressure cooker; somebody sent it from Seattle. And yes things like that. Gadgets. And I would need a little knick-knacks here and there. Yes.

PL: Did you go to the mikveh?

CE: Of course.

PL: Which mikveh was it? Do you remember the mikveh?

CE: At that time it was, I think, on 26th Avenue. Oh, in New York?

PL: In New York.

CE: No, I don't remember where it was. No. But of course—

PL: But you remember going?

CE: Of course. He wouldn't marry me if I wouldn't go to the mikveh.

PL: Do you remember that experience?

CE: Well, yes. It was a very nice experience. My cousin came with me from Brooklyn. And she initiated me, says certain prayers. And that's all I remember. And what I did

over here in the mikveh in Seattle. I did the same thing but [unclear] to me. A little bit extra is what I did. I used to give the brides over here a bride's prayer. And it's beautiful. It's in the *Hedge of Roses.* Have you ever saw that book? When you come next time, I'll find a copy of the *Hedge of Roses* and the other book also as well, *The Waters of Eden*. You'll like them. So, it was a good experience. It was very gentle. The reason that you go to the mikveh is, like I say, you have to purify yourself. And then, there is a period of two weeks when you are separated. [laughter]

PL: What are you thinking?

CE: Well, I wish he was here. That's when I'm—it's almost 16 years. And you know, I had a few proposals here and there. But, I couldn't. I couldn't. There's just nobody like him. And my daughters tell me, "Mom, it's not right. You'll never bring him back." But that's the way it is.

PL: So, it sounds like you had quite a wonderful partnership?

CE: I had a wonderful partnership, and I am very grateful for what I had. We were married 38 years. Could have been longer. But I'm grateful for that.

PL: When did you move to Seattle?

CE: Well, we came back here in 1950, in November of 1950.

PL: And when did you get married? What year was that?

CE: 1948.

PL: And was that a religious ceremony?

CE: Of course.

PL: And then did you have a separate civil ceremony?

CE: No first we were married by a Justice of the Peace for just a simple reason. I needed a green card. I needed to have some things. And I couldn't work because I couldn't. So we got married, and the Justice of the Peace. That was February [11]. And that year, [1942] February. And I was able to go to work immediately.

PL: What did you do?

CE: Well, like I say, I'm a dressmaker. I've worked on Park Avenue – on 86th Street, I think it was, and a Salon where they made clothes for actresses. And my specialty is fittings. I was able to do things like that. And I had a good job. He was always joking. He took me out of Park Avenue. [laughter]

PL: So, you got a job, and you're making dresses for the stars. Do you remember the name of the shop?

CE: No, I can't remember. It's funny. I can remember the name in Stockholm, but I cannot remember here. I just can't. The place that I worked was—the woman was from my hometown. And it was through my uncle that—you know, they are from Sighet. That he told them, "Do you know my niece is here. And I just came. " And she says, "Send her over right away." And I came and I was hired there right away.

PL: Do you remember how much you were making?

CE: No.

PL: But you had a little money?

CE: I had a little money, and I had a little dignity.

PL: Was that a very important transition in your mind?

CE: Well, I'm a professional. Even today, I had a store and I did alright. It's if you do things and you like it, you want to do it. There was no point. I went to school, day and night.

PL: What kind of studies were they, by the way? What were you studying in New York?

CE: In New York? Well, I went to bes yakov. I had to go there. It's a parochial school. And the night school just to learn English.

PL: I think we're going to stop here.

CE: Okay.

PL: And we'll pick up in our next meeting.

CE: That's Okay.

PL: In Seattle.

CE: [laughter]

PL: We have a whole life to discuss.

CE: Oh, that's nice.

PL: In Seattle.

CE: That's a pleasure.

PL: Thank you so much.

CE: My pleasure.

[END OF CD 2]

PL: This is the continuing oral history interview of Cecillia Etkin. We are, once again, in her home in Seward Park. Today's date is August the 1st. The year is 2001. And this is Pamela Brown Lavitt, oral historian for the Jewish Women's Archive's "Weaving Women's Words" Project in Seattle. So we last left of a couple of weeks ago talking about when you and your husband met each other. And I'd like to know the events that led up to your wedding and to hear about your wedding.

CE: Well, the way I met my husband was that I attended a meeting in October of the B'nai Akiva group. A friend of mine asked me if I would go with her, and of course I was willing to go. And she said, "I want to introduce you to my boyfriend" and who was in the Army. And my late husband was with him. They were buddies. And she introduced me to her boyfriend and he introduced me to my husband. And I spoke with him just a few minutes. And I got into—I got lost in the crowd. Just a few minutes I spoke with him. And she remained with her friend. And I went into the crowd, joining everybody. And it was a very interesting evening. It was mostly a gathering. It was the first meeting. And I paid my dues – as I was a member at home since I was 12 or 13 – to the B'nai Akiva. Well, I had a wonderful time. And there was a young man over there who entertained me all evening long. He wouldn't let me go. So we had a good time. And he walked me home. So, on the way home to my aunt and uncle, he asked me for my telephone number and I told him, "I don't have it. I don't know. I just come in July and this is October." Everything was so new to me. And I told him, "My uncle's name is Isaac Taub. Look it up in the telephone book and you'll call me." So he said he had two tickets to go to the opera. Would I go with him? And at that time I told him I don't have the number but you call. So I come home, and I was telling my aunt and uncle about a wonderful time I had. And I met this young man, and he told me his name. And his name was so-and-so. And it just so happened that they knew the family, and they were very pleased that I am going to go out with him. And this young man apparently tried to call me and he couldn't because the telephone number was under his son-in-law's name. It was after the war. And it was difficult to get telephone in housing. And it was

because he was a G.I. he was able to get a phone, a telephone. So that's the way it was—under their name. And this young person could never call me. So, what happened? In the meantime, he called up – my husband called up – and he told me that he met me at the gathering over there. Would I go out with him? And I accepted a date. And in the meantime, I had described the other fellow – he was chubby and he was in jewelry business. All the things that I know about him. And then my husband [to be] called to make a date, and he said he's coming at a certain time. And he was in Williamsburg. And I lived in East New York—Brooklyn. It's called East New York. So, when he came and he walks in, he was skinny as a toothpick. So my uncle asked him, "How come you're going out on Saturday night? Jewelry business is supposed to be so busy, and you are going out tonight?" So he was talking to him on a friendly basis. So Nate, my late husband, tells him, "Do you have an open window somewhere?" And my uncle said, "What for?" He says, "I want to jump out because I see I'm the wrong guy." What he saw, the look on my aunt's face when he walked in. And I hadn't seen him yet. I was getting dressed. And then I walk in and I take a look at him, and I was shocked. [laughter] I was so shocked. The other guy was like this [gestures with her hands apart to indicate his wide girth]. But anyway, I was shocked. And he was—he had a terrific sense of humor, Nate. So, we walked out of the living room into the hall and he said, "There was a misunderstanding over here [unclear]. Do you really still want to go with me?" And of course he didn't sweep me off my feet. But I was shocked. And I didn't—I wouldn't embarrass him. So I went with him – he was a nice guy – but because I was shocked and I expected somebody else. So we went. We went to a Jewish play or something. And on the way home, when we come home he tells me he would like to take me out on Thanksgiving but he had made arrangements to meet with somebody else. And I was glad because, like I say, I was shocked and he didn't sweep me off my feet. Anyway, he went away and he said he will not take me out on Thanksgiving. But he'll keep me in mind. So, what he did in the meantime—he didn't really have a date. He had—he went to my relatives to find out who I was. He immediately did that.

Because I told him that I had relatives here and there. And one particular place he went was a cousin, a first cousin of mine, who was a rabbi in the Yeshiva where he used to go. So he went there and asked them what they knew about me. Who I was. Well anyway, they are cousins and they would only say good things, right? So anyway, then I get a call around Hanukkah time—before Hanukkah. And he says, “You remember me? I took you out at that time? And I like to come for Shabbos.” Coming for Shabbos meant that you would come to stay there because Williamsburg was a long walk. You couldn’t walk back to Williamsburg. And he has to stay for Shabbos? “Can I come to your house for Shabbos?” So, I was so embarrassed. I says, “What do you mean you are coming to my house for Shabbos?” I was arguing with him. And so my aunt, she grabbed the telephone and she says to him, “My son, you are invited to come for Shabbos.” And he came. And I had no say in the matter because she invited him. “Where is he going to sleep?” “He’s going to sleep in one of the little rooms over there.” Somewhere. Anyway, he came. This time he came with huge flowers he has sent. Almost as big as this round table. And a note—but I can’t remember what the note said. And again, I was shocked. So Friday night, you know, we had dinner, and he did make the kiddush and all the things that you do on Shabbat. And after dinner, we went for a walk. It was kind of cool, I remember. It was in the winter. This time, it was Hanukkah. And we go, and he asked me if I knew about the mikveh? So, because of a woman has to go to the mikveh. “So of course,” I said. “I know about the mikveh. My father went every single morning, even on Shabbat.” He was a Hasidic devout. He would go to the mikveh every single morning before he could daven. So of course I know about the mikveh. He said, “Would you go to the mikveh?” And I said, “Listen. Why are you asking me this questions?” And he said, “If we have children, would you agree to bring them up and give them a religious upbringing?” And I was so flabbergasted. Why is he talking to me like that? So, I tell him, “Listen. I don’t know who you are. And you don’t know who I am. And why are you telling me these things?” He said, “I know who you are. My parents live in Seattle, Washington, and it’s

a long way from here. I will take you there. But it's far. But I can take you to my friends. And he has relatives over here." Well, we agreed on that. Go and visit his friends. When I walked into their houses, I saw right away who he was. He was a very learned man, my late husband. And there was one place—was Rabbi Poplek [phonetic] who used to live in Seattle. And I come in there and there was a wall filled with *seforim* – books – everything. So, I saw right away. He says, "This was my *chaverusa* [phonetic; Hebrew: study peers]. I used to learn with this rabbi." And then, he took me to his cousins. And I saw right away that he is not an ordinary person. He's a learned man. So anyway. I enjoyed—he started growing on me. He had a fantastic sense of humor. And we were going on the train to Broadway somewhere. But also with the other couple. And he was so skinny. I couldn't stand it. I says [laughter], "Oh brother, you need a wife." [laughter] Anyway, it seems that Hashem gave the right words in my mouth to say the right things. Because everything I said, he was thrilled. Now anyway, going on further—one day I come home and my cousin asked me, "Where were you today?" And she was nagging me, "All these places I've never heard of. Never knew." So I tell her where I went—went here, went there. And every time she nags. My cousin lived in the same house. So, and I keep on telling Nate that she nags me wherever I go. He said, "If she asks you where you are going to go next time, tell her we're going to Niagara Falls." And I come home and she [says], "Nu? Where did you go?" I said, "Well, next time we're going to Niagara Falls." And she started dancing and clapping. "Mazel tov! Mazel tov!" I says, "What's the mazel tov for?" She says, "Do you know where Niagara Falls is?" I says, "I have no idea." [laughter] And, "That's where the honeymooners go. [unclear] But let me show [?] you about Niagara Falls." Well anyway, you want to ask me something?

PL: Well I was just wondering. So, when you said that you went to his home, and you saw that he was a learned man—you're talking about in New York or in Seattle?

CE: No, I'm talking about him.

PL: Yes. You went—

CE: About him.

PL: In New York? In Williamsburg?

CE: Yes. Well that was in Brooklyn where we walked.

PL: Please continue.

CE: Yes. So one day I come home, and he was very serious. He was—I guess it was my *mazel* [luck]. He didn't want anything. He didn't care about anything. We start talking about a wedding. And I wanted to have a big wedding. So I had two aunts and two uncles in the Bronx, in New York. One was in the Bronx. And they go together and they made me a big wedding. At that time, I think it was considered 150 people—for me it was a big wedding. And there's my wedding picture up there. Over there is my wedding picture. [laughter] […] The only thing I didn't have was my parents there. My aunt and uncles, both sides, they were very good to me. And then I come home and I went to school during the day and night. Night and day I went to school. During the day I went to bes yakov for spiritual learning. And in the evening I went to night school to learn English. So, I didn't know very much English. I took in Sweden one or two lessons, professional lessons. The rest I learned from a lexicon. And the other ways, I used to write to my cousins – letters. Of course everything was broken. And I would tell them, you know, just to write to me. And what I did? I take—I took out all the most important expressions and I turned them around to my benefit. And this is the way that I used to write to them. To my uncle I would write in Yiddish. So one day we go for a walk, and he said, "You know, you need a tutor." Nate tells me, "You need a tutor." I says, "Where can I get one?" He says, "He's right here." [laughter] So he was a very gentle person. And I come home from school one day, and my aunt gives me two dates for a wedding. She says March 13th or March 20th —or whatever. She gives me these

dates. And I says, "*Tanta* [Yiddish: aunt], what is the matter with me? Am I some kind of a *misgain*[phonetic] or something? I have to get married?"

PL: What word did you just use?

CE: That's a Hebrew word – an unfit person or something, [a misfit]. And they want to marry me off? So she sat down with me, "*Mayn kind*…" – she called me "*mayn kind, mayn takhter"* [Yiddish: my child, my daughter] – "He's a nice man. He wants to get married. And he doesn't want to wait. And why not?" She says, "Look at him. He's handsome, and he's so and so. Why not? Why procrastinate?" I says, "I don't know anything about him. All I know is that he went to the Yeshiva before the Army. He was drafted in the Army, and he was in the Army for three years. He was in a place, Guam – on the island." What is that island called?

PL: Guam.

CE: Guam Island? He was in the Medics. And after he came back from the Army, he came back to Seattle. And he was a little restless over here. He wanted to get married. So he came back to New York. And he went into business with somebody who was in the Army – his brother. They went into sign supplies at that time. They used to do the window lettering for signs. And this is what they did. It didn't go very well but it was a business. So he wants to get married, and she gives me these two dates. And we decided on the date of March 13th. And we were very happy. He just grew on me. Like I said, the first time he didn't sweep me off my feet. But as he came, kept on coming and doing things. I liked about his physical looks. Like I remember when he sat down in my aunt's house, in the kitchen, he wrote out the invitations, and his sleeves were all rolled up. And his skin was so soft. They didn't have a hair. And I called him the *der zadene hent* [Yiddish: silk hands]. He was like apple. He was very soft and clean. And he was a gentleman. And we got married. And then we came [back to Seattle] and ten months later we had a baby [daughter].[laughter]

PL: Let me ask you where you got married?

CE: In Brooklyn—in Dumont—not Dumont Avenue. I think I told you before. I might have it in the album. I'll take it out.

PL: Is there a name of the hall that you remember?

CE: Mantel Manor. Yes. Mantel Manor.

PL: And were they used to doing kosher weddings?

CE: Yes, of course. And not only that, he didn't even want to have mixed dancing. We did not have mixed dancing. But I did dance with my uncle. [laughter]

PL: Can you describe the scene of your wedding and your wedding dress – even though I will take pictures of it. How you chose it, and—

CE: Well, I came with nothing. I told him I come from a concentration camps, and I have nothing. The only things I had was what was on my back. And we—I couldn't go to work because I was a student. I didn't have a green card. I came from Sweden as a student and I went straight to school. I couldn't go to work. But then when we decided to get married, we got married in civilian court – Justice of the Peace – on February 11th. Why was that? Because soon as I got married, I could get a green card, and that's what I did. When I got my green card, I went to work for a woman who was from my hometown, and she had a salon in Manhattan. I think it's 82nd Street. I can't remember the name of the salon. And she made clothes for actresses. And people came from Paris and from all over to her. And I happened to be an expert on fittings. And I did all the fittings for those ladies who came. And he was very proud of that, and telling everyone that I took my wife out of a "saloon" not a "salon." [laughter] So, I was able to go to work, and I was able to get things that I needed. But my aunts on both sides, aunt and uncle, they paid for the wedding. They paid for everything. The dress, my wedding

gown, was my cousin's. I fixed it to fit me. It was a little—she was a little bit different. A bit taller and a little heavier. And I fixed it. That's the dress over there.

PL: Beautiful.

CE: And so, and he—he was a very elegant person. He was not extravagant, and he was very practical. But whatever he bought was in very good taste.

PL: You said that there was no mixed dancing at your wedding?

CE: No.

PL: But you snuck a dance with your uncle. How did that happen?

CE: Right. [laughter] Also, well, first of all he was my uncle. [laughter] Now, the other people were not dancing. We were just not—you know how it looks. It was very limited. And I danced with my groom. He came over and he danced with me and—

PL: Would you say that your wedding was Orthodox or *chasidishe*.

CE: It was Orthodox, not *chasidish*.

PL: Okay. So what about it was Orthodox, other than the separation of the men and women from dancing?

CE: Well, first of all, you had the rabbis. You see the picture, and you see the kind of rabbis were there. Orthodox means that you go and do things according to the Law. The Hassidim they do ultra things. And there might have been one or two "black hats" [slang: ultra-Orthodox religious Jews], but that was not the main thing. We didn't go out of our way to do extraordinary things. It's just according to the Law. Everything went according to the Law.

PL: Did you dance with—holding a napkin?

CE: No. [laughter]

PL: Were you lifted on chairs?

CE: Not at that time. I don't remember. I don't think so.

PL: Do you remember—

CE: At that time, it was different.

PL: —being danced at by the other men?

CE: Oh yes, they were dancing in a circle, yes. That I remember. Yes.

PL: And in the ceremony, did you do things that would be—like did you circle your husband?

CE: Yes, seven times.

PL: What did you think that meant when you did that in the ceremony? What did it mean to you?

CE: Well, I always wanted to have everything according to the Law—at home even. I was the sixth daughter in the family. And I was always doing those extra things on Shabbat. I would learn and study quickly every Shabbos afternoon and then I went to something else. And I always—I belonged to B'nai Akiva which is a more Orthodox, more religious organization. And my other sisters were not exactly that way. They're wonderful people, but I was a little different than—because I learned more. So that's the way that we conducted ourselves. He was in the Yeshiva – the *mesifte* [Hebrew: Yeshiva], *Torah Vadas.*He was there for many years. And we were just—we wanted to continue. And we had an agreement that our children would get a Jewish education, and they did. All of them. A religious education.

PL: And so, when you say, “because you were the sixth daughter you went a little extra,” why was that? Meaning you were the youngest?

CE: I think I was the sixth daughter. There was one younger one than me. We were seven sisters. The younger one [11 years old] didn’t make it, [didn’t survive].

PL: What was it about you that wanted—why did you want to do that extra?

CE: Because I’m interested in learning. Only that’s the only reason. Because I’m interested in learning.

PL: So, at your wedding, when you had to make decisions about going that extra step, what did you decide to do that made it a little extra?

CE: Basically, I stayed the same. It was just that I wanted to know—I never missed going to the mikveh. I went as a bride, of course. He wouldn’t marry me if I wouldn’t. And I wanted to do that. I wanted very much. I remember going to the mikveh with one of my sisters [every month]. And in Europe, they didn’t have all the luxuries [showers and bath tubs] they have over here.

PL: Such as?

CE: There used to be a big tub. And you would get into that tub and you would wash yourself. And I would wash my sister’s back. She would take me along because it was like a steam bath. In the wintertime it was a pleasure. [laughter] So she would take me along and at the same time I would wash her back. I didn’t know why she went to the mikveh. I didn’t know. I just went there, I washed her back. And I figured, it’s once a month. You have to, you know, it’s nice. It’s in the winter. [laughter] I didn’t know what the mikveh was about. I started learning about the mikveh when I was [a bride]—before I got married. I got a book by Rabbi David Miller and it explained everything. So I realized that it was a good thing. Going to the mikveh is a wonderful thing. It’s not only

the mikveh, it's a way of life. You want to hear about that?

PL: Yes.

CE: It's a way of life. A woman has a period every month. And for two weeks after that, after she has her period for seven or eight days, I think it is – eight days – you don't sleep together. We always had single beds. But when we got together two weeks later, it was like a honeymoon. Every time it was like a honeymoon. You don't get tired of each other. I don't understand how people who don't keep that Law is—how they live, really? Because we used to—we waited for one another. Like the morning before I went to the mikveh that day, I would strip the beds – both of them. And he would say to me, "What time are we going?" [laughter] He would always take me to the mikveh. He waited for me. And it was wonderful. And you'd go to the mikveh. It's a routine. You couldn't—I couldn't live any other way.

PL: Can you describe—and I will ask you about your work in the Mikveh Association later—

CE: Yes.

PL: —in your much vaster experience. But in terms of your personal experience, it's amazing that you did this together. He drove you to the mikveh?

CE: Right. Right.

PL: And then what was that routine?

CE: Well, the routine was—that first of all, I have to make sure that I was "fit" to go to the mikveh. You know you check yourself. Maybe we shouldn't have it on this subject.

PL: I actually think that for people who are writing about the mikveh, this would be very interesting. But I say, speak freely, and then you can choose later if there are things that

you are uncomfortable with.

CE: Well, like I say, it's routine. It's for five or six days. I think it's the minimum of six days that you have your period. Even if you don't—but you count six days. And then after that the sixth day in the evening, you check yourself to see if there is anything left. So you start there. If there is nothing, everything is clean, you take a shower or you take a bath, and then you start counting every day until the day when you go to the mikveh. That's the end of the twelfth day, and evening of the twelfth day.

PL: Is that period of waiting called anything?

CE: It's—when a woman is having her period, she's called *niddah*. And that means that she is—I don't like to say "unclean." But because of the period, we're not clean, right? So, that's what it's called "niddah." And the woman know, the husbands whose wife does that practice, they're a little bit different in a way that they're waiting for their time. It's not that he's going to run around. A woman is not a thing that you can do what you think—whatever you want. It's respected. And even then there is a different way of looking at her when at that time – when he cannot have her physically – the contact, the eye contact, and the love that he shows is—you can—how can I tell you? You know. I mean, and I remember how he used to look at me, and it's okay, I can tell you—I can't wait until later we get together. And it was—it's a wonderful way of life. That's what I can tell you. And the young women today, they all go to the mikveh. When I was working there, my pride and joy was when I initiated a bride, a bride. And I know that she's going to come back after she gets married. And that was my pride and joy. And I loved it. I enjoyed it. And I see little—I see girls now they are becoming brides that for their mother I initiated. And then now I have their daughters. And it's the greatest reward—that something that I felt that I did something in my life, helping these women. I was there over 26 years.

PL: I want to return to this. But I want to go back a little bit and ask you about—when you went to the mikveh—where was it in New York that you went to the mikveh?

CE: Well, in New York, I remember there was one in Brooklyn. A cousin of mine came with me who herself came and went to the mikveh. But not at that particular time. But she came with me to introduce me to the mikveh. She introduced me how to light the candles. What to say on Friday night. And since then, I do the same thing as if I was there yesterday. And it was a lot of women. They used to sit and knit and exchange recipes.

PL: In the mikveh?

CE: Yes. While there was a living room and the women came together – they were sitting. Because not everybody goes in at the same time. Here, in Seattle – excuse me – I change the water every single night. I prepare the mikveh. And regardless if it was five women or one women or ten women. If it was really heavy traffic I change the mikveh [waters] more than once. And it was chlorinated. And there was no change. We never had anyone complaining about illnesses or anything. There's something about the Waters of Eden that, you know, that does something for you.

PL: So in New York, or when you first got married, where were you going to the mikveh? What was the name of the mikveh?

CE: I can't remember—that was some 50 years ago.

PL: At what point did you and your husband move to Seattle?

CE: We came back at one point—was my in-laws had another son. And he was killed. He was a flier and he was shot down in France. And my late husband was his brother. And that's all they had. They had a daughter, a married daughter, whose husband was stationed in Seattle, in the Army. And he remained here. They married here and he

remained here. But his parents lived in New York. In 1950, he said that his parents wanted to go back to New York to live there. He was an only child. And he wants to go to live there. And it would be proper if we would come back to Seattle. So at first he was hesitant. He was hesitant to come. He liked New York. But the parents wanted him. And I told him, “You know, if I had my parents, I would go anywhere.” And at that point, he went and he bought tickets and we came back.

PL: How did you feel about that move?

CE: Well, I trusted him. I wish he was around to help me with all the things I have to do. He bought tickets and we came. I didn’t know anyone except my mother-in-law who came to the wedding. And when I came here I was befriended immediately by his group of people.

PL: Where did you move into? What neighborhood?

CE: We moved into the Central Area. We moved in with the in-laws for about six months or so. And then, we bought a house on 31st Avenue in that Central Area. And we came back to here in 1950, November, 1950.

PL: So to get back to the mikveh, what mikveh did you start attending when you were here in Seattle?

CE: Well, the reason I attended—

PL: Yes.

CE: Oh, I went every time.

PL: Where was the mikveh?

CE: The [Bikur Cholim] mikveh was—I think around 26th Avenue or something. There in the Central Area.

PL: Do you know who ran it?

CE: There was a woman by the name Goran, Mrs. Goran. And she lived in that place. And there was the mikveh. It's different—it was different than the one we have here.

PL: You said that in the mikveh that you went to in New York there was almost an ante-room with women waiting and—

CE: Right.

PL: And can you describe that a little bit and then describe what the mikveh here looked like?

CE: Well the mikveh in New York I cannot remember. But I remember the women were sitting in the living room, waiting to get in. And they were knitting and talking about recipes, and gossiping and doing things over there. So, when we came to Seattle, I went to that Mrs. Goran's house. And then shortly after that, they built a mikveh over [here]—a new mikveh in that area. Not in the same place.

PL: What neighborhood is that in?

CE: It was in the Central Area. I think there on 25th, 26th Avenue—and I don't know exactly.

PL: Was it near a synagogue? Or affiliated with a synagogue?

CE: Yes, it was on 17th and Yesler, come to think about it.

PL: So the old Bikur Cholim.

CE: The old Bikur Cholim. And over there was a little space where they built a mikveh. And it was identical like the one we have over here. We have a very nice mikveh over here. We have one for the men and one for the women. We have three dressing rooms here. And it's kept very well. It's chlorinated and disinfected all the time. So every day they take care of it.

PL: Well, I actually want to ask you how and when you became involved with the Mikveh Association. And can you tell the story, and the locations that you worked in as well?

CE: Okay. The reason I became involved, there was a Rabbi Miller over here many years ago in Bikur Cholim. He was from Gateshead, London. So he was running a camp, a day camp. And he asked me if I would like to go and help in the camp? I used to go and volunteer when my kids were younger. So I told him I couldn't do it at that time because one of my daughters who lives in Israel was getting married. That was in August. And I couldn't possibly do it.

PL: What year?

CE: I think it was in 1970. So I couldn't possibly do it. He said, "Well, I'll talk to you some more." And then he calls me and he said that the woman who runs the mikveh is an excellent cook and she would go to camp. Would I take her place? And I said, "Rabbi, I cannot commit myself. I have to do it at night, and I cannot." He said, "Would you help out with the brides?" I said, "For the bride, I would help out – occasionally." So there were two girls at that time, they were getting married. And I did the same thing—what I was told to do when I was a bride.

PL: Can you describe what that is?

CE: Well, you do certain things. You talk to them and you tell them, "It's the way it is tonight." You know, "It's your night." And all the things that you tell a bride.

PL: Assume I'm a bride and I come in.

CE: Okay.

PL: What would you say to me?

CE: I would tell you, "Today is your day." You—it's like when a bride gets married it's like Yom Kippur for her. She davens certain prayers that like we do on Yom Kippur, the day at *Nilah* – in the evening. So we say the "Shemoneh Esrei" [Amidah prayer] and Hashem listens to a bride. She's very powerful because she goes to the mikveh. She's doing *tefillah* [Hebrew: special prayers]. She fasts that day. And she davens and she goes to the mikveh. Doing all the good things. And Hashem looks at her as with mercy and grants her certain things. And we see it. We hope it's true. So, I will talk to them. And I have a book. It's called *A Hedge of Roses*. I would give them a book. And I'll tell them, "Read this, and this and that." Well, sometimes they would come with a mother or a grandmother and they would cry. They would become emotional. Well anyway, the bride had a very good experience. I would make sure that she took her bath – that her nails [are cut and] clean, and no makeup and no die in the hair. None of those things.

PL: Do you help actually clean the nails?

CE: No, I don't—they do that themselves. I just examined. I never did anything for them. Just checked to see if there's any loose hair. They have to wash their hair. And there's sometimes a loose hair falls down on the neck, and I would remove that. And make sure that the ears are clean, and no contact lenses. And things like that. And most of all, is the talking to them. And that's it. So they never heard that before. They had such fantasies about the mikveh. Their grandmothers told them horrible stories. I had one bride I took care of and she said—I tell her I will wrap them up in the sheet after they took a bath and talk to them – they're sitting on the chair. And I would check a neck

to see for hair and everything. And she said, “When are you going to examine me?” I said, “I already did.” [laughter] I checked the toenails, the fingernails. I said, “You’re okay.” Then, “You can go to the mikveh.” And I would say the blessings with them. And I would teach them what to say—and then, next time, you do it yourself.

PL: Because I have heard stories of some mikvehs where women are given a pad and they have to prove that they are clean – that they’ve passed the waiting period.

CE: No. They would come there to the mikveh with a pad? I would say it’s a no, no. No, we don’t do things like that. It’s not—it’s not as fantasy, fantastic the way they think about it. It’s not that.

PL: So what then happens after she’s wrapped in the sheet, and you give her this talk? What do you do then?

CE: Well, like I say—I check her out and then she goes in the mikveh, in the water. I take away the sheet and I just look at her in the water. And just the head. I don’t see anything else.

PL: Is she facing you?

CE: Yes.

PL: Or facing away?

CE: Yes, she has to face me. And she’d go in the water one time, come up and say the *bracha* [blessing] and then she would go again – two times. And there’s another thing. They say that when a bride goes to the mikveh, she—Hashem grants her certain power. And at that time when she’s in the water, she will ask for a *refuah* for somebody, whatever. A refuah if she’s ill.

PL: Can you translate what you mean by “refuah?”

CE: Refuah means a healing. Healing—that's called a refuah. And you ask [God] for certain things [such as helping a sick person]. You have a friend who doesn't have children or they want to get married, or whatever. You keep it in your mind or you would see how Hashem should help those. They should be *matzliach*. You should be fruitful and so forth. A single girl, you know, you want her to get married. You mentioned her name. And that's what we do. And they—the bride is—and they like to go. I like to take those after a bride. After there is somebody—a bride went to the mikveh tonight. And tomorrow or after her, the same night, I will take somebody who – if she can go—if she's clean to go in the mikveh. Otherwise, we will not let them in. So we will tell them that it's a bride, and you have [an opportunity] to go after her. And they go. And in many situations, it was like this. What can I tell you? It's tefillah – helps. I had women who didn't have children for seven years or so. And Simchas Torah you know, she needs to go to the mikveh.

PL: Why Simchas Torah?

CE: Well, if her night falls, she cannot wait. If it falls so that it could be Friday night even. If a woman—her night is to go—the seventh night of this, or whatever. At that night, she has to go to the mikveh. She cannot wait – keep the husband waiting. And she has to [go]. There's another thing. If the man is a salesman and the wife comes home from the mikveh, he cannot leave that night. He's got to be with here before he leaves. These are the Laws. I mean, it's the Law. So there are certain things about the mikveh. It's very pleasant. And women go home. They're happy. I had situations where a woman had an argument with her husband and she made an appointment to come. And she didn't come. I wait and wait, and she doesn't come. So I called up her house, and I said, "I want to know if everything's all right." And she tells me, "I am not coming tonight." I says, "What's the matter?" "I had an argument with my husband and I am not going." So, I started talking to her and I convinced her to come, "Come to the mikveh. Let's wait with the argument. It's going to go away." Anyway, she comes.

She came to the mikveh. And she drove around. She was reluctant to come. Finally, she comes, opens the door. Bursts into tears. "What's the matter?" "I had an argument with him." She says, "I'm going to go for the mikveh only because for you." I says, "No [laughter] not for me, for your husband. Not for me. You've got to go. It's for you." Anyway, I convinced her to go in the water. And she went home. And she calls me up, "Everything's all right." Her husband has taken a bath or shaved himself and he is all cleaned up. They're okay. They're happy. So what happened? They had a baby after that. [laughter] And the Simchas Torah baby, like I say. I have a lot of Purim babies and Passover babies.

PL: So babies that were conceived right after the mikveh, and you know that they were because you remember them being there on Purim and on Simchas Torah

CE: That's right. Exactly. Exactly.

PL: So then, what is your role? What is the role of the mikveh lady?

CE: Well it used to be that the mikveh lady was in full charge in the sense that she had to clean the mikveh. She had to do everything possible – prepare the mikveh. But that's not the case in my situation. All I did was taking care of the women. Make sure that everything is clean with them, with the *halacha* [Jewish Law] and everything is going. And like I say—I would have to talk to them.

PL: It sounds like you've also taken on a more counseling type role, where you have counseled people on some level. Is that true?

CE: In a way. I did not give lectures. There were girls who were very highly educated. And they had classes. They had regular classes. When they came to me, they were already knowledgeable about the mikveh, and it was easy. Some of these girls went to Stern College [for Women, Yeshiva University] and they learned a lot over there. They had a professor who wore a *shaytl* [Yiddish: wig/hair covering that religious women wear

for modesty and piety]. And they were religious and they knew—they know. Take a girl from Stern College and she knows what to do.

PL: What about the girls who don't know what to do?

CE: They teach them. They teach them, and they find it so rewarding and they feel so good about it. You should come to our shul sometimes and you'll see all these young people.

PL: I am curious whether or not—what your experiences have been with different kinds of rituals other than the brides. Such as when there's a conversion ceremony for a child or an adult?

CE: Yes.

PL: And if you could talk about baby namings and other types of ceremonies?

CE: Okay. The conversions, I took care of a lot of that. And the women actually they would ask for me. And there were also some men who would come to the mikveh. And they have their separate—if you'll excuse me I've got to go there.

PL: I'm going to take a break.

[Break in recording]

PL: So, we were talking about alternative ceremonies or other ceremonies.

CE: Oh, yes. Conversions and so forth.

PL: Yes.

CE: Other ceremonies, I don't know of. All I know are the conversions.

PL: Yes.

CE: And I know that a baby—when a baby's born—when they have a boy, you know, they have a circumcision the eighth day. For a girl—let's say a girl is born on Sunday night. You go on Monday to shul – the first time they have a chance to read the Torah. At that time they name the baby. The date could be Monday, Thursday and Saturday. So usually the father has to have an aliyah And they can only do it when they read the Torah. So at that time they named the baby—not in the mikveh. The only time they name a baby in the mikveh is if it's converted. And only for a girl. For a boy they convert the baby and they would go to shul and make a bris. They would give it a name at the time when they have the circumcision.

PL: Are there any conversion stories that stick out in your mind?

CE: Yes. There was a situation with—a couple came to the mikveh, a husband and wife, and a single man at the same time. And that was done by the Conservative or even not so Conservative. Just—what do you call it?—just a rabbi. So as a rule for the women I stand in and I make sure everything's all right. Well, for the men, they have a mikveh on the other side in the same building. I usually don't stand there. But I listen. At the time of this particular incident, it was raining and I was in the building in one of the rooms – in the women's dressing room. And then men was taking care—the women I took care of. And the men were just there, and there was a rabbi, a so-called rabbi. He wasn't Orthodox, but he was—I can't remember his name. And the way they did a conversion—it's not that the water is the same, you know? You dunk and you do this. But they were saying certain things that was not according to my understanding. So, I just thought it was ridiculous. If you do something, you've got to do it right.

PL: What would have been the right way to do it?

CE: Well, you have to have a *beit din* [rabbinical court]. You have to have three men who are *shomer shabbos*. And they write like they would write a *ketubah* [Jewish wedding contract]. They have to write in certain things. And they ask them certain questions. Certain questions that could be heartbreaking sometimes. But that's the conversion. They have to understand it. They have to roll along with these rules and laws. Well anyway, I was in the other room. And I heard the way the rabbi was conducting what you call "ceremony." It was a ceremony. And I felt it just wasn't right. So I got into the living room, waiting—where I was talking to the woman. And the last person who came out of there was a man, he's a lawyer. And he says, "Ah, I just feel great. I'm Jewish. I'm Jewish." I says, "Listen, Mister, I'm sorry to tell you that your conversion is not valid." He says, "What do you mean, Mrs. Etkin?" He tells those people, "Did you heard what she said?" And I tell him again, I said, "It was not a good conversion." And he says, "I just came out of the mikveh and I did everything that the rabbi told me." "I'm sorry." "What shall I do?" He wants to be a hundred percent. I says, "You have to have another conversion, the right one. This was not good." [laughter] And he was [unclear] just shocked. So he tells those two people – the husband and wife – and they look at me and they left. And this guy over here says, "I don't believe it." I says, "Well, I'm sorry." "What shall I do?' he says. "You have to go to an Orthodox rabbi. If you're sincere and you want to have—you want to be Jewish, you've got to do it right." Well, a year later, I went to the Chabad, and they were dedicating a Torah at that time – some years ago. Somebody touches me on my shoulder. I turn around. It's this man over there. He says, "Mrs. Etkin, do you remember me?" I says, "Yes, of course." He says, "I'm the one that you told that this conversion was not kosher. And I'm listening to you and I came over here to the Chabad – they should help me. But the Chabad, they do not help with conversions." Well anyway, it took him a few years, and he started coming to our shul on Shabbat, here and there. He was still not a hundred percent. But he came on Shabbat and on time and everything. And little by little, that guy moved into the neighborhood. And he's very

much involved in the community and the shuls. He went Orthodox and he does a hundred percent everything. I don't know about the other couple. I've never seen them again. But he comes around sometimes. He was here last Friday night.

PL: How do you feel about the influence that you had upon him?

CE: Well, there are other influences. So it's to me—it's the natural thing. That's the way you have to be. If at all possible, people should help the other people to be good, to understand. It's unfortunate that people don't know. They don't understand. If they only would, things would be different.

PL: And I understand that even though Jewish Law says that woman are supposed to purify herself – she's supposed to purify herself—

CE: Mmm-hmm.

PL: —that the entrusting of the supervision to a mikveh lady is something of recent vintage. I don't know, you really are a community representative. Yet in this example, you had quite a lot of authority. So, can you describe or talk about that authority position?

CE: Well, I never thought that I had authority. Influence—I just, I felt that's the way it has to be. I was given a big dinner when I retired. And I have pictures with people's writings in there. It's just natural to me. I love people. One of the writings in one of the [laughter] books over here that I have the pictures, they're even talking about chopped liver. One guy was a convert. And he used to come to shul and I didn't even know he was convert. It was before me. And I used to help out. And at one time I helped someone make a bar mitzvah, and I made the chopped liver. I took charge of that. And this fellow was there. And he talks about it – how he learned to make chopped liver. And like I say, there are a Simchas Torah babies in there and Purim babies and—all kinds of expressions. And this is a great work for me. I was there over 26 years. I did

not only take care of the brides, I took care of everybody. The stories that I can tell, there is not enough time over here.

PL: Well, maybe you can share a few with us.

CE: Well there was, for instance, there was another conversion. A fellow came with his girlfriend from a Conservative—to be converted. And I took care of her. I took care of her and she impressed me very much. She was a very pious-looking woman. And she impressed me. And I asked her, "How come—" [laughter] Such stories. Well, anyway, she wants to convert. I asked her, "Are you serious?" She said, "Of course."

PL: She's converting [to Judaism]?

CE: She is converting. She's not Jewish. So but the Conservative rabbi came with her. And it was a similar thing. No beit din. Nothing. They just tell her, "Go in the water, and come out." And one of the women rabbi was wearing a *kippah*. It was all mixed up. So, she got out of the water, and I tell her the same thing. I asked her, "Are you serious about it?" She says, "Yes, of course." And I tell her, "It's not good. It's not right." I says, "If you really want to covert, and if you're planning on having children, you've got to do it the right way otherwise you and your children are going to have problems." When it comes to get married, they search. You have no idea how the rabbi search.

PL: Search for what?

CE: They search to see that they should be Jewish – a hundred percent. And if they were converted, they have to know where, and what and when. All these things must be documented. And the Reform and the Conservative, I don't know if they do that. Well anyway, she says, "Of course." And I tell her, "It's not valid. It's not good." Well, a year later she started taking classes. The women were offering classes and they were—and I saw her in the classroom, and I knew that how she was converted but I was

glad to see her. She was covering, wearing a kerchief or something. Nice person. Well anyway. All of a sudden I hear they want to go to Jerusalem to study – her husband and her. So and she's still not—she's still Conservative. And then I lost contact with her somehow. And one day she comes back – comes back to the mikveh. And this time she wants to do it right. So I asked her, "Have you ever been to a mikveh?" She says "Mrs. Etkin, can't you remember me?" And then, I remembered her. That she was there. And she told me she wants to go Orthodox, and they did. Her husband-to-be was—they were just engaged at that time or living together. I don't know. He was with her. And while she came to the mikveh, so I talked to him. And I said, "How would you like to take a dip?" He said [laughter], "Well, I wasn't prepared for it. I don't have any towel with me." I says, "You know what? I have everything over here. And I'll make the mikveh real warm for you." And I got him. I got him to go. [laughter] He took a dip. He comes out. He says, "You know, Mrs. Etkin, you're a very wise woman. You made me go there." Well anyway, they're going to Jerusalem. They got married. We were invited to the wedding. It was just a small wedding. And we – my husband and I—we went to the wedding. And they went away to study in Jerusalem. He went to Yeshiva and she went to a seminary for women. And you should see them today. You should see them today. I remember they invited me one time, Friday night [for Shabbat], and I went there and the children were little. And they were singing Shabbat songs and it melted my heart. And now they're big. To see their daughters—they have three daughters. And two of them are in Denver, Colorado, in a seminary, bet yakov. And they're going—now they're going—one of them is going to Israel to study for a year. And they are very involved in the community. Seattle, this area is a wonderful community. Once a person has converted—and the manner was we don't ask "are you converted" or not. If she's accepted in the community – the guys or the women – it's just like one of us.

PL: Is it different than other parts of the country, or the world for that matter?

CE: I don't know how it is. It may be different on the East Coast. Here it is a very warm community. And, like I say, I have my friends, younger friends, they come here all the time – converted.

PL: What is it about the Seattle community that makes it that way?

CE: Well, what I think it is, it's the closeness. The territories close to Seward Park, there are a lot of young people living here. They just come here. And they were very outreaching. I mean, they remind me—I don't remember everybody. But if I see a new person at shul, I would go over and ask him, "Where are you from? Do you need a place to eat?" We invite him to our house. And this is how—what it is. I have many, many people come to my house.

PL: Can you talk a little bit about overseeing, or witnessing, the differences between the Sephardic and Ashkenazic customs in the mikveh?

CE: Yes there are differences. The Ashkenazi women, they will bring their grandmother, their grand-aunt, their sisters, their sisters—everybody will come. And what they are doing? They are bringing sweets. They are bringing candies.

PL: You mean the Sephardim will do this?

CE: The Sephardim. And we do it sometimes amongst our own. What I used to do with the girls that I—even the converted girls. As soon as they come out of the mikveh—is it on?

PL: Yes, keep going.

CE: As soon as they come out of the mikveh, I would have a group of women there – friends or somebody – and we would greet her with a dance. We would grab the *kaleh* [bride] and we would dance with her.

PL: Like a horah or—

CE: Yes, something in a circle, and we'd sing [singing], "*simen tov u mazel tov, mazel tov u simen tov.*" And she was just beaming. This guy that I talked about who was converted. He calls me his "*Yiddishe mama*." He loves to come. He loves my chicken soup. [laughter] He loves to come. He says that, "I'm her adopted son." He tells everybody, "If it wasn't for Mrs. Etkin, I wouldn't be what I am." And this is the way—and that's my reward.

PL: I understand that you also – in terms of the Sephardic customs – that there was a time when women would bring their trousseaus to the mikveh? Do you recall that?

CE: No, not in my time.

PL: What is it—so the major difference then between the Sephardic version—

CE: Well, not very much. Now they do it, the *minhag* [custom]. They would—the mother would bring something, sweets for her – if they know about it. The Sephardic customs are beautiful. They're very warm and they're beautiful. And we too. It's just a matter of knowing it.

PL: So, how did you know it? And have you incorporated any yourself?

CE: I took care of my daughters when they went to the mikveh. My oldest daughter, Judy, she kept on saying, it's almost tomorrow when I took her out of the mikveh. [laughter] And the other mikveh—the other daughter, Simmie, over there in the corner [gesturing to photograph on the wall]. She's heavy-busted. She went in the mikveh and she was floating. [laughter] And they all—they davened. You see there—Yom Kippur, Shemoneh Esrei they fasted. And *baruch-Hashem*, they're wonderful. And they're okay.

PL: Just to ask you a few more questions.

CE: Yes.

PL: About the mikveh. I wanted to know a little bit—I understand that there was this story about a convert that wouldn't dip fully in the water. Does that ring any bells?

CE: Not in my place. I had no difficult[y].

PL: [laughter] What about mikveh songs?

CE: Well, like I say, when the mikveh—the women comes out—we would sing "Simen tov u mazel tov." Because that was appropriate for that situation.

PL: Do you remember Sephardic women singing any specific songs?

CE: No. No.

PL: No?

CE: They might do it. You know, they have their own ceremonies at home.

PL: I guess—what are common misunderstandings that people have about the mikveh?

CE: Well, because their grandmothers would tell them tales and it's not that way. [laughter] It could be that in Europe, you know, the mikveh's were different. They were not so modern. They say that in some places—I saw a mikveh, in Baltimore, for instance. And it is beautiful. Everything is—you push a button and it's there.

PL: Explain what you mean?

CE: Well, let's say, filling the mikveh, physically. Well, I would change the water every night. I let the water out. And then the next day when I come it's fresh water. We have

to do it physically, using the plumbing. But now, there are certain places you don't have to do that. You just press a button and it fills. And then you go in one place and you come out another place. You never meet anybody. And here the women have to sit and wait for their turn. But they don't mind. It's the same thing. They talk and they knit and they [exchange] recipes.

PL: So is the mikveh then a special women's space. And you have talked about the power of a bride. And is it an empowering women's space, or is it a solitary space for women?

CE: I think it's solitary. It's just for yourself. They don't talk about it. It's a very private matter. They don't advertise it, and, let's say, when one is not going to say, "Tomorrow and I'm going to need…"—no such thing. They have to be very secretive about it. It's their private situation.

PL: Now,halachically speaking, the number of *mitzvot* for women are much smaller than those for men.

CE: Yes. [Well, women have to keep the same mitvahs as men only in a different way.]

PL: And men at different times have had very different views of the mikveh as being an important or not important *mitzvot* or *mitzvah*. And I'm wondering if you could talk about that a little bit.

CE: Well, let me tell you, first of all, a man is not required to go to the mikveh. But he does for a spiritual reason. You see, my father went to the mikveh because he was a very pious person. He—before he felt that he's doing davening – doing a mitzvah there – he wants to feel that he is purified. And he would go to the mikveh even on Shabbat. And there are some Hassidim around here that they do go to the mikveh here on Shabbat.

PL: Men? Or, men and women?

CE: Men [only]. No, no. A woman would only go on Friday night if it is her time. She must go. But the men, they go to elevate themselves spiritually. This is why they go. And I've seen men go even in cold water. I had a woman who came here from Oregon and she also—she looked very pious. And everything she did, I could see that she's knowledgeable. And so, she comes from Oregon. I asked her, "Where did you go to the mikveh in Oregon?" She said, "There was no mikveh." I asked her, "Have you ever seen a mikveh? Because she's never seen one. She says, "Tell me everything." "So, how did you go?" "I went to the lake." She says she went in the lake, but she got—a little while later she got pregnant, had a baby. And when you have a baby you don't need to go—after you—with a baby, you don't have to wait—don't go to the mikveh. And I was just shocked. How was it—"What did you do in the wintertime?" "I was pregnant," she said. "I didn't go." But they did go. Yes, you can go to the lake.

PL: Can you describe where the mikveh is located? What its interior is like? Where the water comes from? Because there is so many requirements with the mikveh. You know, that the water can be filled. It has to be so many gallons. It has to be built into the ground. And, you know, everything about the vessel. And I'm wondering if you can give us a picture of this.

CE: Well, the mikveh is built—we have to have natural water. Spring water. And it's built that if there is no spring water, you cannot have a mikveh. So underneath the building there is a hole like a whole section of—you see how the water comes up from there. And it has to come up. We pull it up. We have what they call a "bore." The bore is a pit. And in that pit is the rainwater—so either the rainwater or from the bottom. And it comes up, and we open up the bore. When we fill the mikveh we first let in that amount of water that's required, that comes up from the ground to a certain level. After that we add either cold water or hot water. If it comes to a certain level, it has a hole in

the wall. And it is connected to the bore. So when we open up the bore, it becomes one. Like over here in the Ballard [Locks], the waters become one. If you open up a certain section, it all mingles. So that's where the mikveh is. We have to have a certain amount of water. It cannot be less, it cannot be more. We must have the amount—so that it could mingle with that. And that goes into—halfway into that wall.

PL: What does it look like? Is it tiled? Is it painted?

CE: Oh sure. The mikveh, it's nice – a nice building. And the mikveh's all tiled.

PL: What would make the mikveh, not an unclean, but an impure mikveh?

CE: If, G-d forbid, a cat would fall in there. That would make it impure.

PL: Just that section of water? Of if it fell into the bore?

CE: If it would fall into the water, into the bore, that would make it unclean. And if there wouldn't be enough water, there wouldn't be no mikveh. We have to have a certain amount of water.

PL: So, what were your responsibilities as the mikveh lady? What were the things that you had to do other than the human contact?

CE: That's the only thing that I had to do, and prepare the water. I had to make sure that it was done according to halacha. It's not just something that you fill up a tub with water. We have to do it according to halacha . As I say, we have to open up those bores and we have to have it become one body of water.

PL: Are there national associations? Or have you met other mikveh ladies? Not from this area? Do you know each other? Do you keep in contact? Is there a newsletter? Do you—is there any—the Mikveh Association does it extend beyond the local mikveh?

CE: Well I talked to—in Philadelphia—there is a beautiful new mikveh there and I talk to some mikveh ladies. I took my granddaughter to the mikveh in Israel when she got married. And I talk to people [over there in the mikveh].

PL: I guess my last question about the mikveh, before we move on—is—can you describe a little bit about what it means spiritually for women? And how it enhances their relationship with Hashem, with Judaism?

CE: I tell you, according to what we know, and this is—I was going to give you that book, by [Rabbi] Aryeh Kaplan. It's called *The Waters of Eden*. Have you ever read Aryeh Kaplan?

PL: I've looked at it.

CE: Yes, okay`. The mikveh is not a new thing. It comes from the time of Adam and Eve. It says that when Adam and Eve, they sinned by eating from the *etz ha-da'at*, the Tree of Knowledge. They sinned. They were not supposed to do that. But Hashem is merciful. He put—he created a pit of water and he set them in there to repent, to do *t'shuva* – to wash off their sins. So, if we believe that the roots of those waters were connected to *Gan Eden* [The Garden of Eden] in a sense, because that it was. Those roots – the waters that spread out. And that's what Adam and Eve were sinning. So, you should see in Israel they have places in Jerusalem, where you go and you see—have you ever seen those ruins? And you see those mikvehs. You see this was a mikveh here; there was a mikveh there. And some people see it. And Masada, old mikvehs. They were different. They were different. And some of them were bitter cold. I've seen a mikveh in – where is that – Safed. It's very cold. It's very deep. And yet women went. I mean, it's something that they do. You have to do it. You have to do—we have to wash off the *tomei*, the impurity. And the reason that it is we're impure is that something is in our body which could bring life. And yet when we lose it, we're like dead – the something that is coming out of us. It dies in us we have to be purified.

It's just like if you see the Torah. You learn that a Cohen cannot go to a funeral because he becomes impure. I mean, what can we do. These are the laws.

PL: When a woman [goes through or] has gone through menopause, when is the last time that she goes to the mikveh?

CE: She goes one time after she lost her cycle. One time, and she's finished.

PL: Do you ever miss it?

CE: I don't have a man now, so I don't.

PL: We are going to have to change tapes.

[END OF CD 3]

PL: We're continuing with the oral history. This is a minidisk #4 of Cecillia Etkins. So you were saying Cecillia, about the mikveh now that you're retired.

CE: And they are very capable women and pious. And then Tsipi Twersky. I don't know if you heard about the Twerskys. She's a very pious woman. [laughter] I remember, why did I become a mikveh lady? This lady Tsipi came here as a young bride. And it seemed that every time she had to go it was on Friday night. And we had meetings—and the mikveh lady says, "I can't do it. I'm tired. I'm working all week. I can't do it Friday night." [laughter] And then I was at the meeting, and I looked at the young woman there and I felt so sorry for her. I says, "Okay. I'll take it. I'll take Friday night."

PL: Did she have a beeper on? [laughter]

CE: Well they call, you know—they call to make appointments. Well anyway, she's there, the mikveh lady. And she's wonderful. She's very, very nice. Very gentle. Very

nice. And I urge you. I think it would be good for you. You'll enjoy it.

PL: I want to ask a little bit about – to backtrack – when you got to Seattle. And I understand that you, at some point—I mean you had children pretty soon after. So can we go back to your children? And when you had your first child? And I understand you opened a business? We have much to speak of, so—

CE: Well, my oldest daughter was born in 1949. We married in 1948. She was born in 1949. And at that time we were talking about coming back to Seattle. And we came here in 1950—November 1st, 1950. And like I say, I liked Seattle from the minute I stepped on it. I feel comfortable over here. What else should I tell you? [laughter]

PL: Well, I guess I'm wondering a little bit about how it is that you, as a survivor, met other survivors? Were you living in isolation from those experiences? Was it—you know, you're making all these changes in your life. What was—how did you move on from there?

CE: Well, I'll tell you. When my children were a little older – I'd say like after nine, ten—ten-years-old – so of course I have a number. And they would nag me all the time. Mommy, what is it? Are you going to tell me next time, next time? Well, one time I started talking. It was on a Friday night, telling them what happened. And all of a sudden they left the table. They couldn't take it. And I realized, I talk too much. How can you instill things like that in little children? And I was pained so much. My husband was a very understanding person. He never criticized me for anything – except once I was wearing red pants when I was painting. He didn't like the red pants. But he never gave me criticism for anything. And I realized that my children couldn't take it. So—but I still need to talk to somebody. They got so worked up that I had to talk. So, I went [for help] to a shrink. It was a Dr. Bason. I don't know if you've ever heard of him.

PL: Can you spell his name?

CE: I don’t remember.

PL: Continue.

CE: Dr. Bason?. Anyway, I went there. And he asked me first question. He asked me where I came from? Did I behave as a girl, and all those things. Well, he asked me things what happened. And I says, “I have nothing to say.” He says, “You come to me, and you have nothing to say.” He was sitting there. And anyway, he little by little started pulling things out of me. And one time he assigned me to an assistant of his. And I come to him – the other guy – and he says – I’m sitting on the chair – and he says, “Mrs. Etkins, stand up.” And I says, “What for?” He says, “I want you to hit me.” He says, “Hit me. Hit me, like that.” I says, “Why?” He says, “Because you are angry and you are frustrated, and I want you to hit me.” I says, “I can’t do that.” He said, “Break my windows.” I says, “I’m not going to break your windows.” He says, “Get it out of your system. Break everything. Kick me. Hit me.” All the things he tells me, I can’t do it. He says, “Are you angry at those people who are walking by in the street?” I says, “No.” Anyway, the reason he asked me those questions was because when I was in camp—I think it was the end of the war. It was already in Padburg, in Denmark. That when they told us that we were free, and I got up out of the wagon [train], and this German Nazi comes by and he takes everybody hand, and [says] “I’m sorry” and “I’m this and I’m that.” And I says, “The hell with him.” I could have hit him. I could have kicked him where it hurts. And I didn’t do it. And it bothered me. It bothered me so much, I had to go to a shrink for 18 years. Little by little then I realized when I said I have nothing to say. He said, “You’re coming here, and you have nothing to say? You’ve been in a concentration camps and you have nothing to say? And you could have hit that Nazi and you didn’t do it? And you have nothing to say?” And that Nazi bothered me – that I didn’t do it. Because I was so hurt during the camps, that I would have killed him. And I had a lot of trouble. I was in Bergen-Belson. I don’t know if I talked about it before. Did I? Okay. So these are the things that bothered me. And it was hard on

my children. I couldn't talk to them because it was hurting. One day my daughter came home—Judy came home with the children for Pesach. And those children were already that age, nine to ten. And they were nagging me. I should tell them why that number was there. And I looked at Judy and I was reluctant to do it because I knew what happened before. And she motioned to me I should go ahead and tell them. And so, little by little, I was telling them what happened. I started out with Haman [sp?] on Purim—when they go to shul and they talk about the Haman. And tell them that Haman was a cousin of Hitler. And that's what Hitler wanted to do. He wanted to kill us all just like Haman. It wasn't easy for my children. My son was hurt more than anybody else.

PL: Go ahead.

CE: Yes, he couldn't take it. And he would cry. Why did my mother have to be in concentration camps? And I told him, "We didn't ask for it. It was a *gazera* [phonetic; Hebrew: something destined that should never happen again] and that's the way it is. Millions of people. Thank G-d I'm here and you're here."

PL: Were there other people in Seattle that you could relate to at that time?

CE: Well, it wasn't very helpful to speak to the same—to the survivors. The only place I had to go was 18 years to a shrink. And eventually, I slowed down. I quieted down.

PL: How did that help? I mean, in 18 years of therapy—how did that change you and make you deal with it?

CE: Well, it didn't change me, in a sense. It's just to cope with it. It's—I am a religious person. And I believe that there is a purpose—I mean, G-d forbid there was no purpose of killing so many Jews. But the purpose is that I am alive. That I'm here. My parents, my sisters, brothers are not here. And I am here, and it is my duty to continue where my parents left off. That's the way that I can rationalize that I am here. And I have generations after me.

PL: American culture has dealt, through the years, very differently with survivors. I mean, at one point, you were called “victims.”

CE: Yes, we are the victims.

PL: And now you’re—but even the language has changed. And I’m wondering how you’ve witnessed—you know, now there are movies made. There are—you know, it’s become part of the discussion. But at one point, I imagine, that it wasn’t. And going to see a therapist was something that was hard to talk about, even publicly. I’m just wondering if you wanted to speak to that at all?

CE: Well, if you have seen *Schlinder’s List*—and every bit of it is true, only not enough. And like I say, my rationale is that I’m here. And my children—they’re all religious children. They’re modern [Orthodox], and their not black hats. I have a grandson who was just bar mitvah’d. He looked so cute in a black hat. [laughter]

PL: So how many children did you have? And is there a relationship then that you are saying between your feelings about religion and your sense of purpose that you instilled in them?

CE: Yes. I think so. I think both of us – their father that they had – was a role model for them. He never laid his hands on any of my kids. I did. I used to whack my son more than anybody else. And I realize that maybe I should not have done it.

PL: Well, are you saying that you were a firm disciplinarian or that you stepped over the line?

CE: Firm disciplinarian. Because where I come from my father didn’t lay his hands on us either. He just looked at us, and we knew that my mother would say, “I am going to tell your father. I’m going to tell *tate*[Yiddish: father].” And that’s all we needed. [laughter]

PL: So, how did you and your husband then negotiate those discipline roles?

CE: I had to do the disciplining. And with the daughters, we had no problems. And even my son when he was younger and he was holding my hand and crossing the street. And he knew that if he ran, he had to wait. It was okay. And you know something? He's here. He's very caring. He was married and he's not any more.

PL: So, how old is your son? He still lives with you?

CE: Yes. He's here. He's 49. He just turned 49. He's a very good person. We tried. We sent him to a Yeshiva and he came home six months later. We took him back. We sent him to Israel. [laughter] He was on a kibbutz for a year or so. He went to Bar Elan [University].

PL: Would you say that he had—he struggled more than your other children? Did he have discipline problems?

CE: No, he struggled more than the other children. Yes, but with the daughters, it was very easy. They all went away to Stern College. They all had degrees. My oldest daughter has a Master's Degree. She lives in [Rannanna], in Israel. My other daughter has a degree from Bar Elan. And my daughter in Baltimore, she works in a law firm as a paralegal. My other daughter in Toronto is also—she works for a big company, an insurance company. They're doing okay.

PL: What did you and your family like to do together in your leisure time?

CE: Well, we would go a lot for walks, and we would climb the mountains around here in Seward Park. The kids loved to go with their daddy. And of course, Shabbat we do the same things. And the holidays, we were always together.

PL: Are there any things about celebrating the Jewish holidays or Shabbat in your home that you would like to talk about as being particularly special? Or any events that happened?

CE: Well, on Shabbat, when my husband was alive, Friday night especially, we would always learn. He would study the *Tanakh* [written Torah] or whatever. I gave away so many *seforim* [prayer books] – fourteen boxes that he had. I have some that I use myself. But we would always study. And in the afternoon, we would go for walk. When I had the business. When we live in the Madrona area. We used to walk around that area. So, people would say, "Hello Mrs. Etkin." And he would say, "Why don't you run for office? They'd vote for you." And you know something? They liked me so much in the neighborhood. They used to bring me gifts.

PL: This is when you had your—

CE: When I had the store.

PL: Can you talk about that store?

CE: Well, I had a fabric store. The reason I got that. One of my sisters came from Vienna. And her husband was—they had a store, a fabric store. And I came to visit her. And I walked into there and I went, "Wow, all these fabrics." And that's my—my fabric is my work. And I looked at all these fabrics. And my brother-in-law said, "You know what? Go home. Find yourself a little place and I'll send you all the fabrics you need." And he did. My place was on Madrona, 34th and Union.

PL: What was it called?

CE: It was called Madrona Fabric & Sewing Center. I had a full line of patterns and fabrics—beautiful. What he used to go. He would go into the places where they would manufacture fancy clothes, and he would buy up whatever was left—odd lots. And he

would send them to me. I had beautiful fabrics.

PL: Did your husband work?

CE: No, he did not in the fabric store.

PL: What did he do?

CE: He was—officially, he did not want any titles. He worked in the shul for 33 years. Thirty-three years from the time we came there until he retired. He ran the shul. He ran the cemetery, the wineries. He did everything. [unclear]

PL: So did he have a title? Or would he have had a title of the *shames*?

CE: They called him "office secretary." That's what he did. And he did—he did everything there. I mean, if there was, G-d forbid, a funeral, they asked him to eulogize—do the eulogy if there was no rabbi. He would conduct services. They had to have somebody to daven, he'd do that. That's the way he was. He did not want a title.

PL: So while you were working was your job a full-time job?

CE: Well, I worked until my daughter—until I was in the ninth month at first. And then I stopped.

PL: For which child?

CE: For my oldest one, Judy.

PL: And you had how many children? And how many children? Five children.

CE: So I didn't. When I went to visit my sister, and my brother-in-law said, "Open up a store." And which I did. And he sent me fabrics. And in the business, I was also sewing. People came in. They picked out a pattern and I would give them advice what

to do. And if somebody wanted me to make them a garment I would do that. Sometimes they would just bring me a clipping from the newspaper and I would make that dress for them.

PL: Were you a solo operation, or did you supervise other people?

CE: No, I was a solo operation. But I was asked to teach.

PL: Where?

CE: Well, there were private people who said, “Just do it, and I’ll do it in my basement.” And there were doctors and lawyers that I had in the Madrona area. And when I gave up the business, I was offered the job in one of the high schools in West Seattle. I never did that. But I made my daughter’s wedding gowns and the whole trousseau, bridesmaids, my own gown. See, over there is my gown and my daughters. I made all those.

PL: So, Cecillia, how profitable was your business?

CE: Well, it was. The first year was difficult. But the second year it was very profitable. I was there 12 years.

PL: So what—

CE: I was able to send my daughters to college. Do whatever I needed to do.

PL: You must feel very proud of that?

CE: Well, I felt very good. I came dressed like a lady. I had a full-time housekeeper for five years. And I went into a fancy suit. People looked at me [laughter] and they knew and they’d ask, “Did you make that?” I even had somebody from Nordstrom’s as a client. She was one of my better clients. I didn’t make her clothes from the beginning,

but if she needed some fixing or fitting, she'd come to me.

PL: So what was it like for a woman who hadn't worked prior to this to have such earning power?

CE: In the meantime, I sewed in the house for my children. My children were walking out of the house like models. They didn't—we didn't have a lot of money. But they walked out of the house—and myself, the only thing I would buy was a hat and shoes. And I was always elegant. Always. Dressed properly – my children, even my boy. Was very proud of what—I made an overcoat for my husband at one time. He wore it for ten years.

PL: So your relationship to the synagogue, Bikur Cholim, was very close on—given that your husband was working in the synagogue?

CE: That's right. Yes.

PL: I also understand from watching – there was a commemorative video made about Bikur Cholim – that you were both very active also in *Hachnosis Orchim.*

CE: Yes. Did you see that movie video?

PL: I did. Can you describe your involvement?

CE: Well, I'll tell you, my husband was a very considerate person. And it says in the Torah, the *haggadah*, that every person who's hungry should come in and eat. And they should not be alone. So, what he did. He used to go out in the street, the marketplace, and look for Jewish people. And he would invite them to come to our seder. And we had all kinds of experiences with that. So at first what happened—the way we got involved in it. There used to be a shames in shul on 17th and Yesler. And he and his wife, they used to cook for the Pesach. And one year he got sick and he couldn't do it.

And my husband started working on me for a long time. Just slowly, slowly breaking me in. "Those poor people are not going to have a place to eat," and this and that. And, "If Mr. Rubenstein is not going to do it, who is going to do it?" He sort of laid it on me and prepared me for it. So, what did we do? He finally got me to admit that I will do it. So, we had to live—there was a motel around there – 17th and Yesler – and we cooked there. They brought everything. They did all the shopping. They brought all the dishes and everything. And I did the cooking and the supervising. So, we did it. And Pesach, people came from the street.

PL: Did you have a title as the supervisor?

CE: No. No we don't. We are not title people. But we were in the newspaper. Well maybe, I'll show you something. In the front page. We didn't want any pictures. We tried to keep them away. But they caught us, and you see something in there. That was on the front page. It was something that I knew—we have a fund. It's called a *chesed* [goodness] fund, the Nathan Etkin Chesed Fund. And it's an ongoing thing. People donate to that. We—my children established that. Because that's the way he was. And his mother was like that too. She had a house full of people. Even blind people came to her. And this is what the family was known for. And I did it. He worked on me. [laughter] And I did it for several years.

PL: Well, it sounds like from our early interview [that] your family was also very involved. And you did tell the story of many people that came to your house. That your father invited them as well.

CE: Yes, yes. In Europe. That's right.

PL: What other voluntary or community involvements have you had? For instance, have you been involved with the Sisterhood?

CE: Yes, very much so.

PL: The Northwest Yeshiva?

CE: Yes.

PL: How so?

CE: Not so very much the Yeshiva, but the Hebrew Academy. I was many times running rummage sales for them. We needed scholarship money for the kids to send them here or there [to study]. We needed money—and the Sisterhood, we were known for that. And how can you raise money?

PL: What's the process of holding a rummage sale? What did you have to do?

CE: Well, what we had to do—collect a lot of clothes, and a lot of other items, household items. And you collect them. And then you take a place in the market, Pike Place Market. And we had it there for two or three days. And we had a lot of merchandise. And I didn't collect from houses. I would go to the businesses. And given that they knew my husband, when I called them and I said, "We need something for a rummage sale." I say, "My name is Mrs. Nathan Etkin" and then nobody ever refused.

PL: What kind of businesses did you approach?

CE: Stores—like even Eddie Bauer. They would give us boxes full of jackets, down jackets. Now we had a mild winter this—and now they make different kinds. But we did. And I called Jeffko. They gave us a lot of clothes. The Bon Marché. Sears & Roebuck. They would give us—we told them, you know, what we are doing with this money – either for Israel, or for scholarships. They never refused.

PL: How has that business community – non-Jewish and Jewish – responded to, you know, a Jewish organization?

CE: They didn't mind.

PL: Were they enthusiastic about it? Or saw it as a good PR move?

CE: Could be. First of all, whatever they give they write off. So they don't lose any money. And they were glad they waited or us every year. Jeffko gave us a lot. It used to be Jeffko. I don't know what they call them now. I don't know what they call them now.

PL: What was your involvement then in the Hebrew Academy?

CE: The same thing. The same thing. I'm a good sales lady. [laughter] So, we sold. We got a sewing machine – one that was brand new. It needed a little cleaning up. So I did it. I cleaned it up myself. And I displayed it—sold in no time. And all kinds of things we got.

PL: What other things do you do to occupy your time? Your leisure time? Hobbies and things of that nature?

CE: Well, I go places. Like today, I have the *bris*. During tomorrow night, I'm invited for dinner. Next week I'm going to a bridal shower, one or two showers. I run my house. I clean—I clean and I work in the yard. And if I'm called for something [to do], I go.

PL: Called for something?

CE: Yes, I used to go and help in shul. The women would bake *hamentashen* before Purim. And sometimes we needed help to help with the cooking in the kitchen. I would do that. And many times when my kids were younger, I would go to camp in the summer and just be in the kitchen—help. I chose—I chose to wash the pots and pans and the silverware because I didn't want to get involved with the cooking. With the woman—one say "this way," "that way"—so, I chose. Nobody bothered me. Used to sing, you know, and scrub. It was funny. My son—he was a teenager. And he didn't want to go to camp one year. My other daughters all signed him up. And he was about

13 or 14. And I asked him to go to camp, “We’re all going. “ He says, “No he didn’t want to go.” I says, “Well, nobody’s going to be home to cook for you. We’re all going.” He said, “Are you going to cook?” I says, “I’m going to be the first cook.” And he came to camp. And he was a counselor. The kids loved him. So he comes into the kitchen to ask for seconds for the kids. And he sees me scrub the pots and pans. He says, “Mommy, how come you are doing this?” I says, “This is my job.” He said,

“Didn’t you tell me you are the first cook?” [laughter] So I used to do a lot of things. A lot.

PL: What is the camp that your children have gone to? Is it the same camp?

CE: Well, yes. They all went to the same camp. It was a campground by the shul.

PL: Does it have a name?

CE: Camp Noah, they call them.

PL: I just wanted that for the record.

CE: Yes, all right.

PL: I’m wondering whether or not you have any television shows or books or magazines that you read on a regular basis or watch on a regular basis?

CE: I don’t read. I read whatever, you know, important things of—I throw them out. I read them and out they go. I don’t have—haven’t read a book in a long time from A-to-Z. I used to do it when my kids were younger. I would go to bed and relax over there until I would fall asleep—the book.

PL: Did you have any favorite authors back then?

CE: No.

PL: Or types of books that you liked?

CE: No. Anything that was of interest. I would read the *Reader's Digest* and this and that.

PL: What about television or movies?

CE: Yes, I do. I watched the news and I watch the business news, and all with Chandra Levy, it's so sensational. It interests me. At 6:00 o'clock, I watch the news. And when I eat breakfast, I take it in there, and I watch the news while I eat. [laughter]

PL: So it is pretty much news that you like to watch?

CE: Yes, it's news that I like to watch. I'm very much interested in Israel. This morning I woke up at 3:00 o'clock in the morning. And for some reason I couldn't sleep. I go to bed early – 9:30, 10:00 o'clock – so I get up early. So usually, I get up 5:30, 6:30. But this morning I couldn't sleep for some reason. So, I called my daughter in Israel. It was 15 minutes after 5:00. And over there I can't remember what it was. Well, anyway. So later she called me back. And I told her, "I'm going to a circumcision at 7:45." So, she called before and she says, "Mommy what have you done? Why did you get up at 3:00 o'clock in the morning?" [laughter] And then, you know, after I spoke with her, I went immediately back to sleep. I slept late till 7:30.

PL: Well, speaking of Israel—I'd like to know a little bit about—I mean, I'm looking here at your five children. And two of them live in Israel. One of them lives here in Seattle with you. One is in Baltimore. And one is in Toronto.

CE: Mmm-hmm.

PL: You made a decision to make *aliyah* and move to Israel, right?

CE: Yes.

PL: When did you make that decision and how did you make it?

CE: Huh. I'm been wanting to move to Israel since I was 12 years old. It's been—I've been in Israel 17 times. And I love Israel. And last year I went there. I stayed in a retirement home for 5 weeks, to try it out – to see how I would like it.

PL: Where was that?

CE: It was in a place called Rannana, *achusa bait* [Hebrew: retirement home]. It's ten-minutes away from my daughter's house. That's why I chose the place there. Because my daughter's there. I realized that I am not getting any younger. And for the future, I've got to get settled somewhere. I don't want to be a burden on my children. I don't want them to have to do anything. If I am not able, this and that. So I want to go to a place like that. It's like The Summit over here. It's just more equipped with facilities and so forth.

PL: What kind of facilities are you talking about?

CE: Well, they have exercises. Exercises in the swimming pool, which I went to every single morning. And they have programs in the afternoon. There is a group—English-speaking people. I think that there are about 25 or 30, all English-speaking. And we get together for tea, just amongst ourselves. There are other residents but the English-speaking, they stick together. And I liked it there. It's a nice place. It is not as big as here. It's one bedroom. Not even that. But you're not there too much. There's always activities going on. So I did that—that's the reason that I decided I have to leave. I have to go. Because my children are not here. They are not going to come here to live. There's no way.

PL: How often do they and your grandchildren visit you?

CE: Not very often. They get busy. They're all in camp. My children from Toronto, they are in camp. One of them is a drama teacher, a programmer and the other one is doing something else. And one in Baltimore is—works in the law firm in the summertime. She just turned 19. And her brother is also in a day camp. He's 13. So, they're busy. They can't. My daughter works, and they can't. They were here a few years ago.

PL: So, what then have been your experiences of grandparenting?

CE: Well, I feel very good. I have great-grandchildren. Yesterday, I felt very bad because—maybe that's the reason I couldn't sleep. The Israelis went into Schem [phonetic]. It's 20 minutes from Jerusalem. And they did a lot of damage. They killed eight Arabs. And it's—very sad. But this is the retaliation for what they're doing. Last week they ambushed two 17-year-old boys and they stabbed them to death. I mean , the Israelis have had it up to their neck. They can't take it any more. So, my feeling is now that they are going to retaliate very heavily.

PL: So what does it feel like, Cecillia, at this time – given the things that are going on and the unrest in Israel – for your decision to move there? Do you feel that—can you answer that?

CE: For one point, I say, I like to be there and my children are there. And on the other hand, I am a survivor and I went through a lot. And I know what it is. There was some question a couple of weeks ago. There was the water in Tel-Aviv. Was like it was poisoned. And maybe it wasn't. They say that—they corrected that. That some farmers might have done something unintentionally. But they couldn't drink the water. And, you know, it's things like that. I'm worried what could happen with, you know, the Arabs? They might just do that. And they have the means. And they know that if they do something that they are going to get punished. So, it's a two-way street. We just don't see an end to it.

PL: What will you miss most about Seattle?

CE: Well, I have a lot of young friends. Most of my friends are older. They passed away. They're not around. I feel very good about it – these young people that are my friends. I like to be helpful to them. They look up to me like [laughter] I was their mother. And I feel very close to them. I will probably miss them. But I realize that that's what they have to do—they have to go their way. One is going to Jerusalem. She's now in Brookline, Massachusetts. Also a convert. She's a wonderful person. She left. She has a friend in Massachusetts. And they might get married soon. She may not even come back, but she'll live there. And the other one is going to Los Angeles. And a third one—they're all getting married. The third one is—maybe she will remain in Seattle. Well, Seattle is a wonderful place. I have good memories about it. And we had a good life here. But it is time to leave. I have to go.

PL: When did your husband pass away?

CE: In 1968. Sixteen years ago.

PL: That's a long time ago.

CE: It is.

PL: And how did you deal with his—was he ill? Or, was it sudden?

CE: He had Parkinson's Disease. And he did not shake. He had his facial sometimes change a little. He would—shuffling. Shuffling and drag his feet. Sometimes his hand would turn someway. But he used to tell me that people live with Parkinson's Disease for a long time. He was a very strong man. He could put in 12 miles a day on Shabbat to shul, and it didn't bother him. I used to say, "He'll live till 120." But he had a massive heart attack. It was on a Friday night. It was just about—a week before Tisha B'Av and he passed away. Friday night, he was sitting there and learning. [Sighs deeply] He went

to bed. He called me in the middle of the night to tell me he wasn't feeling well. I should wash his forehead and clean him up. He was sweaty. I did all that, and then I called the medics. When I saw that he was not getting better I called the medics. And I never forgave myself. I called the medics.

PL: Why?

CE: Because I felt maybe they'd done something to him. They—I saw they pushed a big needle into him. And, I don't know. I don't know. 3:00 o'clock in the morning, he was gone.

PL: How did you—what networks did you rely on to get through that experience? Were there women's' networks or friends? How did you mourn?

CE: It wasn't easy. I was telling my granddaughter yesterday – in Baltimore. She called. And she asked me, "Bubby, how do you feel?" And I asked her, "How do you feel?" She said, "Fine." She works in a law firm. And she likes to visit elderly people. She—there is a specific woman who can hardly hear. And she goes to visit her on Shabbat. She's an old lady in an old home. But she likes her. And she goes there. And the woman likes her. She likes to see young people. So, I tell her, "Keep up the good work. It's so important to make an elderly person to feel good. You're younger. And she's happy." So, I told her the story about my situation with a young woman. There was a young woman around here who lived a few blocks away. She was a salesperson for IBM. And she used to have classes once a month in her house over here. From the Chabad, women would come – a *Rosh Chodesh* class. And I used to go there. And one time, everybody has gone. And the chairs were laying around. And I remained to [put away the] chairs. And she was very tired. She flopped down on the couch. So I took everything away from there. And I asked her, "Is there anything I can do for you?" And she said, the only thing I need is a husband. [laughter] And I felt so bad. I just felt if I could find somebody, just give him to her. [laughter] Well, anyway, this

girl on Shabbos came over—and after that was before I went to her house. She came over one Shabbos – had a big dog. And left the dog on the porch. And she walks in and she walks on the door. She walks in. And that was soon after my husband had passed away. And I was in very bad shape. I was just so low and crying and everything. She walks in. And she said, “Mrs. Etkin. Good Shabbos. Can I do something for you?” And I looked at her, and I asked her, “Who are you?” And she said, “My name is Batsheva. I live around here, and I came to see if I can help you with something.” I sat her down on the couch and I says, “You already did.” She gave me a lift. And I was so low at that time. So, lo and behold, I had company some time after that. And there was a friend of mine who passed away recently and some younger people. And this young man was invited also—came from Philadelphia. We invited him. And everybody had left, and he stayed on. His name was Jeff. He sat on the couch, and I asked him, “How come you are such a nice young man and the girls are not running after you?” He said, “I couldn’t.” He says, “Because I couldn’t get married, because I was learning. I was in Israel and I was learning, and I had no time.” And I asked him right then and there, “Are you interested now?” He says, “Yes.” I says, “You know, what? I have two girls for you.” One was my son-in-law’s sister. She has all of the qualifications for him. He was a religious fellow, a learned fellow. And the other one is Batsheva who came in that Shabbos, and works for IBM. And he was in computers here. And I figured it would be a good *shidduch* [Hebrew: match for marriage]. So I says, “Would you be interested in meeting any of these girls?” He says, “The other one is in Vancouver.” “You would have to go there. This one is in Seattle.” He liked to see the one in Seattle. So, next Shabbos she comes to shul and she sits next to me. And this young man got an aliyah. Nice clean-shaven young man. She says, “Who is that young man.” I says, “You’re going to meet him.” [laughter] And they did.

PL: So you’re a *schadchen* [matchmaker] also.

CE: [laughter] So, they went out that Shabbos afternoon. And they liked each other. They were going around for a little while. And one day she comes on a Friday—comes with flowers Friday afternoon. A beautiful suit. And she sits on the couch and she cries. I ask her, “Why are you crying?” She says, “Mrs. Etkin, there is a problem with Jeff. He doesn’t want me. And we need to go to New York. He’s got to go to New York. And I have to go to New York on business. And he doesn’t want us to go together.” And then she felt that she senses something is not right. And he told her he doesn’t want to go with her. He doesn’t want people to see them. And she cries. Okay? So that was Friday. On Shabbos afternoon—Motzei Shabbos. When Shabbos was out, I called him and I says, “Jeff, would you like to come over?” And that night he came over. And I tell him, “Jeff, what is wrong with Batsheva?” He says, “No, Mrs. Etkin, but I cannot get married. I cannot get married in Seattle. I just came here five months ago.” I says, “Listen Jeff, why not? We make beautiful weddings in Seattle. And if you don’t want to have a wedding here, you can have it some other place. But Batsheva is a wonderful person.” And I outlined all the good things about it: she loves you; she’s going to be a good wife; and she has a lot in common with you. Well anyway, *a fardrei im a kop* [Yiddish: drive himself crazy]. And he went. It was 2:00 o’clock in the morning when he left. And he goes to her [laughter] and they made peace. And then they traveled together to New York. And then I get a call, early in the morning. He proposed to her. [laughter] So now they live in Israel. They have two children. And they’re very happy. So I was trying to tell my granddaughter, when you do chesed – you do a good thing, you are not looking for a reward. But somehow it comes to you. And I couldn’t help thinking that that girl, Batsheva, had such a mitzvah. She did so much chesed for me, that she was rewarded. If she hadn’t come here, how would I know her?

PL: That’s a beautiful story.

CE: And I go there. Every time I go there, I stay there for at least one Shabbos. And the children call me “s*ofta*.**”**

PL: Which means?

CE: It means grandma.

PL: In which language?

CL: That's Hebrew. Softa is a Hebrew word for grandma.

PL: Well, I guess to try to end this interview—and that's just a beautiful note. But I want to ask you a little bit about, again about your decision to spend the last years of your life in Israel. And make that transition. What does that mean to you to go there?

CE: Well, first of all, everybody should go to Israel. We have an obligation to the Holy Land. It's our land, and Hashem gave it to us. Regardless of what nations are saying, it's our land and it's beautiful. Were you in Israel? How long?

PL: Not long enough.

CE: Not long enough. Well, every time I come there I see something nicer. Israel is a prosperous country. It's a small country but the knowledge is there. You know that they're coming up with all kinds of discoveries. It's a friendly country, and it's beautiful. And besides, my children live there.

PL: And how has your health been, in terms of making such a grand move? Have you been well?

CE: Well, could be better. Could be better. But I am here for a purpose and I am not complaining. I look around and there are others who are worse off than I am. I have a few problems here and there but I deal with them.

PL: Have you had any experiences around your health or illnesses that have been extremely significant in your lifetime?

CE: No. Thank G-d, no. I did have a nervous breakdown for a long time when I was in Sweden after surviving. But other than that, no.

PL: And in terms of watching yourself grow older, and—let me pause for a second.

[Break in recording]

PL: So, I think that what I was getting at before I paused, was to ask about how you have dealt with the issue of aging in general?

CE: Well, it's very natural. Nate used to stand over here. He would put his arm around me and look in the mirror and he'd say, "We're aging gracefully." And that's what we did. We want to get older, right? We like to be in the health that we had when we were younger. But that's nature.

PL: So what advice do you have to young Jewish women today? About any of the subjects that we've talked about? Do you have any advice?

CE: Well, I live by an example. Like I said, these women that are coming around here—I had a women come and live here for a year and a half. She came here. She was devastated. She was heartbroken. Her husband walked out on her. He came home one day and he said, "I don't love you any more." And she was just heartbroken. Married to a non-Jewish man. And that's the way it was. And she had a son. He was not very good to her. A young man. He was in his upper-teens. He called her up one time, and he said, "Mom, I wish you so and so" and "I'll lock you up and throw away the key." And he said horrible things to her. And she was here and she cried. And now you look at her, she's a different person. She was here, and she will tell you. She learned everything in this house.

PL: So, what special talent is it that you have – that you can put your finger on – that says, I have the ability – whether it is recognized or not – to transform other peoples'

lives and make them better?

CE: I don't know if that is my talent or it is just becoming that way. I just—I like people. I always did. And I don't have any animosity towards nobody. And that's the way I am. I just—these people love to come. Sometimes I have five or six women here Friday night.

PL: I'm sorry.

CE: That's okay.

PL: So, is there anything else that you would like to—I mean, this is for posterity. This is for yourself and your family. This is for an historical record. Is there anything else that you would like to add? Either a philosophy that you've had over the years? Or something that we've missed that you would like to make sure that we have on tape.

CE: The only thing that I can say is that not everybody is bad. There is some goodness in people. And we have to help one another. If that would be the case, if we would just be good to one another, we would—there would be peace in the world. There would be *shalom*. This is what it says. The *Moshiach* would come. We have to have unity, *achdus* [Hebrew], no matter what we are. And the Torah tells you, you should not reject anybody even if they are not so religious. Even if they're not so—you cannot reject. They have a Jewish heart and they're in the image of Hashem. So, that's the way I feel.

PL: Just because you mentioned that, I wondered—because, in Israel, in particular and even in the United States—there are many ultra-Orthodox that feel differently.

CE: That's true. Yes.

PL: And as an Orthodox woman, how do you feel about that?

CE: Well, I can say, I know that the Satmar and my sister in Borough Park called me the other day. And they don't like what Satmar is doing. The go out with Arafat and they

say that they have to give back the land. That Israel is not ours. It's there's. I mean it hurts. It hurts very much when they say that. But that's the way they believe. You cannot have—you cannot fight them. You cannot force them to believe that the way that we do. We just have to live according to what we think is right. And if they're wrong—maybe they're right. Maybe Moshiach is on his way. We don't know.

PL: Let's hope so.

CE: Let's hope so.

PL: Yes. Thank you so much Celia for a wonderful interview.

CE: My pleasure. My pleasure. Just if I could help. I hope that this will somehow help you in many ways.

CE: I hope it will help others as well. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]