

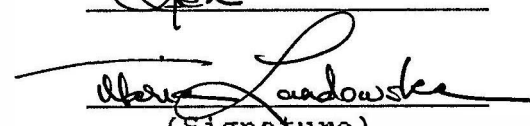
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MARIA LANDOWSKA
December 21, 1989

Place of Interview: Fort Worth, Texas

Interviewer: Keith Rosen

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Oral History Collections

Maria Landowska

Interviewer: Keith Rosen Date: December 21, 1989

Place of Interview: Fort Worth, Texas

[Editor's note: The UNT Oral History Program does not vouch for the accuracy of the contents of this interview.]

Mr. Rosen: This is Keith Rosen interviewing Maria Landowska for the University of North Texas Oral History Collection. The interview's taking place on December 21, 1989, in Fort Worth, Texas. I'm interviewing Mrs. Landowska to hear her experiences, feelings, and perceptions as a Holocaust survivor.

 Mrs. Landowska, let's begin by telling me some autobiographical information. For example, state your full name, when and where you were born, your education, and occupation.

Mrs. Landowska: I was born in Metz, France, April 18 or April 19, 1931. The question regarding birth is that

the documentation says one thing--we were twins, and one was born fifteen minutes before midnight and the other was born fifteen minutes after.

I celebrate my birthday on April 18, but all of my documentation says I was the one born on April 19. So there is [chuckles] some confusion there. I was born to Margaret Cameron Landowska, who was [a] Scot, came from Inverness, Scotland. She met my father, Jacob [pronounced YA-kob] Landowska, in Paris. She was dancing. I believe, they call it more of a *seco madonna* of the ballet, she was with Sadler's Wells [Theatre].

Rosen: Before you go on, let me ask you some questions here.

Landowska: Yes?

Rosen: Metz, France. Can you spell that, please?

Landowska: Oh, M-E-T-Zed. Or, -Z.

Rosen: Okay!

Landowska: Sorry.

Rosen: Your mother's maiden name was Cameron?

Landowska: Cameron. C-A-M-E-R-O-N.

Rosen: Your father's first name was--?

Landowska: Jacob.

Rosen: Jacob, or--?

Landowska: J-A-C-O-B, from the English.

Rosen: And you pronounced it earlier--

Landowska: Ya-kob.

Rosen: --in Hebrew?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Which would be spelled--?

Landowska: Y-A-K-O-B.

Rosen: Okay. Now you mentioned that your parents met in Paris, France, where your mother was--?

Landowska: Dancing, with Sadler's Wells at that time, a ballet company, S-A-D-L-E-R-S W-E-L-L-S. They had become the royal ballet company.

Rosen: Of--?

Landowska: Of England.

Rosen: Of England?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Okay.

Landowska: My father was playing, he was first violinist. I don't know which orchestra he was with at that time, but that's how they met; he was playing in the orchestra.

Rosen: Earlier, when you mentioned you were born on April 18 or April 19, you indicated you had a twin?

Landowska: [Quieter voice] Yes.

Rosen: Could you tell us a little bit about that? This is a twin--?

Landowska: Mirror twins. In other words, my natural part on the left side of my head, that was left-handed, her natural part's on the right side of her head and she was right-handed. And outside of that, we were pretty well identical, except of personality.

Rosen: What was your original name at birth?

Landowska: Alicia Maria.

Rosen: Could you spell that for me, please?

Landowska: A-L-I-C-I-A, and then Maria. And my sister was Margot, M-A-R-G-O-T, Maria.

Rosen: Okay. What religion were you?

Landowska: Jewish. My mother was a convert to Judaism. My mother had very bad timing.

Rosen: And your father?

Landowska: He was Jewish. The Mendelssohns and the Landowskas were rather reformed, and the two families were interwoven. My great-great-great-grandfather was Moses Mendelssohn, the philosopher. I get very confused about how many "greats" we have here, but his grandson was Felix Mendelssohn, the composer. The Landowskas, or Landowski, came out

of--Landowska is the female form, Landowski is the male form. They came from Poland, but they-- what we represented at the time of the Holocaust was six generations of musicians, from cantors to composers.

Rosen: Can you spell Mendelssohn, please?

Landowska: M-E-N-D-E-L-S-O-H-N [sic]. I believe that's it. And Felix is F-E-L-I-X. Moses is M-O-S-E-S.

Rosen: The Mendelssohn side of your family was from--? Which branch on your--?

Landowska: The Mendelssohns--Bartholdy, you mean--this is my father's mother.

Rosen: Okay. And you also mentioned Bartholdy?

Landowska: Yes, the Mendelssohn-Bartholdy [family]. It's a double name, actually.

Rosen: Can you spell Bartholdy?

Landowska: B-[A]-R-T-H-O-L-D-Y.

Rosen: Okay. Thank you.

Landowska: And--what I was getting at there before we got onto the spelling bee, that the family was very liberal in a religious sense. My father was probably more devout than most members of the family. My mother had been born Roman-Catholic

and had suffered ostracism, et cetera, in the part of Scotland that she came from.

Rosen: This is your mother?

Landowska: Yes. Because of the fact that she had one blue eye and one brown eye and was considered a witch. So she was very pleased to leave Roman-Catholicism behind.

Rosen: You mentioned that you were born in France, and that your mother was born in Scotland. Can you just--really quick, your father was born--?

Landowska: Leipzig, [Germany].

Rosen: In Leipzig?

Landowska: L-E-I-P-Z-I-G.

Rosen: In the country of--?

Landowska: Germany.

Rosen: Germany. Now, where were you raised during this time period?

Landowska: In Heidelberg. H-E-I-D-E-L-B-[E]-R-G, I think. And Berlin, B-E-R-L-I-N.

Rosen: So in Germany?

Landowska: [Nods]

Rosen: Did you have any other siblings besides your twin?

Landowska: Yes, I had a half-brother who was ten years older. His name was Abraham.

Rosen: Any other siblings?

Landowska: No.

Rosen: This half-brother, which half was he from?

Landowska: My father, and his mother died in childbirth.

Rosen: Okay. So for your father, this was his second marriage?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Okay. Okay, Ms. Landowska, you were mentioning that your family name has been Landowski and changed to Landowska?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Can you go over that again, please?

Landowska: Well, I don't--I've always used Landowska. My father used Landowska, even though it was the female form. I don't understand what happened along the lines, but I know that to some it's Landowski, and to some it's Landowska. But it is a female form, generally. In Poland, just the females call themselves that.

Rosen: Okay. You mentioned that you grew up in both Heidelberg and Berlin, Germany. Could you describe those early years in the 1930s growing up? What was life like?

Landowska: [Pauses] Very comfortable. We had a large home, we had a chauffeur, a maid. The family was a prestigious family. We had occasions where many people were in the house, all relatives, end-to-end. This was in Heidelberg. My father preferred that--he was a student of history. He said that we coursed--he talked of the curve in history and that we lived in course, through that curve, and that wherever we are is as barbaric in one point in time as it was in another. For instance, in the 1930s he thought that Germany was as barbaric as the Roman circuses had been. And he thought that it was constantly reoccurring.

I remember this, because I was my father's daughter in the sense that he liked to talk with me, my bedtime stories were on Greece and Rome. I grew up on the Parthenon, P-A-R-T-H-E-N-O-N [laughs]! And his idea of bedtime stories were stories on history. And he invited all of Socrates, Aristotle, and invited all of the philosophers into my mind's house. So, he made quite an impression on me, very young. I was the listener. So this is why I like to be around Heidelberg, the university there. [Editor's note:

Heidelberg University, a public research university founded in 1386, is the oldest university in Germany.] And his studies, as far as history was concerned.

Rosen: Which of your--were you closer to one of your parents than the other?

Landowska: Oh quite, my father.

Rosen: You mentioned that you had two homes, Heidelberg and Berlin, and that you liked being around Heidelberg and the university. How--?

Landowska: Oh, we had an apartment in Berlin. My father played with the Berlin Philharmonic, and he was a first violinist, and then occasionally he was conductor. At that time, Stanislaus Richter was the conductor. S-T-A-N-I-S-L-A-U-S Richter, R-I-C-H-T-E-R.

Rosen: Thank you.

Landowska: And my father would occasionally stand in for him, he did first violinist. And so we lived in an apartment in Berlin and split our time between these places. I never went to public school. Never. I was tutored along with my sister, and my brother was away at conservatory in Munich studying cello. And at home we practiced, that's

what we did. We were family and that's one reason why we couldn't go to regular school, because we had instruments.

Rosen: You said you practiced, what was it that you practiced?

Landowska: Harpsichord and piano. When I was four I was playing four hours a day, when I was five, was five hours a day. Six, six hours a day. So: discipline.

Rosen: So your family made two homes, an apartment in Berlin and a house in Heidelberg.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: So you spent most of your time in one of those than the other? Most of your time, where?

Landowska: Probably more time in Heidelberg.

Rosen: Okay. What was your Jewish background like at that time, your religious background?

Landowska: Interesting, really. Because the religious background was my mother went through all the ceremonies on Friday night, my father also. We did very little, we had very little to do with going to--I don't remember going to a synagogue, sure, that much when I was young. But I remembered I had [a] home, and I remember the occasions, Yom

Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, and--although I was never the youngest child. Being a twin and the oldest of the twins I was never the youngest child [laughs]!

Rosen: So you celebrated the holidays at home?

Landowska: Yes. And we had family come in. My memory about this is probably not as clear. You're talking-- you're talking to a young child right now. And my memories of my father are probably my clearest memories, although my mother gave me my poetry, which remained with me the longest.

Rosen: You mentioned family would come over for the holidays. Did you have much of a family, in terms of numbers of cousins or relatives?

Landowska: Oh, 200 or some in Germany.

Rosen: In Germany alone?

Landowska: Yes. Of course they didn't all arrive! Those were occasions, but there were a number--now I'm very blank on most of the family, I'm the only one left.

Rosen: Out of the 200 or so relatives?

Landowska: Yes, I think it was 233 was the count. But I'm the only one.

Rosen: You mentioned the count's 233, what count are you talking about?

Landowska: When checking down on all my relatives, which we did at one time, my adopted father, trying to find whether I had any living relations, and we could not find any--

Rosen: When was this?

Landowska: --within about two or three generations, and this was [in the] late 1940s.

Rosen: After the Holocaust?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Do you remember what organization--or, did you go through an organization to check?

Landowska: I think I went through some organization in Canada; we were living there then but I've forgotten, it was in Montreal. But at that time-- I'm taking a jump now on the continuity here, after the Holocaust, and you may or may not have run into this with interviewing people, everyone did not want to hear from us. And it didn't make any difference to us if they were Gentiles or Jews, *they did not want to hear*. So we had to repress a great deal, and in my case I was adopted by a man who really put me back together again,

but at the expense of some of my memory and repressing and "This did not happen, forget it, go on," type of thing.

Rosen: We'll get--I want you to talk more about that as we go on through the interview.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: In growing up in Germany in the 1930s, you talked about your family was rather prosperous and prominent in the music world--

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: --and it was comfortable, very comfortable. Did you experience any discrimination as a Jew?

Landowska: [Pauses] No, I experienced what I thought was betrayal when--I was very close to the servants in the house. Closer in some respects than to my mother. And the cook, the chauffeur, and they just deserted us in a day. Suddenly they were not there. And that was very difficult for me, because I used to stand in the seat in the car besides the chauffeur with my arm around his neck. I mean, he was like a father to me! Or an uncle or something. And then suddenly they were not there anymore.

Rosen: When you say suddenly they were not there--

Landowska: In my memory, they were just not there. I was young, they disappeared.

Rosen: Do you remember when that was, what you're talking about?

Landowska: [Sighs] It was--well, everything happened so quickly to me, and about the time that my father went and some men came--my sister and I would sit on the stairs and we would look through French doors in the drawing room. Well, at this time we were sitting on the stairs and these men came, and my father went out, met them, and my mother got him his coat, put a scarf around his neck, kissed him, and that was the last [pauses] we saw of him.

Rosen: The last--?

Landowska: And so he left, and I can't tell you the sequence, whether they left before he did or whether they left right after he did, the servants. Then they were gone.

Rosen: We're going to back up just a moment here. The neighborhood you lived in, do you have any recollections of that? In either Berlin or in Heidelberg?

Landowska: Not really. Lots of trees, you know, and iron fences. And I, I've seen them in London, similar ones. And--

Rosen: Do you remember any of your neighbors?

Landowska: --and, no. No. We were--[pauses]. There were some other children that played with us, lived close by. But [pauses] they weren't there either. It was just one of those things. Between [ages] six and eight, the whole world changed.

Rosen: Between 19--?

Landowska: No, my age.

Rosen: Between the age--

Landowska: Of six and eight. You see, you're talking to a young child there. Things that I had, I just didn't see after that. I didn't see family, either.

Rosen: Your friends, were they Jewish, or Christian--? Do you remember?

Landowska: No, I don't. It was not such an important thing.

Rosen: So as a little girl, do you remember any kind of --there being any kinds of difficulties with being Jewish?

Landowska: I remember going with my mother to official buildings, and sitting on benches, and people

making, sort of--you know, just looking at us or saying something or pulling away from us. You see, my mother was so strong, and my mother was a British subject, and that in itself put us apart. That and the fact that she was a very beautiful woman, physically. And she was accustomed to getting her own way, and she was accustomed to-- she just felt that we would sit there on the benches long enough and they would pay attention to her, and my father would come from wherever they had taken him and everything would be all right. And that was my impression of what was going on with us at that time. [Pauses] Of course she should have left, but she wouldn't leave him.

Rosen: So your memories of going to public buildings with your mother was after your father was taken away?

Landowska: Right.

Rosen: Not before?

Landowska: But see--no, I was doing that--we were doing that all the time.

Rosen: Do you recall your parents ever talking about the politics in Germany, or what the future--?

Landowska: [Chuckles] My father was a nationalistic German, he was very strongly for Germany. Not for Hitler,

I remember that. But you see, he [thought] there was this crazy man, and he would go away, because people would learn that it was crazy.

Rosen: You're saying your father would refer to Hitler as the crazy man?

Landowska: Right, yes.

Rosen: Do you remember if your father ever experienced any kind of discrimination as a Jew?

Landowska: Oh, well, he didn't have a job anymore, I remember that. And he said it would all change, everything would be fine. And that he--he was more at home. He was a *geigenbaumeister* on--

Rosen: What?

Landowska: A violin was his hobby. He made violins, he fixed it. A *geigenbaumeister*, it's one who repairs violins and strings them, makes them, and so he returned to that in workshop.

Rosen: Can you spell that, please?

Landowska: [Laughs]

Rosen: [Laughs] We're trying to help you, the transcriber.

Landowska: G-U-G-E-N-B-A-U-M-E-I-S-T-E-R [sic].

Rosen: I hope the transcriber appreciates this!
[Editor's note: She did.]

Landowska: [Laughs] Typically I'm a good speller, but I have a feeling that I've gone off on a few of these!
[Laughs] But he repaired violins. He was doing a lot of that at this time. And talking to me, all the time, talking. I would sit on his workbench and listen to him, and he, he felt--all I can remember is he did a great deal of talking to me about politics, but I didn't know what he was talking about. But I do remember that there was a crazy man, and that he would go away in time, that people would get tired of it, get him out of power.

Rosen: Do you remember when your father lost his job?

Landowska: [Pauses] It's probably around 1936 or 1937, in there. I think 1937.

Rosen: In the meantime, did your mother do anything, as far as having a profession to earn money?

Landowska: No, she sweated a lot. My mother was a dancer, first and foremost, a very strong woman physically. And she and Margot were constantly working at the *barre*. We had a ballet *barre* at the house. And that's B-A-R-R-E. And they worked out constantly at that. I was physically not too strong when I was young. Which is rather ironic,

because the only one who survived was the weakest one. And so there was enough money there, there was no problem as far as I was concerned. My mother--you know, certain things were disappearing, it seemed, in the house.

Rosen: Such as--?

Landowska: Silver. You know, silver tea services--those things were being moved, and looking back I think that they were sold.

Rosen: By--?

Landowska: By my mother. But she just said that they were put away because she didn't want to polish them [chuckles]. But that was all that I was aware of, and the fact that my mother couldn't cook and [suddenly she] had to. And the house was large, and she just shut off rooms.

Rosen: You said your father lost his job in approximately 1936 or 1937. He was the sole breadwinner for the family. At this point your mother danced as a hobby or just to keep in shape with your sister. But your family had either savings or through selling off possessions, made enough money to keep afloat and your father began working as a violin-maker. You mentioned that your father was taken away by

some men. Do you remember--do you know who those men were who took him away?

Landowska: No, they were just--policemen, that's what I--

Rosen: Were they--?

Landowska: They were policemen.

Rosen: Do you remember if they were uniformed?

Landowska: No, they weren't. They were not uniformed. And because I can vividly recall, that memory is very good.

Rosen: What year was that, approximately, when they--?

Landowska: Oh, 1938.

Rosen: So either a year or two after he lost his job.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Can you describe that in a little bit greater detail as far as do you remember the time of year he was taken? The time of day?

Landowska: It was cold, and it was dark outside. But my impression is that it was late afternoon, and it was cold because of what he was wearing. They wore hats then, and a scarf and a heavy, heavy dark coat.

Rosen: "They," being--?

Landowska: Men, you know.

Rosen: The men who came to take him?

Landowska: Well, everybody, you know. And--[pauses] I'm--it was, I would imagine--you're making me think now. I think it was about in November or somewhere around there. But it could have even been the early part of the year, I don't recall. I think it was probably November 1938. [Editor's note: *Kristallnacht*, or Crystal Night (also referred to as the Night of Broken Glass), the pogrom against Jews and Jewish-owned buildings, stores, and synagogues in Nazi Germany and Austria carried out by Nazi forces, was November 9-10, 1938. Broken glass littered the streets in the aftermath, lending to its name.]

Rosen: You saw your father actually taken away?

Landowska: Yes. Well, it was very, it was very--my father was a gentleman. It was like that, it was a very quiet going, and nobody was being nasty, mean, or anything! He just, he just went with them.

Rosen: The people who came for him, or--?

Landowska: Yes. They were--they were not uncivil, they just were not talking.

Rosen: And your father put up no resistance?

Landowska: No, no.

Rosen: At that point when you--

Landowska: He probably thought it was another crazy thing that would pass.

Rosen: Did you have any words with him before he left, or he with you?

Landowska: No, no. He looked at me. And--I don't recall anything else.

Rosen: Do you remember how you felt at that moment, or what your thinking was?

Landowska: [Pauses] I was afraid. But it was an intuitive type of thing that came from my mother's feelings, something that was passing between them. But I was, I was afraid.

Rosen: Afraid for whom or for what?

Landowska: [Softly] for my father. I adored my father. He was--he was wonderful, bright, he was everything to me. And I never did see him again.

Rosen: Now where was this? Was this in Heidelberg or was this--

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: What happened to your home, your apartment in Berlin in the meantime? Did you still maintain that?

Landowska: No, no. No.

Rosen: What happened to the apartment--?

Landowska: I don't know. That was grown-up business, more or less. I don't know anything about it, we just never went back there.

Rosen: When your father was taken in 1938, were you aware of any other people being rounded up at that time?

Landowska: Yes. Yes, I was aware that [pauses] other--I had an aunt come to visit, and I remember an argument about leaving the country with my mother, and my mother was a stubborn Scot, and she'd just stand firm, because there were a quite a few people that came. And Juana [?] felt that she should get out of the country. And she just would not leave. Because you see she *could* have, it was no problem, because she was British and we could leave.

Rosen: Now, was this after your father was taken?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Let's go back for a moment. Before your father was taken, was there ever any discussion in the family about leaving the country?

Landowska: Not as far as I knew, no. Because he would not leave Germany, no.

Rosen: Before your father was taken, were you aware of any other people ever being rounded up by the Germans?

Landowska: [Pauses] No, the sequence--I was aware of some, but it was--the sequence of events, I don't recall whether it was before or after.

Rosen: Do you remember, had any German police or representatives of the government visited your house previous to the time when your father was taken away?

Landowska: I remember that there were some friend of my father's that was wearing a uniform, would come to the house, and--my father thought he was funny. He thought the whole things was funny, you know, it was going to pass and this all rather [dark] sense of humor, you know. It would pass. And I remember him laughing about this uniform that he always liked to dress up [in], and--I can't remember the name now, but I keep thinking it was Hugo or something like that. But he always liked to dress up.

Rosen: This friend of your father?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Do you remember what kind of uniform Hugo wore?

Landowska: It was black, [a] black uniform with quite a lot of silver stuff on it. [Laughs] It was very pretty!

Rosen: So in 1938, maybe in November or so, your father was taken away. Did you ever hear from him again? You mentioned you did not see him again.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Did you ever hear anything from him?

Landowska: My mother got a postcard from him. Because I remember her sharing this postcard to us saying, "This is our--" It was not--it was just some writing on it, you know. But he was fine.

Rosen: Do you remember where the postcard came from?

Landowska: [Pauses] No. There was a red brick building on it. I remember looking at that and wondering whether it was a hotel, or what, my father had travelled and would send us a postcard. But we did get one postcard. Nothing after that.

Rosen: Do you remember how much time passed before that postcard had come?

Landowska: [Pauses] Oh, it was some time, seems to me. I mean, because in my mind, it's, we--you're talking about a child here. You do one heck of a lot of sitting around on benches, you know, and so it seems like a long time, and we didn't know where he was. And my mother always knew someone important who was going to influence something,

and so we had to run around and sit and wait. And in there somewhere, in the midst of all this, [unclear] a postcard arrived. And then she said, "Well, now we know, now we go to so-and-so and [unclear] someone else." And it was just always fruitless.

Rosen: In the mean time, you have mentioned you had a half-brother, Abraham off at--

Landowska: Yes. He disappeared.

Rosen: --school. He dis--you mentioned, now, he disappeared, from where?

Landowska: From the conservatory in Munich. He was studying music--in fact he had already performed. He was a good musician. And he--he disappeared. Later, Alan Davis, who adopted me, said that when he had searched, that he did talk with someone who said that *Abram* had received word that he was going to be picked up, and he ran. But he we was a young man. I mean, he was, like, eighteen around that time.

Rosen: You used the word *Abram*--

Landowska: Abraham. My brother.

Rosen: --the Hebrew [version] of Abraham.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: And that would be spelled--?

Landowska: A-B-R-A-M.

Rosen: Thank you. So you--it's only after the war that you heard that your half-brother had run when he found out that he was--

Landowska: --he was going to be picked up.

Rosen: In the meantime, it's 1938.

Landowska: So it was around that time.

Rosen: Do you have any knowledge of what was going on at that time with *Abram*, or Abraham?

Landowska: No, and we were curious. But he was home, he was home after my father was taken. And he was always arguing with my mother. He was, I would say, a fighter, more of a fighter type, and she believed, like my father had, that everything was going to work out. The Mendelssohns had been in Germany for well over 200 years, my family. And it was just bad, there was no way. Too many connections, too many people who could help. And for some reason he did not believe that. He believed that it was going to be bad.

Rosen: Abraham believed?

Landowska: Yes. And he was for getting--for her getting out. He wanted to stay and fight for [unclear], she

said he was going to get--I remember they were screaming at each other at one point, that he was going to get everybody killed.

Rosen: Who was going to get everybody killed?

Landowska: My brother. He was going to get us all killed with something that he was doing--

Rosen: Maybe--

Landowska: --when he had come home.

Rosen: Your brother, Abraham, stated that he was going to get the family, you, your sister--

Landowska: No. My mother, in anger, shouted [that] at him.

Rosen: Your mother, oh.

Landowska: That he was going to get everyone killed. That's all I remember.

Rosen: And then your brother--did he remain with the family?

Landowska: No, he left and he went back to school. And then shortly after that, I guess, [we] received word that he was on some list and he just disappeared.

Rosen: Did you ever hear anything from him again--

Landowska: No.

Rosen: --or at that point?

Landowska: No.

Rosen: All right, so now it's late 1938 or so. Your father's disappeared, your half-brother's disappeared. How are you feeling about all this?

Landowska: [Pauses] Not too secure. Afraid. Because I didn't have a lot of confidence in my mother in the first place. I was a pretty good thinker when I was young, and I was afraid. And my mother just seemed to be more hysterical every day, it seemed, in terms of always hearing of somebody who could help get him out of jail or wherever he was. She kept saying that he was in the [unclear], in jail. And that it was all a mistake. And he had never hurt anyone in his life, which was true. But at the same time, we had come from there--suddenly, we didn't even have a car at that point, and I mean, before we started off with our chauffeur and cook and the whole, everything. Now, we didn't even have a car. And I was never aware of not getting food or anything, but I was aware of my mother worrying about it.

Rosen: Worrying about--?

Landowska: Worrying about where the money was going to come from, for food and so forth. To begin with, I remember just thinking that it was her poor

cooking, that's what we were talking about! But it wasn't that, it was the fact that she was worrying about whether we were going to have enough food to put on the table.

Rosen: You say that you were afraid. What were you afraid about?

Landowska: [Pauses] I don't remember the incidents, but I remember being aware that people didn't like me much. And I didn't understand that, and there was an incident. I can't recall, but it was an older person, because I remember the thinking, I remember the memory of what I thought, and I thought, "Why can't they see we're children?" I thought, "What have we done, because--?" You see, when you have a twin you think in "we" a lot, and "What have we done?" I just, I was aware that there was an injustice here, and that there was some very demented thinking, but I can't remember the incident that caused it.

Rosen: You mentioned that the--well, in being afraid it sounds like perhaps you were afraid for yourself, then, at this point?

Landowska: Oh yes, yes. Because you see, as I said, I didn't have a lot of confidence in my mother.

Rosen: Why didn't you have--well, you mentioned she was acting hysterical.

Landowska: My mother was not a thinker. My mother was beautiful and she was a nice ornament, but she was so wrapped up in body--nowadays we do "the body physical," but there wasn't that much then. But she was really wrapped up in all of that. And I didn't think that she was altogether right. And I still don't think that she was too swift.

Rosen: When you heard your half-brother and her arguing, and your half-brother advocating to leave the country, do you remember what your thoughts were at that time?

Landowska: Oh, whatever--I was so male-dominated, probably, my father was perfect, my brother was perfect, you know. My thinking was that he was right, he was the right one. And--[pauses]. So--

Rosen: Did you and your mother ever talk about leaving? Did you challenge or ask your mother, or talk to her about--?

Landowska: Well, yes. I didn't, Margot did. And she said, "When are we going to go to your house, you know, to your home, where you live?"

Rosen: Margot had asked this?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: And when she said "your home," she was referring to--?

Landowska: To Scotland. And it was, "When your father comes back." [Softly] "When your father comes back." Of course he never did come back.

Rosen: You mentioned the car was gone at this point now, you no longer had a car. What happened?

Landowska: The car was just taken away, and it wasn't--I believe it was confiscated by someone, because it was a nice, big car, and I--my mother made such a bloody nuisance of herself, you know, she fought every step of the way. But I remember that particularly because she was really livid over them taking the car. Which really didn't make too much difference because she didn't drive.

Rosen: Do you remember who took the car?

Landowska: No, just a man came and took the car. In uniform, though, but I don't know whether it was a chauffeur's uniform or whether it was a military uniform. I just remember it was a green uniform.

Rosen: What was the relationship between you and your sister like? You talked about you and your respect for your father and your--

Landowska: It was very interesting. There was a symbiosis there that--I was very late to walk, and I think that my mother didn't like me too much because of that. I was not physically strong, I didn't talk. I was about three, between three and four when they finally forced me to walk and forced me to talk, because Margot brought me everything. I always maintained that I was the smarter of the two of us, because she always waited on me. Our attachment was such that it was always a wonder to everyone, because she seemed to know what I wanted without my ever saying anything.

Finally it was decided--they hauled me around to various different doctors, and I remember that, and it was very embarrassing to them, the story that went in the family, and I recall it being recounted numerous times--they finally hit a doctor who said, "This is the laziest child I've ever seen. You get her up on her feet and you make her walk. You don't give her anything except if she asks for it, and there will be no trouble." And that's exactly what they did, and there was no trouble from then on. I started speaking in two languages and asking for things. But [before]

I didn't have to, so I sat and did a lot of thinking.

Rosen: Your--what languages did you talk in?

Landowska: Of course, my mother's language was English. I have to laugh because everyone says, "Well, you speak such good English!" That was my mother's language. My mother spoke that language. And my mother also spoke French fluently. Her French, I think, was better than her English. But--and German. English and German were my languages.

Rosen: Your father's name, Landowska--

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: What ethnic background is that?

Landowska: Oh, go back a couple of generations of Poland.

Rosen: Did you have any relatives in Poland then?

Landowska: Probably some, I don't know. We had lost track of those, really.

Rosen: You didn't maintain ties with relatives in Poland then?

Landowska: No, no.

Rosen: You've talked about the possibility of leaving Germany to go to, to the United Kingdom.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: And I was wondering if there was ever any talk about leaving Germany to possibly go to Poland with family in Poland also.

Landowska: Oh no, no. There was a lot of snobbery at that time between the German Jews and the Polish Jews. The German Jews really felt that they were superior to the Polish Jews, and I definitely remember hearing about that [chuckles]! And so, I think, my father's family, they had stepped upward going to Germany, and then they had married into a musical family, you know, he had--and so that was my grandfather. And so, no, they wanted to leave their Polish ties behind.

Rosen: Okay, so we're in 1938. Your father's taken, now your brother's taken. Your mother and you are going to--

Landowska: The main thing I remember is 1939.

Rosen: Let's pick up there, then.

Landowska: Yes. And the outbreak of the--suddenly everything was happening very quickly. And I guess--now knowing history as I do, you know, Germans walked into Poland, and then of course suddenly France and England are allies declaring war on Germany, and my mother is *persona non grata*. She was in

deep trouble because she was a British subject, they were at war with Britain and she had not left.

Rosen: Did your mother ever acquire German citizenship?

Landowska: No. No. I think it was a lot of ambivalence there. She--and I see it now, [after] the time I spent in Scotland. I mean, they're very nationalistic people. And there are many things that she had stepped up, upward, in her social status in life by marrying my father. But at the same time, her home was Scotland, and even though she became a Jew, if you scratched the surface there you had a Roman-Catholic underlying that. It was interesting because--so to her, there was no way that she would go--she would just go with what was familiar to her. And she had friends. Still, you know, she could go home, which is the way she looked at Scotland, which was home.

Rosen: She *could* but she chose not to?

Landowska: Yes. Well, she was going to go home when she got out, and then they'd be safe, everything would be okay there until it blew over.

Rosen: You mentioned that scratching the surface, she was a Roman-Catholic.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Under the top layer. Was there any talk about raising you and your sister, then, as Roman-Catholic, particularly after your father was taken away?

Landowska: No, that was not honest. She was honest. She was a very black-and-white woman. Very. I mean, there was right, there was wrong, there was a morality involved that was, "Okay, this is what religion you are. This is--you're going to stick to it." And to her that would not have been honest to my father, to what she had taken on.

Rosen: What was your nationality?

Landowska: [Chuckles] I probably looked on myself as a German. I can't [be otherwise], because of my father. Now--I don't know. To me, because I dislike all these Germans [now] to such an extent that there's no way that you can get me to sit here and say, "Well, I was German." But probably, in being honest, that was probably how I looked on myself [then].

Rosen: I was curious how the Germans looked on you in particular in that you were born in France of a Scottish woman and a German man. If your

citizenship would indicate that you were French, or if you were considered German and what part that might have played.

Landowska: At one point in my life that was a very important consideration, because [I] was adopted by a Canadian, able to claim U.K., German, French. So I threw it all out and came to the United States. I never was very good at making some of these big decisions. But I just--to me, it's always forward. But I have Germans who looked at me and they looked on me as a Jew. It was just a--I believe after [the passage of the] Nuremburg [Laws in 1935], there was hardly any citizenship for Jews. And so, you know, we lost all of that, and most of my life in Germany I was a non-citizen. I'm supposed to be subhuman.

Rosen: I'm asking about that because in some sense, one can't lose what they don't present--

Landowska: That's right.

Rosen: --to begin with. So if you were *not* considered a German but a French person to begin with, then you might have had a different experience than one who was a German.

Landowska: Well, I think that really what they--I think that they looked upon us as British subjects. I do, because of my mother. Constantly referring to all of us as British subjects.

Rosen: Did you have many friends during this time period?

Landowska: No, no. Didn't need any, had my sister. And we were that close.

Rosen: Let's go back to 1939, then. You were talking about the events started moving quite rapidly with the invasion of Poland, the beginning of World War II and your mother being considered a *persona non grata*. What were your experiences then?

Landowska: [Pauses] Well, we start going to school, for one thing, which was sort of interesting.

Rosen: Well, let's back up here. You mentioned that you'd been privately tutored in the early years. During this whole time period, after your father was taken, were you still under a private tutor?

Landowska: Yes, by some Jewish people who came in and my mother paid them and they taught us. And they had --the Posners. Posner was the name. They had been professors at the University of Heidelberg, a man and a wife, and they had lost their jobs, and so they came and they taught us. Somewhere along the

line we lost them, but they were having classes at the synagogue. And so we went to the synagogue and then, then it was different.

I think that's probably why things moved so quickly for me, because everybody was scared, they were--you know, there were always rumors running around. We were in touch, at that point, with the [unclear] in our area, and then it became very scary. Because--and then that was when I learned that they had villages where you went and you worked, and all I could think about was that everybody was being relocated to places where you could work. And all I could think about was my mother [laughter], she didn't have anything that she could do! She couldn't cook, she couldn't sew, she couldn't--all she could do was exercise. And [laughter] I became very aware that she was--we were going to be out in left field unless somebody learned how to do something around here! And nobody knew.

Anyway--and I was the only one that was worrying about it, because my twin sister [was] a very happy person. Lots of life, lots of vitality. And didn't worry about anything, didn't think

about anything too hard. Once in a while--and if it came to her mind, she challenged on it, was [that] I thought a great deal. And--but anyway, at this time we came in contact with others, and it seemed to be a constant flowing mass of people disappearing, people coming in, people leaving, that sort of thing. So we didn't make any really strong ties, but it was a period of time for me that I felt--strangely, I felt a little bit more secure, because there were other people out there that were experiencing this, and there was some caring, some emotions that there was learning, which is, for me, necessary. And so this was part of the moving fast, you know, a lot of things going on.

And then my mother got these cards, these cards that we were supposed to [sighs] go to this area, and then they would take us so that we could be relocated. And--good admiration for my mother, now, looking back on that. Because it was as though she suddenly knew, and we were supposed to--we could bring a suitcase full of things that you could take with you, and my mother didn't take anything. [Pauses] Just warm coats. And she still

had a fur coat, and she just took a heavy wool coat. I remember that, so well, to [unclear]--

[End of Track 1. Begin Track 2]

Rosen: You said you admired your mother because she seemed to suddenly know. What is it that she suddenly knew?

Landowska: [Pauses] I think she knew she was going to die, very shortly. And she made her decisions about what were important to her. And for her, it was her daughters. She had to have--and I mean, and that was the practical intelligence of it. Maybe I'm reading into it, but I don't see it that way. She kept her arms free. She had two daughters that she was looking after, and she could not be bothered carting a lot of other things. And I guess she thought she was going to live in there with us or just look after us. She--[pauses]. We ended up on the train.

Rosen: Let's back up a little bit before we get to that. You were mentioning that in 1939 you began going to a synagogue for education?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Did you also go to a public school for education?

Landowska: No, no. That was--we could not go to a public school then.

Rosen: Okay.

Landowska: We couldn't--we were not acceptable. And Jews were not acceptable as teachers. So what they were doing is they were teaching in the synagogue, as far as I remember.

Rosen: It's interesting that you mention that even after your father was taken away, you still had a private tutor until 1939--

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: --that was prior to a lot of declining of the money in the family, but your mother still provided an education you, a private education. I wonder--and you may have alluded to this already, if she was still providing for a private education that was costing money--well, let me ask you. Did she pay for the tutors to come in and educate you?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: With that in mind, if she was still spending money and there was no money coming in, if she was aware of what the future held--

Landowska: I've looked back, and my rather brutal assessment of my mother as a child--I just don't know how valid it was, because toward the end there, she just calmed down, became very practical, and was really focused on us, her daughters. And I think that the education was important because she adored my father, it would have been very important to him. And I think that that was it.

See, my mother did not have a formal education after the age of around twelve, because she was taken out of the Highlands [by an] agent [unclear], dancing, and entered Sadler's Wells where she learned wonderful French and how to dance. But she really didn't have a lot of other things going for her. She loved poetry, and she knew poetry. But she had managed to get a lot--I don't know whether it might have been--she never said anything--but she thought, I think that sometimes my father went on and on--she thought it was funny, how he went on. And his interest in history in things that were past [were amusing to her], and she was a practical woman. So--[pauses]

But I do think I experienced in her--and of course it might be in light of the last couple of

days of our life together--I came to respect her. That woman was so physically strong, because she ended up practically holding us upright for a couple of days, in her arms. And then when we arrived at Dachau--

Rosen: Well, let's back up before we get to Dachau.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: When you were in the public school--actually, actually not public school, you were in the synagogue school.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: You said you felt a certain amount of security.

Landowska: Yes. Just in numbers.

Rosen: Had you ever had exposure to a very large Jewish environment before that?

Landowska: No.

Rosen: So this was your first time?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: And there's an irony here that actually the Holocaust made you more aware, perhaps, of--or brought Jews together in this case.

Landowska: Oh yes.

Rosen: In your case, whereas otherwise, it was--

Landowska: That's right.

Rosen: --it wasn't as unified. When you heard stories, then, of other Jews at this school, of what was going on, how did you feel about all that you heard?

Landowska: [Pauses]

Rosen: Let me--perhaps I can make this more clear. You've talked about a rather sheltered and isolated background growing up, not many friends for your parents, for yourself as far hearing what others might say, associating with others, not really being aware of all that was going on [unclear] coming in from other people and friends. Now you're having this experience.

Landowska: Some of it was quite horrifying to me. The primary one I really remember is this little boy, Elmer was his last name, telling me that they had gotten a postcard from his uncle, and around the stamp was written, "They cut out my tongue." And just the horror of that, you know, it's like what kids would experience, I don't know, nowadays, [in] maybe a horror movie of some sort. But the actual horror of it was just--and there was a fascination to it, but at the same time [I was] horrified.

That memory has stuck with me all these years. I'd like to get rid of it. And I don't even know whether it was true or not, because he was sort of enjoying it, a certain relish. Kids are kids, you know, no matter what is going on around them.

But I was hearing some of these stories, people, you know. And so there were rumors running around that it wasn't fun out there, that there was something besides relocation, that if these people who were running things thought that you were not the right kind of person, that you could really suffer. And at the same time, I was--I mean, because that horror about his uncle, so easily transferred onto my father who talked a great deal, and, you know--so I was afraid. But at the same time there were more people there, it was--there was a certain protection in the numbers, I guess. For security, more security, in all those numbers. Because one didn't think of all those numbers dying.

Rosen: Did you think about people dying at that point?

Landowska: [Pauses] Yes, because some people had been killed by mobs, you know. This was the first time I'd

heard of *Kristallnacht*, K-R-[I]-S-T-A-L-L-N-A-C-H-T. That had just gone right beyond me, I had not experienced that. So now I was hearing the stories about people being beaten or their grandfather or so-and-so was pushed out of a window and died, you know. They're not people that I knew, but I was aware that it's [happening]. Horrible stories. And I, such a [unclear] in me, I guess it came from the Scot side, I don't know, but a certain [pause] personal importance--

Rosen: How do you--?

Landowska: You know, if they're important, if--you have to have something going if they're making this much fuss over you, that was [laughter], that was really what I thought as a child. But we must be important.

Rosen: When you say "we--?"

Landowska: As a people, Jews.

Rosen: So you, you were aware that you were being singled out as Jews?

Landowska: Oh yes. Oh yes. And that I didn't quite understand, because I--it took me a while to realize that there was any difference. Because I experienced--I guess I experienced *me* as a German,

through my father. I experienced, more than anything else, I experienced myself as a budding musician. Not everybody my age could take a harpsichord apart and put it back together again! And so that's where my identity was. Then, now, it was as though I was also a Jew, and this was a racial thing to me. Because I did not see it any other way. I was seeing it as the Germans saw it because it was a reflection. It was racial. So, you know, I did not see it as a religious problem. I saw it as we were a different race. Somehow or other. It's very vague in my mind, but that's what I saw.

Rosen: Before your mother enrolled you in school at the synagogue, how aware were you of the cause for the problem being that you were Jewish?

Landowska: [Pause] It wasn't much. I wasn't that aware of it. No. I was aware that my father talked too much on politics! [Laughter] That's what I was aware of. So I didn't see. I guess it was quite an insular existence. Quite apart. But now suddenly I was seeing a lot of other people in the same boat, and it really had nothing to do with history and the politics of his--it had to do with how

other people saw you. It didn't have to do with who you really were. It was how other people saw you. I did a lot of thinking about it, and that was my conclusion.

Rosen: At this time when you began attending the school synagogue, what were you feeling as you heard these different stories, as far as--you really talk about being afraid for your father.

Landowska: Yes. But, well, there was a certain importance because my father was already taken, and a lot of them had their fathers with them, had their close relations. So we were somewhat important because our father had been important enough to disappear, if you understand that. There wasn't enough time for people to sit around and say, "Oh, the poor thing." Because there were a lot of "poor things." We were just that much more important than others.

Rosen: It almost sounds like you're talking about a sort of sense of pride of being important.

Landowska: Yes. I was a child, you see? And children think differently and there was this pride in our family. That's why, you know, from the beginning, why it would all blow over, because no one was going to do that sort of thing to the Mendelssohns

and the Landowskas. I mean, nothing was going to happen!

Rosen: Did you think very much about *being* Jewish, up to this time? As far as identification with Judaism?

Landowska: Yes, on the occasions. Not on the daily [basis]. For instance, quite different from the way my children have been reared with [the teaching], "It is written that you feed your animal before you feed yourself." So therefore you must feed this animal first--everything in life relating to the Torah. But we weren't raised that way, no. But I did have my identity as a Jew, but there were all sorts of different kinds of Jewishness, really. [Pauses] I'm just thinking of all the degrees, from being *kashrut* to being, you know, to being a completely Koshered Jew.

Rosen: *Kashrut*?

Landowska: Yes. And to, to being a--it's like a *yeshiba*--oh, Y-E-S-H-I-B-A.

Rosen: Do you want to spell *kashrut* too?

Landowska: K-A-S-H-R-U-T, something like that.

Rosen: Thank you.

Landowska: [Laughter] Close, I think. But you see, my education as a Jew [is] certainly lacking now. I

have a daughter that--oh wow! [Laughter] She can give you chapter and verse on how to spell it and everything else! But we--and that was some of it too, you see, at that time. Because in Germany, when I was young, there wasn't any *Bat Mitzvah* for girls, or *Bar Mitzvah*, and young men were taught, but women weren't. So there wasn't near the identification, and I think--I remember, I remember hearing at that time, just one of the things I pondered, that we were being punished because we had not paid attention, and that we had gone away from Judaism and the practice of Judaism. We were too liberal in Germany. And I've heard that. I heard that then.

Rosen: Who did you hear it from?

Landowska: In the synagogue, yes. I pondered on it and decided they were all wet, because you know, we'd just be in more trouble! [Laughter] [At age] eight and nine, I could figure it out [Laughter]!

Rosen: Mrs. Landowska, do you--do you think when you went to the synagogue that instilled greater pride or lesser pride in being Jewish?

Landowska: No, it was--my Jewishness became a little more rounded instead of being on a plane of [only

celebrating] holidays and so forth. It became more of a daily thing. I couldn't get away from it, but it became more part of me.

Rosen: I want to backtrack to the fallout here. When your father was taken away, was there any explanation given for why he was being picked up, that you recall?

Landowska: They wanted to question him regarding his political points of view. Yes.

Rosen: So it was here at the synagogue, then, that you realized it wasn't just his political points of view?

Landowska: That's right, that there was something very wrong, and that's the way I looked at it. [Pauses] I'm blessed, because even when I was young, I had very good reasoning powers, and did not understand other children that didn't think and reason as I did. My sister was one of them!

Rosen: You mentioned about your mother receiving a letter informing her of the requirements for the three of you.

Landowska: As I recall, it was just a green card, like this [shows card to interviewer]. Seems to me that it was, like a green card.

Rosen: When you say "like this--?"

Landowska: Well, I'm thinking three-by-five [inches], something like that. Maybe a little larger than that, yes. But--

Rosen: It was a green card--?

Landowska: --it said that we were going to be relocated.

Rosen: When did your mother receive that letter, or that card, approximately?

Landowska: [Sighs] I believe that that was around--it was the fall of 1939.

Rosen: Shortly after the invasion of Poland and the beginning of the war?

Landowska: [Softly] Yes.

Rosen: Do you have any idea about how much time you had to prepare for the relocation?

Landowska: Oh, very little time. It was just a matter of days, a few days.

Rosen: Was this card something that she received in the mail? Or by person?

Landowska: Yes, it was in the mail, I believe.

Rosen: Did it indicate where you were going to be relocated to?

Landowska: We went to a place where we were put on trucks and then we were taken to another place where we got on the train.

Rosen: How did--?

Landowska: And we just went.

Rosen: How did your mother, you, and your sister Margot prepare?

Landowska: We didn't. We--[sighs]. The whole thing was just so fatalistic. It was done quietly with grace. I mean, I can remember playing the harpsichord the night before we left, and she just dressed us and we walked out of the house.

Rosen: Were there any provisions made for the house, maintaining it, or--?

Landowska: I don't think she did a thing. She never contacted anyone, she never--we never-- said, "Hey, we're going," or anything like that. It was just--I think, at the school where it was, a lot of people were going. So, you know, it was like a giant picnic! You know, [where] you're going but there was not that feel about it. I've got to tell you that. And yet I did not end up with any of those people later. Somehow or another I never saw them [again].

Rosen: You just mentioned that it was almost like a picnic but it wasn't that feeling.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: What feeling was there to it?

Landowska: [Pauses] Apprehension. Not really knowing what you're going to. I honestly believe that for my mother, it was almost like relief. Like, you know, now this is [being resolved]. Some decision has been made somewhere. But she had suddenly become a capable person to me, and I thought, "Well, okay. She seems to know what she's doing here." So I felt that I could--you know, we were going to be all right, as all right as you could be not knowing what you were stepping off into. And we were going someplace else. We weren't going to anything that we knew. And--[sighs]. But from the school, the realization that we would not be exposed to all the hateful people out there, perhaps we'd be ghettoed completely. We went back to the medieval feeling of the security of the ghetto. So [I had] very, very mixed feelings.

Rosen: It sounds like you had some [unclear] feelings that you were looking forward to--

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Your sister at that time: did you two talk about this? Or did you talk about it with anyone?

Landowska: No I didn't. Well, she--it was sometimes very difficult for me to know what were my feelings and what were Margot's feelings, because she did a lot of talking to me. And--so many times in my life looking back on my memories, I see this person, and I think, "Well, that was sad for me." And then I realize that it probably was my sister, you know, that I couldn't see myself like this, in this state!

She thought we were going to have a house wherever we were going, and we were going to be able to go to school and that we would find the rest of our family, and she was very up, very optimistic. And I was not. I felt that we'd probably be really lucky to have something to eat. That was my feeling. Because to me, you had to have a man in order to have food, and I was afraid. But at the same time it's changed. I had been that way all my life, you know: "A change? Good." You wouldn't think, considering, that I would feel that way, but--and I have never gone back. Never been back.

Rosen: You mean to Germany?

Landowska: No, to anywhere that I have been, I've always been on--or, I mean, gone back to live, that is. Maybe I'd go back for a visit, but I've never stepped back.

Rosen: Was there any desire on your part or to acknowledge your mother or your sister to resist the--

Landowska: No.

Rosen: --the order for deportation?

Landowska: No. No. No, that was--you were told to do it and you did it. There was much more order in those days than there is [now] [laughter].

Rosen: I was wondering--you've indicated already that you think your mother recognized at this point a death order.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: And she [decided] to not take any of those things that she previously prized other than her two daughters.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: And you've indicated a certain sense of serenity that came over your mother, very calm and--

Landowska: I like that word. Serenity.

Rosen: I wonder--and you also said she also realized this would be the end.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: So I wonder if, if that being the case, that she did realize this would lead to the end, if she was resistant in any way.

Landowska: No. She didn't. And--in some ways, that surprises me because she was the fighter, and now as the years have gone by, I have become a lot more like my mother, and particularly in terms--I felt a great deal of the time my mother was a woman who was very afraid, and pushed forward and did things because she was afraid and the only way was to go right into it. But at that point, she became, as you said, serene. So I don't know. She did have the other sight, maybe she saw we would survive in some way.

Rosen: Do you know whether there was any talk about making provisions separately for you and your sister?

Landowska: No. I know she didn't because we were so close towards the end of this. Maybe she had tried before, when there was something to bargain with or whatever. But I don't--I don't really think

so. I think before she was deluded as to what was happening, and that she was going to resolve it in some way. Then it was, "Well, I really dropped the ball on this one, didn't I?" And it sort of --all she could do was take care of us physically. I think if someone had come up and physically threatened us, she would have attacked, because that was the type of action that she would do. But she just didn't know what to do any further, so you reach a certain point and you just get calm. And you accept. I think that that's what she did.

Rosen: Was there ever any expectation at this point of joining your father?

Landowska: Well, yes. With her, she thought there might be. So we sort of hoped, but there was nothing in our --on these instructions, there was no indication, you know, it was just a mob scene, so how--it was going to be pure luck.

Rosen: Let's pick up, then, at this point with when you left your home. Where did you go to? Your mother, you, your sister, leave--this is, you indicated, in late 1939?

Landowska: Okay, we went to an area, I keep thinking it was around the synagogue, and we were picked up and we were put on trucks and then we were taken to trains. It wasn't very long. It wasn't [a] very long drive. And then we--

Rosen: How many people, would you say? Or were there many people being carted away on the truck?

Landowska: It seems to me that there were a lot. I don't know how many. [Softly] It seemed to me there were a lot.

Rosen: You weren't the only family?

Landowska: Oh, no. [Pauses] No. There were a group.

Rosen: Did you see other people in this group that you knew, or did your mother recognize--?

Landowska: Yes, yes. Yes there were people that I [had] been to school with. And that's why I say, later I don't remember ever seeing them again, you know, it's--. But they were there. It was like a certain area was tapped [chuckles]. And we were the only people [who left] without carrying a whole bunch of stuff. And we thought that was really strange, Margot and I did [laughter]!

Rosen: Strange--? On whose part?

Landowska: On our mother's part. We thought it was most peculiar. I mean, "She's the only smart one in the crowd," you know, because those goods did not go anywhere. They just went to the Germans, or [were] sorted through, whatever. But we didn't contribute anything to that. Of course they could go in the house and take anything they wanted. And that's the way it was.

Rosen: So you made it to the center where the truck picked you up, real close to the synagogue.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: And after a short trip on the truck, you arrived at the train--

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: --what is it, a station that you--?

Landowska: Yes, yes. And we were put on the trains--there were people already on there, and we were put on the trains. I mean, gosh, there were a lot of people. And--[sighs]. I--what were you going to say?

Rosen: I said what kind of trains were these?

Landowska: [Laughs]

Rosen: I mean, were they--?

Landowska: I don't know what kind of trains we have now!
[Laughter]

Rosen: Let me rephrase that, Mrs. Landowska. The trains that you were going to, were these passenger trains, or cattle trains, boxcars--?

Landowska: No, they were the boxcars. Have you been to the Holocaust Museum in Dallas?

Rosen: No.

Landowska: That one. I--I was walking along and I stepped through there, and all of a sudden it was panic. I didn't realize what I was walking into.

Rosen: You're talking about the Holocaust Museum?

Landowska: Yes, they have the train? In the middle of the wall there, that you walk from one part to another? I was chatting; in fact, I was with Inga. I was chatting away and stepped right into the middle of it, and I--I lost my cool entirely.

Rosen: For the transcriber, we're talking about the Holocaust Museum in Dallas, Texas, and Mrs. Landowska is talking about her friend, Inga Penneck [?], who is also a survivor. So you were, you and your mother and your sister were--the three of you entered a cattle train?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Cattle car.

Landowska: It was all wooden. And time sort of stopped. I hadn't the least idea how many days, it seemed like a whole bunch of days, but I think it was more like two or something like that. And my mother just never let go of us. She--we had gotten squashed in there.

Rosen: Approximately how big would you say that cattle car was?

Landowska: Well, it was a regular boxcar that you would see, a regular train boxcar. All wood. And there were cracks all over it, you know what you would see. In other words, it was wood and there were spaces where the wood had become warped or whatever. And so you could look out through those spaces if you were close enough to them. [Pauses] And it was-- there were a lot of people there. I hadn't the least idea how many.

Rosen: During your trip, what provisions did you have for food?

Landowska: We didn't have any. Nothing. We had some people that gave us some sausage, but we had--mother went with nothing.

Rosen: Did the train [unclear]--?

Landowska: I guess we were supposed to have a dining car or something, but it--it stopped a couple more times and picked up more people.

Rosen: Did you--were you able to exit the train at any time during this trip?

Landowska: No. It was--

Rosen: Was any food provided along the trip beyond--

Landowska: No.

Rosen: --[unclear]?

Landowska: No.

Rosen: What did you do for--for bathroom facilities?

Landowska: Well, there were some buckets around. But I don't even think that they were supplied by the Germans or whatever. But it was--I was fascinated, later, how the bodies shut down, at least mine did! And it's interesting, I am--[do] you find it terribly cold in here?

Rosen: It's a little cold, yes. It feels like the air conditioning's on.

Landowska: I'm freezing. But anyway, this--I can't remember a lot about the trip. All I remember is my mother's body. Her arms around her. And the smell. And it--it's funny, because it, in the last couple of days of my mother's life, I achieved a bonding

with her that I never achieved prior to that. And it's [knocks on wood] painful to me.

She was twenty-eight years old. It's hard to picture this woman who was twenty-eight. Some of the things that she did, they seem foolish, but when you put it all together, she was twenty-eight, working her way through. And she threw the dice on this one and decided that she was going to put it all into, perhaps, getting her children somewhere. Perhaps an opportunity would come to get them out. She decided towards the end that she--at least that's what I believe. [Pauses]

Rosen: The smells that you described, you said you could remember the smells. What kind of smells--?

Landowska: Urine, sweat, feces, salami! I mean--[chuckles]. Primarily, for me, is the smell of my mother's body. It's like an animal type of thing. And you just--a very beautiful memory.

Rosen: Do you have any idea where you were going to at this point?

Landowska: No. I didn't even know when I got there.

Rosen: How did you feel on the car? During this time period?

Landowska: Well, now we discovered that anybody who would transport us this way, that we couldn't be going to anything too grand in terms of relocation. And that was a little scary. I think for us and for most of the rural city dwellers, the worst thing we thought [was that] we were going to some farms or something like that out in the country. But my mother kept saying that there were factories we were going to work at. And [sighs] it was-- [pauses]. It was bad. We knew this was not right, and some people, they had an opportunity to scream out at the guards when we were stopped along the way. They were complaining about their situation. [They] had no idea that it could get worse.

Rosen: Did you--you said you didn't know where you were going. Do you have any idea, perhaps what direction you were headed in, as far as perhaps --could you see anything out through the cracks or--?

Landowska: No, because we weren't that close, we were at the back up against the wall, and my mother had gotten back there. If anything, I still to this day enter a restaurant or anywhere, to have my back against the wall. My daughter does exactly the same thing

so it's great fun when we travel together, because we're both heading for the same seat! [Laughter] But it was just, being prepared--no, I couldn't see anything too much, and we were so small and there were men there that pushed you out of the way, and people did not always act as nice as they could. And who can judge?

Rosen: Does something come to mind?

Landowska: Oh--[pauses]. Well, you know, I remember a man grabbing some bread from a small boy, and then I remember people pushing around and so forth. It was--and my mother had the right idea, you kind of just get to the back of the wall and try and stay put.

Rosen: What was the--you mentioned that you've already left where the [unclear] deportation took place in late 1939--

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: --after the war had broken out. What was the weather like at that time?

Landowska: Oh, it was, it was--the fall. It was about that time that I stopped seeing color. Is it interesting? I think it is. I just stopped seeing color, but I remember at the beginning that there

was color, you know, the trees [and] so forth. And it was after the last time I saw my mother, I ceased to see color. Everything was grey and brown. But I did it in black. It was like the world went into a black and white movie, which of course are the only kind of movies that we had then. But that's what happened with me, you know, psychologically something happened. I did not see color until the 1950s. I just didn't see. And then one day I saw, I was just terribly blinded by it. It was [makes whooshing sound]--staggering, all these bright colors coming in on me! From everywhere. But I think it's--the world just became very grey.

But, you know, when you asked me what it was like, I can think [back], when I started out, it was autumn, and there was color. When I got to where I was going, everything had gone grey and brown. And--[talks to self]. Breathe. And--[Pauses]. Children are playing, whatever it was. I might have seen blood somewhere, I don't know.

Rosen: Something comes to mind that you, you've thought about, seeing blood?

Landowska: No, no.

Rosen: Over time?

Landowska: But I--I don't know, it seems that somewhere around the train experience, somewhere, you know, and I decided that I was not going to see. If I was not going to see blood, I was not going to see death. I was not going to see death.

Rosen: Up to this point, the deportation, had you seen any violence, yourself, occur to anyone?

Landowska: No. No. I heard a lot and I'd seen people shoved around, but I'd never seen anyone bleed. And that was very [disturbing]. I think I was that kind of child, you know, if you couldn't see it [it didn't exist]!

Rosen: What was your source of warmth or heating on the train?

Landowska: Oh, there wasn't any. No. It was very cold.
[Pauses] It was very cold.

Rosen: How did you sleep on the train during these days?

Landowska: On the floor, against my mother. And--

Rosen: Did you have any indication in advance how long this train trip was going to take?

Landowska: No, no. No. I didn't know.

Rosen: So it took about two or three days, probably?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: And where did you end up?

Landowska: At Dachau. We weren't there very long. I mean, Margot and I went on, later, I mean, we were there to begin with for a while. And, you know, we just kept being shunted around. But my mother was separated from us then.

Rosen: Talk about when you left the train. What was that like?

Landowska: My legs were not working right, and I fell. I fell on my face, it was just--I guess it was inactivity, you know, whatever. And [pauses] for the rest of my life, all my life, I see my mother walking away. And she was not walking away, she was striding. And that glorious hair follows, and it was just bouncing on her back, and she was striding away. They had sent her one way, and we were together. She never looked back. [Sighs] And she'd gotten us that far. There were not many walking like that. It was as though she was racing.

Rosen: You said, "We were together," you were referring to you and--?

Landowska: My sister.

Rosen: Margot. Was this when you left the train? Is the --did the train--? Let me back up here. Did the train enter Dachau?

Landowska: [Talks to self] Well, how did it--? [Pauses] No, I don't think so. No. [Unclear]. We just sort of --I saw [unclear] in my mind. And it was terribly traumatic, the whole thing. It seems to me that the buildings, we were here, in front of it.

Rosen: You were in front of--?

Landowska: Sort of gates. And that's where the trains stopped.

Rosen: Just outside of--?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Was this outside of--what? Outside of the camp itself?

Landowska: [Softly] Yes, yes.

Rosen: And then--?

Landowska: [Sighs] I don't know, my mother. But I had my sister, and we were just--put through, you know, this procedure. I never understood why we were alive [chuckles]. I never understood why we did not die that first day.

Rosen: When you got off the train, you mentioned that your mother was told to go in one direction and you and your sister--

Landowska: I did not, I did not hear this, I saw it. And there were these, all these men at intervals, and there were some men in striped clothes, and there were some in uniforms. And--I just never figured out how we ended up in the line that we ended up in, and that strong woman died. It just--she was --I don't know, maybe the head figurative, that's what was going to happen to her.

Rosen: So this was inside the camp? You had mentioned getting off in front of the camp.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: In front of gates.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: So were you led into the camp then--

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: --the three of you, and then split at that point?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Did your mother--?

Landowska: As I said, I fell, and by the time I got up, she was going. In a different direction.

Rosen: Were there any parting words?

Landowska: Nothing. She did *not* look back.

Rosen: What about your sister?

Landowska: She was helping me up. And then we started to cry. And this older woman just came along--I don't think she was that old! [Chuckles] We were very, very young. She came along and said, "Stop that!" and "Come on this way." She was off the train with us. But she probably saved us from something, I don't know. But she just hauled us right along with her. And it's interesting that we--we, as long as we had each other, Margot and I, we were okay. And from then on that was all we had, was each other.

Rosen: Let's take a break at this point.

[End of Track 2. Begin Track 3]

Rosen: Mrs. Landowska, we were talking about when you arrived at Dachau when we last left. You talked about you and your sister being alone. You fell, you looked up to see your mother walking in another direction never to look back or say anything to you, and you and your sister were crying together. Holding each other, or--?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Why don't you pick up from there and tell us--?

Landowska: Well, as I said, this woman came along and said, you know, "Stop that," and ushered us along with her. We went into an area where we were hosed down, more or less. We stripped. And washed--I just realized that I don't recall what clothes we put on. It--just the little things that I don't remember. And our hair was cut. Now, I--that was really hard for a child, losing your hair. I guess [it would be] for any person.

Rosen: Did you have much hair?

Landowska: Well, I always had long hair. I still have long hair. It was a thing with the family. Yes.

Rosen: When you say "cut," cut how short?

Landowska: Well, it wasn't completely shaven. It was taken off very short though. It was just with shears, just [makes cutting noise]. Any which way, I mean it just looked awful. And--that I remember. I don't remember too much else, for a quite a time.

Rosen: And how did you feel at that time?

Landowska: Oh, terrified. I was in sort of a state of shock. I was suspended, sort of. Terribly cold. I was manifesting several shock symptoms. And it

would've just been cold. It was very, it was terrifying. Because we didn't have the least idea what was going on. What was the purpose of all this? And of course they told us that it was to get clean, and that was all right with me. But the people screaming and--just, then you felt ugly. To me it was unnecessary, and it was terrifying. To this day, I can be controlled by people screaming at me.

Rosen: Who was screaming at you?

Landowska: These women there, telling us to move along, do this and get over here and--and it was just screaming, we'd never been screamed at like that. And--but, you respond very quickly.

Rosen: What did these women look like?

Landowska: Just older women. To me, like school teachers or, you know, just healthy German women. And they were not inmates of the camp, I'm sure. I know that because of what they were wearing, they were wearing skirts and shirts type of thing. And--but they were very--very, very fierce.

Rosen: Were they in uniform?

Landowska: Yes, I think those were uniforms they--skirts and sort of a khaki type of thing--

Rosen: Where was your sister during this?

Landowska: --greenish. She was right there with me. Yes. We stayed close to one another.

Rosen: How did this--?

Landowska: And they did not separate us.

Rosen: How did these events affect your relationship with your sister?

Landowska: Oh, [they made us] more dependent upon one another. We were bad to begin with! But quite, quite dependent, to the extent that if one got out of sight of the other one for a few minutes, it was terrifying.

Rosen: And at this time you were how old?

Landowska: [Sighs] Well, this was--eight, nine. [Quietly] Nine years old. Around in there. We were big for our age, though. Big. I stopped growing during those years. Both my daughters, now--my mother was tall. But of course mothers always look tall to little children, but my mother was a tall woman. She was like 5'8", something like that. My daughters are 5'10". And I stopped growing, and never grew any further after 5'1 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", in there somewhere.

At the same time, [an] interesting thing happened. Within two days, I had started my period. And--which, you know, was just a little couple more months and I didn't have one anymore, but I started menstruating. And it was just--I think it was a genetic thing, a family thing. But it was, you know, it was sort of a shocker because at the time I thought I was bleeding to death and [chuckles] a child, I didn't know anything about that.

Rosen: So was this your first--?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: --time you ever bled? Menstruated?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Okay. Your sister, did she have the same experience?

Landowska: No. No. But one of my daughters started at the same age. So that's why I think that it was probably a genetic thing that--

Rosen: You mentioned that you feared that you were going to bleed to death.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Was there anyone that you could go to or ask for advice or anyone who came to your aid?

Landowska: Yes--at that time, there were several women there, who helped me, and--after a while--you see, this was still at the beginning of things. When people first arrived they were different than they were a month, two months later. There was humanity there. And they behaved in the same way as they normally would. They would have a child, they would--there was authoritarian, little overpowering, that way then. But later, it was different.

Rosen: You mentioned you were in Dachau. How long were you in Dachau?

Landowska: [Sighs] Oh, not very long. Maybe a couple of months.

Rosen: I see. You mentioned that people changed within a couple of months. So did you see this change in the people at Dachau?

Landowska: In some.

Rosen: What kind of--?

Landowska: In others I didn't. I saw some people that I don't think would ever change. People became a fake [?], more of what they were in the first place. If somebody cheated on his income tax, he stole bread from someone else that needed to live. [Pauses]

If someone--well, I had an incident in my life there, I'm not sure whether it was at Dachau or shortly afterwards when I was somewhere else--I don't even know where I was in between, because we got shifted around to various places, got busy carrying rocks from one side of the road to the other side.

But in one of these places, there was a woman who I thought was positively ancient, but she gave us her food. You have control over some things, no matter what, and she had control over when she died. And she made her decision about that. And my sister and I just helped her on her way. We didn't know. But there was a lot of guilt for me later. There was a lot of guilt for me with everything later, but that particularly. And I reconciled it in terms of at least she had control over when she died. She made a decision that way and she made a decision of how and she gave us her food.

Rosen: By starving herself to death?

Landowska: Yes. And she did. She just became so weak that--

Rosen: When your mother--

Landowska: --hailed her away.

Rosen: When your mother went in the other direction, did you have any idea of what that meant, or--?

Landowska: No, no. I still don't know what it meant, because I don't think there were any crematoriums at Dachau. I don't think that there was a gas chamber there. I still don't know. I don't know how she died. Later, there was all this, but I don't think at that point in time--we would have heard something, because that's one of the first things we heard at Auschwitz. Yes. It wasn't from us, but a little girl was crying and they said, "Well, see the smoke? That's probably where your family is." And--

Rosen: That was at Auschwitz?

Landowska: Yes. Auschwitz was hard. Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Rosen: We'll get to that a little further into the story.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Describe what life was like at Dachau.

Landowska: Well, we got a blanket and we went to barracks and--Dachau wasn't that bad, really, at that time. It was pretty boring, but they didn't have us working like in some of the other places, you know. I still have the calluses on my hands, and that was from, you know, as a child, just carrying

rocks from one side of the road to the other. I had someone say one time, "You know, what was the educational system like at the camps?" And I said, "Well, you got to carry rocks from one end to the other!" [Chuckles] I just--I could not believe that someone would ask me--it was a teacher, too--would ask me a question like that.

But I don't recall. I'm avoiding--I don't recall at Dachau. I don't recall a lot during this period of time. I just remember going completely blind as far as color was concerned. I know I saw dead people, but I never saw dead people. Refusing to see. Because I remember one time, and it wasn't nice, I took shoes off the person who was dead. Never saw the person.

Rosen: What did you do with the shoes?

Landowska: I wore them. But I never saw the person. I was-- it was just protection. You see, I think my sister did. I think she did, because she had slowly--the joy left her. The joy of living was never in me to begin with. I was a very serious person! But my sister just slowly wilted. And we still kept going because we were together. And it was my experience, then, that those of us who had family

with us seemed to do better. You had somebody that was still a part of you that you could have one another. It was an extension of yourself because the world got meaner and smaller. As I said, people started off still being human, and then gradually, all that was left was the little spark of survival within the individual.

Rosen: You had your sister with you. Based on your comment about having family seemed to help people, how do you--how did having your sister there help you in surviving?

Landowska: Well, we had common memories. Things in common that we could talk about. At the beginning, we talked. And then there a time when you just got so you talked less and less and less. Then at Auschwitz we talked again.

Rosen: How do you think you helped your sister?

Landowska: [Pauses]

Rosen: And I'm asking that in light of your comment about her slowly dying and wilting?

Landowska: [Pauses] I don't know whether I--we just helped one another. I don't know whether I helped her that much. I--probably. In some ways, I kept her going. I mean, force of will, sometimes. You know,

"You have to get up, you have to keep moving, you have to--." You know, just that sort of thing. And that's what you did for one another as much as anything.

Rosen: So if you weren't there--?

Landowska: She would've gone faster.

Rosen: Let me ask some more specific questions about life at Dachau and maybe that'll spur any memories. What were your living conditions like there?

Landowska: [Pauses] Well. It was cold but we had, you know, some, some coal for the stove. We had--ooh, very horrible food. And we had bread. Still my big event of the day is still talking about food. And it was there. Deep discussion, to eat the bread now [or] you take it with you, do you eat it bit by bit, or--? Make these big decisions about a piece of bread. It's only Jews that can make a philosophical discussion of how you eat a piece of bread. It just--which is better for you? So now the conditions were not that good.

Rosen: What kind of building did you live in?

Landowska: It was a wood structure. It was [a] pretty solid building, and there were bunks, you know, you

didn't have your own private sleeping [area]. You had several people in with you, close.

Rosen: In one bunk?

Landowska: Yes. Yes. And--but you could sleep one person, so one person this way, one person this way, you know.

Rosen: What do you mean by "this way," and--?

Landowska: Oh, I'm sorry. Well, like, you could sleep with two, with the heads north and the feet south, and one person in between with the feet north and the head south. And so, that made it a little better. And we had a blanket, and we had to get up early in the morning and stand around. It's what you hear about the military, "Hurry up and wait" type of thing. There's always someone screaming at you.

Rosen: Let's go back for just a moment. How many people did you share a bunk with?

Landowska: Well, at different points it was different, you know. To begin with there were--it was four.

Rosen: Four--you shared it with four other--?

Landowska: With three others.

Rosen: With three others. So you had four people in one bunk, in one bed?

Landowska: Well, it was a pretty good size, yes. It was--
like a single bed.

Rosen: And you were a little girl at this time. Were one
of those four your sister?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: So there were two girls and then--?

Landowska: And two women, yes. It changed. But we managed to
stay together.

Rosen: What about getting up in the morning. What time
would you get up?

Landowska: Oh, around 5:00 a.m.

Rosen: And what would you do? What would be a typical
day?

Landowska: Getting up, going and standing in line for the
latrine or whatever, and--

Rosen: Where was the latrine?

Landowska: They were back in, you know, another area, fairly,
you know, within a block or so.

Rosen: Was this in a building?

Landowska: Outside.

Rosen: Outside?

Landowska: Yes. No, it was not in the same building, it
wasn't like a bathroom or anything. Then they
would come with a bucket of soup.

Rosen: "They," being--?

Landowska: Well, one, one guard and a couple of people that were inmates, and they would bring me the soup and then they would dish it out and you got something to eat.

Rosen: Now was this inside the room that you slept in and lived in?

Landowska: No, it was just outside.

Rosen: You were fed outside?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Now that you said it just--

Landowska: We could--if we could get some extra stuff, we could fix things inside, by the stove ourselves. But this was, like, outside. And I think everything was rather designed to make your life miserable, because also they kept you waiting for a long time. You had to get all in a row, and then they would call off, you would have to call off your number, how many were in your barracks. And they would do that every morning, make sure that you're all there. And they'd keep you there to just do dumb things, you know. [Sighs]

Rosen: So did you have something to hold the food in, that they would dish out?

Landowska: Yes, yes. We had like a cup, a tin--tin cup sort of thing.

Rosen: So they fed you in the morning. This is about what time, now?

Landowska: I don't know, I'm thinking--I'm sitting here trying to remember whether we, I think we stood in that line first.

Rosen: Is this a line to the latrine, you're talking about?

Landowska: No. No the line where you were counting off your numbers and everything. You'd think I would remember everything about this, except I spent a lot of years not remembering. And I believe that we stood in that line, you know, stood up first and got counted up, see whether we were there, and then went to the bathroom, then we got fed. And as I said, there wasn't too much to do at Dachau, but in other places then you had to go to work, and we were--I never knew such a rocky country as Germany. I mean, all this is rocks, you just moved rocks from one spot to another. And I could never figure out the value of this. But we did that.

Rosen: At Dachau?

Landowska: No.

Rosen: Or [unclear]?

Landowska: No.

Rosen: Let's stay at Dachau for the moment.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: So after you were fed outside, what happened? What would happen next?

Landowska: We just sort of wasted time there. We didn't do any work or anything while we were there. We'd go back inside, we had to clean, we were forever cleaning the barracks and everything. We had to clean mats, and then some people sorted clothes, the clothing that came in and so forth.

Rosen: What kind of clothing would come in?

Landowska: Well, the people were wearing.

Rosen: What you had when you first arrived at the camp?

Landowska: Yes. I guess so. And there were all sorts of clothing that had to go in, you know, like, skirts in one area, trousers in another area, shoes in another area. And we did a lot of that sort of sorting.

Rosen: Any idea how many people were in the barracks that you were in?

Landowska: I should know because of the numbers that we were counting off. [Pauses] In the thirties, I believe.

Rosen: You mentioned you didn't have many responsibilities as far as forced labor during the daytime at Dachau other than cleaning up the barracks.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: And sorting out clothing. You mentioned you had breakfast in the morning, which usually was--

Landowska: It was soup and some bread.

Rosen: What about other meals during the daytime?

Landowska: That was it.

Rosen: That was your only meal for the day?

Landowska: That's right. Yes. See, at that time you could scrounge up extra food, some people could. I never had any great skill at that, although I did find a carrot once. But they did and they would get a little pot and put it on the stove and look after it and sometimes they might share it with you, whatever it was. But there was only one meal a day, really, and it very shortly became quite debilitating. Yes.

Rosen: You mentioned you once took a pair of shoes from a dead person at Dachau. Do you have any idea what that person died from?

Landowska: No. There were some people lying out there. I probably would have gotten in trouble over the shoes, too. I took them. Now I saw, I guess, some dead people along the way and I just refused to acknowledge the fact that they were dead.

Rosen: You said you saw them out there in the--?

Landowska: In the yard.

Rosen: In the yard?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: You said you would've gotten in trouble if you had been caught taking the shoes. What kind of trouble do you think you would've gotten in to?

Landowska: Oh, I probably would have gotten beaten or something.

Rosen: Why were you willing to take the chance of getting beaten to take those shoes off?

Landowska: [Pause] Because I listened. One of the things that I learned was that you had to have shoes. Because if you didn't have shoes, you know, that were okay, you could get blisters. From blisters you got blood poisoning. And you were dead. And so I

learned how to take care of myself and my sister. And it was little things like that. Being careful, being careful of your body.

Rosen: You said you learned to take care of yourself and your sister, this sounds like a role reversal from when you talked about those years when your sister used to wait on you, and here you are--

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: --taking care of her. Why? Any explanation for that?

Landowska: No, it's just that--it sounds like those circumstances are related, but they're not. As a very small child, that was on a different plane entirely. I mean, it--I still--I still believe it was not a dependency on my part but a manipulation when I was young. When it came right down to it, of the two of us, she was the more charming, but I was the more capable, just as far as survival was concerned, and it was a philosophical point of view, that she was filled with life. And life was fun and once used to be fun. But she didn't like it anymore.

But for me, living was always a serious business. And from earliest memory, I remember

thinking very seriously about life. So it wasn't any surprise to me that it could get bad. It was hard because we had been so--oh, nurtured. That would be [unclear], not entirely spoiled, maybe a wee-bit spoiled. But you see, spoiled darlings can be very tough, too, because they're accustomed to getting their own way.

Rosen: Who do you think your sister took after more, your father or your mother?

Landowska: [Pauses] I don't know, I think she was a combination of them both. Yes, she was more like my mother, she liked physical exercise, to that extent. But I don't think she was as tough as my mother was.

Rosen: You mentioned--

Landowska: Persistent, is what I mean.

Rosen: --that your sister was not as persistent as your mother?

Landowska: No, I don't think she was.

Rosen: You mentioned that you began taking care of your sister. Do you have some instances that come to mind when you were looking out after her, or some examples of that?

Landowska: Well, there were times she just did not want to get up, she did not want to do things, she just wanted to give up. Actually, what I did for her I did for me also, because if I had been alone, I might've felt the same way. But I wanted to--she gave me a reason for being. I was really pushing, to keep her going.

Rosen: When you took those shoes, you pointed out how you could have been beaten, or you thought you could have been beaten if caught. Did you plan on how you would take those shoes so--

Landowska: No.

Rosen: [Unclear]?

Landowska: No, no. You had to move. You had to move fast, and you had to--when you saw the opportunity, you had to take it. And you just had to have guts. And I just moved from being this nurtured kid to being a real strange [laughter] monster, I think! And so some things, like--some things that [unclear] I didn't share with anyone. A lot of people shared with their--I didn't even share with my sister, when I found the carrot. I went off and hid and ate that. And, you know, then I lived with the guilt. But I did it. And sometimes that's

what makes a difference, for survival. How far you will go, and I guess that was about as far as I would go, on the selfish end of it.

Rosen: You mentioned you saw an opportunity to take it, so you found an opportunity with the boots to get them--

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: --without getting caught?

Landowska: Yes. It was right out in plain sight.

Rosen: Were the guards watching?

Landowska: No. No. And, you know, other people saw me take them. But they didn't say anything, they just wished that they thought of it.

Rosen: You mentioned earlier that within a couple months, you saw people change, as far as become less-- what?

Landowska: You know, it's like myself, I changed.

Rosen: That's what I was--

Landowska: That's a typical example. And yes, I saw--I think a lot of it had to do with nutrition, with [unclear]. The mindset, now that--you know, anything that I did had nothing to do with it! But [there] was so many that became listless, and so I think it had a lot to do with nutrition.

Because when you're--say you diet, and now you go down below 1,000 calories. You can survive, and if it gets tough you take something to eat. But when you're day in and day out around 700 calories at the very most, it--slowly, it's just debilitating. And people became listless, they didn't care. They couldn't make the effort to be kind to anyone else.

Rosen: Do you see any changes in your own physical being at that time? Beyond going through your first menstrual period?

Landowska: Well, I wasn't paying too much attention to it, but I was losing some weight. But it wasn't too bad. But it's funny, you noticed it more in the other people around you.

Rosen: What about your sister?

Landowska: Yes, I noticed it in her, far more than I noticed it in myself. She was getting sickly-looking, you know. The eyes get bigger.

Rosen: This may sound like a funny question here. When you went through your first period, how or what did you absorb the blood with? Or was there much?

Landowska: Well, some strips of cloth is what I used. And women found those for me, and then you just washed

them out, constantly. And there was quite a bit, you know. The first--I only had two periods--three. Three. And then it stopped. Because that was the big thing, I knew that was going to happen because I heard it being discussed. It was another one next to "When do you eat the bread?"

The big discussion was, "Will you ever be able to have children if your period stops, and how does this influence anything, and is there something that they're giving us to make this happen?" And no one understood. Because if there were any doctors around, they were not in that group of people, that's for sure! No, they kept the doctors in a different place. But it was a real worry to women. If they only realized they were probably all going to be dead anyway, but particularly the young women, you know, teenagers and in their twenties and so forth. Because the older ones said, "Well, you know, if you don't have periods you'll never have children," and so everyone thought that this was forever.

And it's an interesting phenomenon. I don't know if you've ever heard of it before, but it

was an interesting phenomenon, that the cycles just stopped, due to malnutrition I guess it was.

Rosen: What did you think about that at the time?

Landowska: Well, I wasn't particularly concerned about it. [Chuckles] Not at all. No. I wasn't too sure how babies came anyway! [Laughter]

Rosen: You mentioned you were at Dachau for two months, approximately.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: When did you leave Dachau?

Landowska: It was winter. Of course, if you listen to me it was always winter! [Laughter] I don't recall any summers in five years! No summers! But--yes, it was cold, and we went on--we did not go by train, we went on trucks and we went to clear out this area, you know, and move rocks around and so forth and they were building stuff in there.

Rosen: Did you know in advance you were being transferred?

Landowska: Oh, gosh no. It's just not something they ever discussed with you, they just came in and you got emptied out and you went.

Rosen: You and your sister were moved together?

Landowska: Yes. Yes.

Rosen: Along with others?

Landowska: Yes. Move-move-move-move-move.

Rosen: They didn't tell you where you were going?

Landowska: No. No.

Rosen: Was it--you said they took you to "this area to clear out rocks?"

Landowska: Yes, we cleared out rocks, and then later I was digging holes and somebody said they were some sort of vehicle traps or something, digging holes in the woods and doing things like that. And really silly, a bunch of women out there digging holes and they're doing the best they can, but really, you could stick a couple of men in there and get it done in a quarter of the time.

Rosen: What do you use to dig holes with?

Landowska: Oh, they gave us shovels and things.

Rosen: How long did you dig holes and move rocks and--?

Landowska: I must've been moving around for--oh, let's see. For about a year-and-a-half we were moving around and just going from one place to another. We were not ever in a clearly defined camp, we were just being moved around to work at various jobs, and we just kept getting skinnier, although the food

was a little better because they wanted us to do a decent job.

Rosen: How was it better? Can you give an example of what you were fed during this time, during that time period?

Landowska: Oh, maybe you'd see a piece of meat or, you know, maybe something in there, you know, some vegetables or something. And you know, for some period of time there too, [I] got a meal in the evening also. So it, it was a lot better.

Rosen: In addition to a breakfast, you mean?

Landowska: Yes. But it was the same meal, you know. But it was just doing--they wanted us to be doing this work, and I guess they fed us a little better.

Rosen: Was your sister with you during this same time period?

Landowska: Yes, yes.

Rosen: When--you mentioned that you were not in defined camps during that year-and-a-half period. What did you stay in and where did you stay?

Landowska: Oh, we stayed in buildings that were up there, but it was a small camp. And then we would go on to another one. I believe that maybe they built other things there, that this was the beginning

and we were clearing out the area and then we built stuff in the woods, the traps or whatever it was. We were into Poland around this time, you know, we had moved toward Poland. And I think it was--of course, time didn't mean too much to me. But we were picked up, I guess it was around 1942, and put on the train for Auschwitz.

Rosen: You say "we." What are you referring to?

Landowska: Oh, a group of us.

Rosen: The whole group of you women workers along the roadways.

Landowska: Yes, yes.

Rosen: You mentioned that you were building traps. Were these the--what were these? Can you specify these traps?

Landowska: They were just great big holes in the ground that you dug, and then they put like branches and stuff on top of it.

Rosen: Were these on roadways? Were these--?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Where were these?

Landowska: Yes, and through the woods.

Rosen: Through the woods, the woods too.

Landowska: Yes. And more through the woods, actually. But then we were put on the train, and that's when we arrived in Auschwitz.

Rosen: In 1942?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Do you remember approximately when in 1942?

Landowska: I don't know. I think there were a lot of new buildings there at that time. And there was a lot of building going on. That was [a] big city, you know, Birkenau-Auschwitz. The camps together there, a lot of people.

Rosen: Did you know anything about Auschwitz at that time?

Landowska: No. No.

Rosen: Did you know it when you were taken on--? No. You were taken on a train to go to Auschwitz?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: How long a trip did that take, approximately?

Landowska: I don't know. It wasn't that long, maybe just part of the day. And it was sort of enjoyable [laughter] after working! I mean, now this is a different scene, you know [laughter]! It was, it wasn't as bad, it was sort of enjoyable. You got to rest!

Rosen: Quite a contrast to the--

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: --[unclear] trip into Dachau.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: What kind of--do you remember what kind of train it was? Was it a--again, was it a boxcar, was it a--?

Landowska: Yes, yes. It was a boxcar. And there were lots of different people on there, from different countries. And--then we came in and arrived there, there were all sorts of people running around. I think that we probably should have died that day.

Rosen: Why?

Landowska: Because everybody else, pretty well, went. But they just put people through, you know.

Rosen: Put people through what?

Landowska: To take showers, just to go right on through. And we were pulled out and a few other people were pulled out.

Rosen: Through what?

Landowska: Into the gas chambers, where you went to get washed and everything. When you arrived.

Rosen: Or told to be washed, right?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: You said, "We were pulled out."

Landowska: [Softly] Yes.

Rosen: "We" being who?

Landowska: My sister, myself, and two other sets of twins.

Rosen: A total of six people in all?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Who pulled you out?

Landowska: I just know we were going through. They just grabbed us [and said], "Just go over there." We went over there, and that's how we lived that round.

Rosen: At this point so far, you've spent--this is 1942, you've spent approximately one-third of your life--

Landowska: Huh!

Rosen: --going through the Holocaust.

Landowska: I've never thought of that.

Rosen: From your--the time your father lost his job and the deportation to the camps and all. How--well, did you see any changes in yourself at this point, in the way you looked at life?

Landowska: [Chuckles] Yes, it had become pretty important to me to write good poetry.

Rosen: Why?

Landowska: Isn't that weird? Don't ask me why, but it had become--I carried all of this poetry in my head, and constantly I was working on it, and I didn't know anything except what I carried in my head. "See the light, the lights of the village shine through the rain and the mist/ and a feeling of sadness comes over me that my soul cannot resist." Okay, the rhythm, "I see the lights of the village," okay, all right. "Who walks in my mother's garden on such a night as this/ When spring-swept wind has descended to give birth of your skin?" That was what was important.

Rosen: Poetry about your experiences?

Landowska: Just poetry. And all I had was the masters. I mean, okay, Longfellow did it this way, I'll do it exactly like Longfellow did it. "When I consider how my light is spent/ Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide/ And that one Talent which is death to hide." Okay, Milton did it this way, I'm doing it exactly like Milton! That's what I was doing. Keeping alive whatever I had in my memory, and I had a prodigious memory as far as poetry was concerned. And a great deal of poetry from Bliss Carman. "I had a fleet of forty sail

before I went to school." All of the poetry, and to use that as my prototype, my pattern. I wrote poetry on it. And so I had a goal to write as much, and to memorize it, write it in the dirt, memorize it and memorize it, get it in my head, pile it all up. So that's what I did.

Rosen: Had poetry been very important to you before?

Landowska: No. It had been very important to my mother. And she was the one that gave me so much poetry, [unclear], that was one of the things I wrote. "My mother wrapped me in a comforter of words, it [unclear] me, a quilt of mosaic meaning." And, you know, I just--and that's what it was, I guess, it was my comforter. And so that gave me something that I could work on that had meaning for me.

Rosen: Do you remember when you became--or when poetry had this kind of meaning for you?

Landowska: It just sort of slowly started, and it was somewhere between Dachau and Auschwitz. And it was--of course, the primary thought process--you've got to be a little crazy to really get into poetry. And I think that I've always been pretty serious, so the symbolism, and some [unclear] was there. It just gave my life meaning. Gave me

something to work on. That's what you need, someone [unclear]. One day exactly the same as the other? Just barely keeping a spark of life going? Eww.

Rosen: At this point when you went to Auschwitz, did you think you were going to see your mother again?

Landowska: No. No. I knew she was dead. Don't ask me how I knew, but I knew she was dead.

Rosen: When do you think you came to that realization enough at least?

Landowska: Oh, somewhere within the first few weeks, because I knew her. I knew that she's nasty, mean, and smart enough! She would put up quite a fight to get to us. And then I started seeing how nasty mean everybody else was around there. And--but, no, no, she's gone. Plus the fact [that] life was so cheap, you know, just one more life. [Softly] No, she was--now I had no expectations of ever seeing her. All I wanted to do was hold on to what I had. I didn't worry about ever seeing my father again, I didn't worry about anyone except the life that was there with me.

Rosen: What about your sister?

Landowska: That was it. That was the life that was there with me.

Rosen: I'm wondering if your growing interest in poetry, creating your own, and holding it close to you as a way of keeping your mother with you, was that the real time that you lost her, your interest in poetry begins, too.

Landowska: Well, it could have been. But if so, she's been with me all my life.

Rosen: So now at Auschwitz, you're pulled out of line. You, your sister, and two other sets of twins.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: What happened?

Landowska: And we were taken to another area, where we were washed and tattooed. The number's put on me there [gestures]. And--which, incidentally, I'm going this Christmas, I'm having them taken off with a laser. Surgery [unclear]. But it's long enough! But--then we were put into, through this complete medical pattern, you know, where everything about us was measured. And--gosh, it took an entire day and then some. I think it took a couple of days to go through all the stuff. But they put us through--they measured everything about us. And

they were putting them with a lot of other young people, after a few days of that.

Rosen: Were these all children?

Landowska: Yes. Yes. They were not all children. The area that we were in was children more or less our age, you know, like more or less two years either way. But, like, some of the people that went through with us were separated because they were older. They were twins but they were older, they were adults.

Rosen: So the group that you were with now, they weren't necessarily twins, they were just--young people with--?

Landowska: No, they were all twins.

Rosen: They were all twins?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Within--how many?

Landowska: Oh, how many of them were there?

Rosen: Well, you said within how many years?

Landowska: Oh, well it was like--we were in the younger group, so there were some--now, there was a younger group younger than us. Like we were, I would say, [ages] seven to eleven, in that group, like that.

Rosen: And everyone in this group, from ages seven to eleven were twins?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: And approximately how many would you say there were there?

Landowska: Oh, there were a lot of different floors and everything, you know, there were different--like we were just the females and the girls, and there were boys in another section, and where we were there were about twenty-four right there, I would say. A dozen sets of twins, right in there. But there were a lot more than that, I mean--you know, something like 10,000 in all.

Rosen: 10,000 sets of--? Or 10,000?

Landowska: 10,000. 10,000 altogether, so about 5,000 sets of twins.

Rosen: Let's go back here for a moment. When you were tattooed, can you describe that process?

Landowska: Well, now they just grabbed my arm and just--

Rosen: You say "they."

Landowska: Oh, well, this woman grabbed my arm, and this man, you know, wrote numbers on me, and it was almost like a pen process, you know. It hurt, pricked, you know, that sort of thing. It was very fast

and very clumsy and the numbers [chuckles] I mean, you have S--like my numbers are here, some are here [gestures], I think I twisted or did something.

Rosen: When you say "here--?"

Landowska: Yes, it just--I don't like to go through this.

Rosen: We--you don't have to--what part of your--when you say "clumsy," you mean that your numbers aren't--?

Landowska: Yes, see, it's just very bad lettering.

Rosen: Your numbers are on one part of your arm?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Whereas--?

Landowska: Well, some others would be on some other part, you know, some other parts of their arm. Some, I believe, even have them on their legs. I've seen some up here, seen some down here, seen some [gestures]--

Rosen: "Up here?" You mean up close to their shoulder?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: As opposed to closer to where yours are by your wrist?

Landowska: Yes. Yes.

Rosen: Was there any anesthesia involved?

Landowska: No, no.

Rosen: Pain killers?

Landowska: They didn't need any, really. And--but it was just--they just did it. It was very, it was very unexpected. For me. And--it was just like, don't ever let anyone tell you that if so-and-so does not have numbers on them, they've never been in a concentration camp. Because that's not necessarily true. Because I went through a number of years there without ever getting tattooed. So. It just depends on what they have the people doing and what they were moving around. It is not any guarantee, you know, because I've heard people say, "Well, so-and-so said that they were in a concentration camp and they weren't, they don't have any numbers on them." And that's, that's not so. The Germans were not near as efficient as people seem to give them credit for being.

Rosen: You said you went through several years of not being tattooed?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Didn't you just say that you--when you entered Auschwitz, the same day you entered they tattooed you?

Landowska: Yes, but I had been in Dachau, I had been in all these other places.

Rosen: Oh.

Landowska: You see?

Rosen: Oh.

Landowska: What I'm saying is, someone may have really paid their dues, and then someone else turns around and says, "No, they didn't, because they don't have numbers on them." And that's not nice.

Rosen: When you--okay, now you're separated into a room with other twins, female twins.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: What happened?

Landowska: Well, they come and they take your [unclear]--the [unclear] is quite clean, there's separate beds, and they're really very nice but--and they're paying an awful lot of attention to you, all the time.

Rosen: Now, who is "they?"

Landowska: Nurses, doctors.

Rosen: So you're getting medical attention for the first time in several years?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Okay.

Landowska: And--then--these children were very smart. I mean there were some children in there who are probably long dead now, that saved my life with the information that I got from them, as far as how they went about giving diseases to people.

Rosen: "They?"

Landowska: The doctors.

Rosen: Would give diseases to people?

Landowska: Right. To one of the twins. Okay, they would give the disease to both twins. They would treat one. They would treat one. And the other one would sort of be left to their own devices. Sometimes the diseases did not take, which is fine. Sometimes they'd try these different cures on them. So mainly what the kids learned to do was to distract attention away, shake down thermometers, do all that they could to keep from seeming to have the disease or whatever, because sometimes the so-called "cure" would kill you.

Also, if one twin died, many times the other twin was killed, because there was no use for the experiment any longer. So you could possibly just try to look after one another, you know, when you went for--of course, twins really care for each

other, for the best part, I've heard of circumstances that they don't.

[End of Track 3. Begin Track 4]

Landowska: But they--we--we survived hepatitis and--

Rosen: When you say "we," you mean--?

Landowska: Margot and I. We--okay, this is where Margot died. And most of it was due to the fact that--[sighs] you've got the picture by now that I was a very strange child! Well, one of the strange things that I had going for me, that I didn't even realize I did, was self-hypnosis, and that saved me, constantly, in this situation. I could concentrate on the corner of the room and leave, and I did not--we were the subject of surgical practices, or experiments, more than diseases. They would practice how fast they could take out different organs and so forth, so I lost my appendix, my gall bladder, one ear drum. A kidney.

And Margot, they--this was 1943 [or] thereabouts, about ten years before the first successful kidney transplant between twins. So they were on the right track. But they took out

Margot's kidney, put it in me, took out mine, put it in her. You know, healthy kidneys. And hers did nothing with me. It just dried up like a prune. She rejected mine, there was infection, there was something. And she died.

But in the meanwhile, what they found with me was that I could withstand surgery even without any anesthetic and didn't quite understand what [it] was all about. I never knew what it was about either. I mean, it was years later, and finally a dentist discovered that I hypnotized myself all the time. They come at me with anything, I--[makes a whooshing noise]. I'm gone! And that was what it was about.

I don't remember too much after her death. We were in beds beside one another. She--she died. At this point--you keep asking, "Why is that?"--at this point, I cried out to God to take me away from this. For me, everybody who was good was dead. And all I could think of was, "That's rotten," because I couldn't die. I just kept living. I honestly think Margot died because she gave up. And I guess a part of me thought I was wrong, that I had to learn how to live with parts

that were filled with guilt, that everyone who is good should die, and I should continue to live.

[Pause] It was impossible for me to reconcile, but at the same time, it was the best part of me, the part that survives no matter what.

Rosen: Let me go back here for a moment, then, with some questions. You mentioned that you were given advice by other twins as far as how to survive through some of the experiments. So when you were put in that room that first day at Auschwitz, were you put in a room that had twins that had been there for some time?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: They weren't all new twins?

Landowska: That's right.

Rosen: How long was it before the first experiments were performed on you there?

Landowska: We were there for about a month. I think that they probably were fattening us up a bit, getting us in pretty good health, and doing statistics on us all the time.

Rosen: What kind of statistics?

Landowska: Just measuring everything, you know. How you breathe--everything. And--gosh, some of those

experiments were ridiculous. I was lucky. Very lucky.

Rosen: Did it--how was the, how was the food there?

Landowska: It was fine, fine. They brought it over, the boys --some of the twins there had brothers, whatever, who--and they would, they would slip and there was a much better program communication with these smart kids. And of this--one boy was used constantly by Dr. Mengele as a messenger. Mark. Mark something. And he, Mengele, M-E-N-G-E-L-E, let's not forget that one--he [Mark] was a great favorite of his, and he used it to slip messages in and to tell--give messages to kids from their brothers or sisters or whatever.

Rosen: You mentioned Dr. Mengele, who supervised the experiments.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Did you ever meet him?

Landowska: Oh yes. Yes. And he was fascinated by us. He was always fascinated by blue eyes. For some reason all the Jews were supposed to have brown eyes or something! But--and he was fascinated because to him, I was not Jewish.

Rosen: You have blue eyes.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: I noticed that. And your sister?

Landowska: Yes. Yes.

Rosen: She had blue eyes also?

Landowska: Yes. It was interesting, because my mother had one brown eye, one blue eye. But my father was blue-eyed.

Rosen: You've said that "Dr. Mengele was fascinated by us," when you say "us," you were referring to--?

Landowska: My sister and I. Also Mark, he was blonde with blue eyes. And he--you see, Mengele seemed to have bought his own party line, which is really remarkable. I guess they believed all this [unclear], because he believed it all. So he was fascinated when he came up with the fair-haired, or as in my case, red-headed, blue-eyed individual.

Rosen: You said the first experiment took place approximately two months later.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: What was that first one?

Landowska: Oh, that was, I believe--I don't know about the diseases, I know what they discovered I had after the war, hepatitis. I think that was hepatitis.

I've had hepatitis all my life and was an amazing person as far as having hepatitis, I've had it over and over again.

Rosen: How many years did you spend in Auschwitz?

Landowska: Oh, Lord. It was like eighteen months or so before it was liberated.

Rosen: So you spent the duration of your period there, until liberation?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: And you remember that, when that was?

Landowska: I was dying, literally. I was very, very ill. I was down to no pounds at all. It was in January, the latter part of January 1944, I believe. And the--they came across the snow like angels, they tell me, I didn't see it and they--the Russian troops coming in. They came on skis, all in white. [Editor's note: The Russian troops liberated Auschwitz-Birkenau on January 27, 1945. There were more than 7,000 prisoners at the camp, and most were ill or dying.] And skied into Auschwitz to liberate it. And I was so bad. I was just really bad at that point. I think I had just-- [pauses].

Rosen: Going back some, after the hepatitis.

Landowska: Yes?

Rosen: We're looking at--oh, you said this is in 1942, that you were at Auschwitz?

Landowska: 1942, 1943, 1944. Yes.

Rosen: How long was it before they--before you had the next experiment?

Landowska: They gave us every opportunity to recover before they zapped us again, more or less. I shouldn't use that facetiously, because many people were zapped, literally, with electricity and so forth. And as I said, I was very fortunate with what was done to me, that I was able to survive it. And--but, you know, you would have at least a month or so, it seemed to me, in between. And, you know, you'd recover. And then they'd do something else. Scary.

Rosen: You mentioned several bodily parts removed--

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: --from your--which eardrum?

Landowska: Which one? This one [gestures].

Rosen: Your left ear drum?

Landowska: Yes. Yes.

Rosen: And your appendix?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: And your--and one--?

Landowska: Gall bladder and kidney.

Rosen: Gall bladder and one kidney? Were these all done at separate operations?

Landowska: Yes, yes.

Rosen: Was anesthesia used at any of these?

Landowska: A couple of them, but not much. You know, they were, they were really using it very sparingly, because they needed it for the troops.

Rosen: Do you--did Dr. Mengele actually perform any of the operations on you?

Landowska: I don't know. I have--I think so. I think that the kidney, he did, with help from somebody else. But you couldn't really tell, because they did wear masks. You see, I believe that all of these doctors did the--they were not successful in kidding themselves about what they were doing. They knew what they were doing was unethical, and they protected their identity as--well, Mengele didn't care. But others did. They kept wearing masks all the time.

Rosen: In dealing with the doctors and the nurses there, how did they treat you?

Landowska: The most important person, Mengele was the nicest. It's hard for people to realize, but he could be very charming with children.

Rosen: When was it that your sister died?

Landowska: [Pauses] I don't know exactly. [Softly] Probably the middle of the year. No, I don't know. I can't even--it was warm. [Pauses] It was very--I mean, she died and I left. I do not remember much at all. [Unclear]. Just opted out. I mean, I left. I just--I was just about as schizy [schizophrenic] as I could get. I--I don't recall anything. I didn't care.

Rosen: When--you had a number of different experiments, or a number of different surgeries and number of different experiments performed on you. In addition to surgeries, the implanting of at least one disease, hepatitis. Were there other diseases that you were given that you know of?

Landowska: Well, I had rheumatic fever, but I don't know whether that was actually--see that's the problem, it was just a matter of checking my blood and seeing what's there, and it was a hotbed of bacteria and diseases, whatever you want to call it.

Experiments in endocrinopathy were probably the most interesting, because they had long-reaching effects. I've had nine children. Seven boys were born [with] massive anomalies. Without legs, liver and chest cavities. The geneticist in this area, named Berman Krauss [?], he's a very good one, they, they're still going, "I think something happened by mistake!" Because no one can quite figure out what happened.

My seventh child was female, and she was placenta previa, and I almost hemorrhaged to death in the third trimester with her. When she was born, she was fine. Then Rose [?] was my ninth child, the only child I had carried full-term, and she was born fine, but a slow learner. But Rose--when both daughters went through puberty, they developed thyroid problems and diabetes. Well, one became diabetic, the other became hypoglycemic. Laurie, by the time she was sixteen, had cancer.

Rosen: Your first daughter?

Landowska: Yes. She has, she was looked back. Seems to be in remission, has been for a number of years. Rose has had most of one ovary removed, with repeated

problems with her ovaries. We're not sure. We just--I have a marvelous doctor here in town by the name of Al Fagan, and he teaches at TCOM [Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine, now part of the University of North Texas Health Science Center], and fortunately he's a wonderful family person--

Rosen: TCOM?

Landowska: TCOM. T-I-C-O-M [sic]. It's the osteopathic school, [Texas] College of Osteopathic Medicine. It's right down the street here, the end of the street. And he took care of my daughter during her pregnancy, because we thought, "Oh my goodness, what if this goes on and on and on?" Her son was born just fine. So we're hoping that if this was as a result [of] things that they did [to me], you know, has run its course. But the problem is that they did not know what they were doing, what they were experimenting with. There's no way that these were valid experiments.

Rosen: You mentioned that you don't clearly remember at what point your sister died, but that she died from--

Landowska: That was a pretty good guess, because it was after the kidney transplant. We don't have proof, but it's a pretty good guess.

Rosen: And it was warm at that time of year when she died?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Were you used for additional experiments after her death?

Landowska: Not that I know of. I don't know why I wasn't killed.

Rosen: Do you remember--?

Landowska: I just know that they were fascinated by the fact that I didn't experience pain.

Rosen: Do you remember how much time passed between approximately the time your sister died and the time that the Russians came in?

Landowska: No. No.

Rosen: Did--after your sister died, you said that they didn't, they did not perform additional experiments on you.

Landowska: Not that I know of, I don't recall any.

Rosen: Did you remain in the same hospital setting?

Landowska: I was found outside. Compound 1A, I believe, which was a ways from that. I was found hidden under

floorboards in the barracks. One other woman was with me. She was about nineteen years old. She later testified at Nuremburg [in the war crimes trials]. She was a lab technician, Polish woman. She had been--well, maybe she was about twenty-one by that time, but she had been studying so that she could give--she knew a lot more about what had taken place. She'd been a twin, she'd also lived, although her twin was dead. Neither one of us knows how we got there! Neither one of us knows anything about it. I--I just don't know. Perhaps someone was good enough to keep us from being killed. I don't know.

Rosen: You said that you were found in a floorboard?

Landowska: Yes, underneath the floorboards in this deserted compound.

Rosen: Do you know how much you weighed at the time?

Landowska: Oh, about sixty-five pounds.

Rosen: And--sixty-five pounds, and were you--do you know how tall you were at the time?

Landowska: Just about the same height I am now, 5'1". 5'1½".

Rosen: Do you actually remember being in, under the floorboards or--?

Landowska: I think I do, but you know, it's one of those things. I think I do. But I was told so much, it's like when you're a child and something is related to you over and over again. [Pauses] That day, the primary concern right off was keeping me alive, and then of course it was very obvious I was a weirdo because I insisted on speaking nothing but English, and nobody could understand why this English-speaking child was here! I mean, this was extraordinary, but I--I never spoke German again.

Rosen: Why is that?

Landowska: To have no intention of ever speaking that nasty language again.

Rosen: Ms. Landowska, you've talked about the first--in this interview, you've talked mostly in the first person [plural; "we"] until about the time your sister died or when you were in the hospital, and you shifted to third person [sic; first person singular; "I"] about what you've been told and where you were found, and I was wondering if you could explain that a little.

Landowska: Hmm. I don't--I wasn't aware of that at all. [Pauses] Hmm. It's so much that I don't know about

it, and so much I have been told. That may have something to do with it, that I--hmm.

Rosen: What happened when you were found?

Landowska: Well, I was placed in a hospital situation and I left as soon as possible. I was sent to British troops, where the British were. Which was very nice, yes. They were trying to identify us! This child. And--because my--of course, as far as they were concerned, it was unaccented English, what I was doing there, and--[sighs]. Just trying to identify me. I was that ill. I did not know who I was. And then it was a very difficult time after that, because when I did decide to remember who I was, everybody told me I was not that person. Because the records showed that my twin sister had died--[she] had lived and I had died. It was very, very confusing. That's why I say they didn't keep records that well. And coupled with it was the fact that [it] showed my hair still parted on the left-end side, but it parted on the right-end side too, and suddenly now I was doing everything with my right hand.

Rosen: I want to go back here for a moment.

Landowska: [Laughter] It was a great confusion, very difficult to keep my sanity in all that.

Rosen: Earlier I asked you about what other diseases you may have been given. You mentioned hepatitis and possibly rheumatic fever?

Landowska: Yes, yes. And damage on my heart.

Rosen: It damaged your heart?

Landowska: Yes. And you always carry rheumatic fever. I don't know whether you're aware of that, but yes. For instance, they won't even pull a tooth out of my head but they put me on antibiotics forever and a day first. But I've had very slight damage on my heart, but worked very hard to improve that, and I just--

Rosen: Were there any other diseases beyond those two?

Landowska: [Softly] It's hard to remember now. There were a couple of other things, and I can't remember. Selective memory. I can't remember.

Rosen: If your memory is selective, and you see where you had the power of self-hypnosis--

Landowska: Yes?

Rosen: Is it possible that you could have assumed the identity of your sister?

Landowska: In what way? What do you mean?

Rosen: I was just wondering that--?

Landowska: --maybe I'm really not who I say I am? Ooh! No, there was one way to prove it, it was be very difficult. And so that's finally what was hit on, and I played the piano and the harpsichord very well, and Margot never touched it. So that was it. And in fact [I] won several Bach competitions in Europe by the time I was sixteen. I--I am who I think I am, but it was really hard proving it. And I did, somehow or other, take on part of my mother, parts of my twin sister in their deaths. And I'm very comfortable with it, because, you know, it's a way that I need in order to help them live still, just fine. And it's been pretty healthy for me, because I think that part of me that really enjoys life so much is Margot.

Rosen: Can you talk about your experiences in recuperating after you were taken?

Landowska: Oh--

Rosen: You talked about you were sent--because you spoke English--

Landowska: Years, years. Vomiting food, vomiting memories. Everything. The entire representation of systems. Biting into a carrot and suddenly being back and

going through all the memories. Seeing Nefertiti for the first time and remembering a woman who looked just like that. And then she died. The-- every, every system has some memory. It's--and it comes on you very suddenly. It was--I was at a restaurant in Amarillo, [Texas] called Red Butler's, a little dinky-bound type home. [I] was sitting in there one evening in the 1970s waiting for dinner, I was close to the air conditioning vent, and got the people with me and the conversation was going on and just [snaps] within that period of time, I was back, from the breeze across my bare shoulders, I was back, naked, bare, in pain, blood dripping, all of the sensations. And then gone, you know, passed all through. I mean [unclear], constant bombardment, and just gradually overcoming it, gradually. Years to put it behind.

Rosen: You mentioned blood dripping. In telling me about your story during the Holocaust, I don't recall you mentioning any time you [were] bleeding.

Landowska: Well, just from the surgery, and blood dripping, itching. You may not feel the pain of it, but it itches. And it--dripping on you. It's--all of

these things, it's constant, and as I said, to begin with it's really hard to eat without regurgitating the food. But then it's learning how to live without regurgitating all these memories.

Rosen: When you were taken--when the war ended, you were given over to British authorities?

Landowska: Yes. It was--I was sent, actually, I ended up in Strasburg, in a hospital there.

Rosen: Let's back up a little. The Russians liberated--

Landowska: Right.

Rosen: And--?

Landowska: And there were nuns that were brought in, there were also some nursing people and so forth. I was very ill, don't remember much. When I spoke, it was English. They said, you know, "This English child, there's no place for her here. She doesn't understand our language"--this is what was given to me later on--"We need to send her over," and at that time they had a hospital in Strasburg that was British. Eventually I made my way there, and from there, they're still trying to find out who I was. I was discovered by Alan Davis.

Rosen: Who was Alan Davis?

Landowska: He was my mother's cousin. And in the late 1920s [and] 1930s, he was bohemian; the three of them chummed around Paris together. He had a jazz band there.

Rosen: Who's the three of them?

Landowska: My mother and my father and Alan Davis. And they chummed around Paris, all were real close, and after the war, well, he was trying to find her before the war, you know, trying to get her out, trying to get her to leave. He went looking for her, and he ended up with me. And I looked enough like my mother at that time, you know, the same coloring except for the eye business. And he took me in. He put me back together again.

Rosen: So he found you, Alan Davis found you in a hospital in Strasburg?

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: Had you ever met him before?

Landowska: No.

Rosen: Had you ever heard of him before?

Landowska: Yes, oh yes.

Rosen: You'd heard of your cousin?

Landowska: Yes. But he--he was a great giant of a black Scot, you know, the black Scots had come from a Spanish

shipwreck off those islands. Great man. And he just, I still remember meeting him. He didn't give me much choice. He said, "You're my little girl now." And that was it. And he took me to an island off the coast of Nova Scotia, and in a little over six months, he brought me from fractions to boolean algebra, and just spent all his time teaching me. Constantly. And he had lots of money, and he just took me out there, and we were on the river and the ocean in a boat, we did a lot of things together. It's wild.

And there wasn't anything he couldn't do. I mean, generally it came out really cock-eyed but he did it. He started to build a boat and God it was a horrible-looking thing! Fastest thing on the river, but it looked horrible-looking! [Laughter] Put a keel on it like the *Queen Mary*! [Laughter] It could turn on a dime. But he was loads of fun.

And the only thing he did that I might criticize him for is he really didn't want me to be in touch with the Jewish heritage, with anything Jewish. He just felt that that was memories, leave that behind, and the one thing

that he did do a good job with, and that was [pauses]--the statement, well he told me two things. Two things that really stuck. One of them was, "If you hate them, you will finish the job they started. You have to put it behind you. You have to live." And the other one was, "Aim for the sky, lass, and you may hit the top of the lamp post, but if you aim for the top of the lamp post, you'll never get off of the ground." [Chuckles] So he, he was quite, quite a wonderful man.

Rosen: What religion was he?

Landowska: Anglican.

Rosen: Did he bring you up then as a--?

Landowska: Yes, but you see, he was very devout, not in a way that you go constantly. He was a very devout man. And many of his beliefs were Judaic. Like for instance, he believed you went right into the ground, really fast. I mean, would have no one view his body.

Rosen: You mean after death?

Landowska: Yes. Yes! But I mean, his instructions on his, you know, burial--because his death was another hard thing for me, very hard. Because he gave me life, and I gave him death, because he had

horrendous paralysis. And he--we could only communicate through Morse code, you know, them blinking at me.

Rosen: At the end of his life?

Landowska: Yes. And it was, it was very, very hard.

Rosen: And looking back, in retrospect, why do you think you survived when others didn't?

Landowska: I kept on breathing. That's a survivalist [instinct]: you keep on breathing. Living is something else. Quality of life, that's something else. But surviving is--there are a lot of people out there that you will run into that if you continue to interview, who are still surviving. They're not living, they have been destroyed.

Rosen: You mentioned that when your sister died, you prayed to God that you could die also.

Landowska: Yes.

Rosen: How do you--how do you explain that with surviving? That you kept on breathing? When you state that there was a time that you did not want to breathe, that you wanted to die and join your mother and your sister.

Landowska: Intellectually, something within me was not going to let go. In 1971, I was caught in a blizzard in

Nebraska. I had two children with me, we had gone out. We were walking, a picnic, and a blizzard came down upon us. You can be completely disoriented in a blizzard--well, you come from the Chicago area so you may have some experience with that. We were in the country, we were living in my back-to-the-earth period, and I took one child, Lauren, and I put her on my back. I carried the other one facing me, she was around eighteen months at the time, and--the other one was four. And I walked a mile and a half, through snow, and I mean it was coming down fast, up to here [gestures]!

Rosen: Up to your--?

Landowska: Those kids--yes, up to my calves. I mean it just moved in on us. And I was completely disoriented but I just kept going. I was going in the wrong way but I finally found a place, and--but it was the same thing again. There's something inside you, you know, and this was-- [Pauses; with emotion] There was my mother with me. [Pauses] I never realized that. [Chuckles]

Rosen: Do you have any bitterness to anyone?

Landowska: [Pauses] Oh, it probably comes on me. I would like to say no, but I think it comes on me in a diffused sort of way. When someone asks a stupid question, you know, or someone says it never happened. Or --ignorance. Sometimes I get angry with the blacks I work with, because I worked hard for their rights, and they know nothing about what had happened to us, and are not really interested. So [unclear]--so I say off the top, no, but yes, I feel the surges of anger and energy in that, that are directed towards something else that I think is really--yes. But I still have pain there.

Rosen: Any bitterness towards the people involved directly in the Holocaust?

Landowska: [Sighs] Yes, it's just that--there's so many, you can't spend all your time.

Rosen: Collectively?

Landowska: Yes, collectively. All the Polish and the Romanians, were worse than the Jews, I mean--.

Rosen: Were treated worse--?

Landowska: I mean no! Were--Germans, I meant, were worse in treating the Jews than the Germans were.

Rosen: You need to back up here.

Landowska: Okay. I'm saying that the Polish and the Romanians were worse than Germans, in many cases, in the ways they treated the Jews. And others have done a wonderful documentary by a French--I don't know whether you've seen [it], I can't even remember his name now, but where he went to Auschwitz and where he went to the villages in Poland that are completely devoid of people now, Jews. People are living in the houses that were obviously Jewish houses because of the art work and so forth. And it means nothing to them. You get very angry watching that, because they say, "Oh, we were glad to get rid of them. The Jewish women were too beautiful, our men looked at them." That was what they were saying. It's just--[laughter]. And yet those are the little things we can always be angry [about], and the only thing is that if you take the anger you've got to put it into something, try and be constructive with it. Try to change something.

Rosen: By the same token whereas you may have greater--expressed greater bitterness toward the Romanians and Poles than the Germans, are there any people that you have fondness for?

Landowska: Yes, the Danes.

Rosen: Why the Danes? You haven't mentioned anything about Danes yet, so why the Danes?

Landowska: Oh! Historically, oh, the king rode out of the gates and he said, "They put on the star of David," and all of his [unclear], everybody wearing a Star of David. The Danes did a great deal with getting Jews over to Scandinavia and Sweden, and--oh yes.

Rosen: At the beginning of this interview, I asked you a couple of questions I don't recall if we actually addressed, and that was your education and your occupation.

Landowska: Oh. [My] education: I have an LRSM in music, Licentiate of the Royal School of Music. I have --

Rosen: I'm sorry, the what?

Landowska: Licentiate of the Royal School of Music, in London.

Rosen: Can we spell that, please?

Landowska: Oh.

Rosen: Licentiate?

Landowska: L-I-C-E-N-T-I-A-T-E. I have a BS from St. Francis Xavier [in Nova Scotia], the university. See,

you're not the only Jew that can go to a state school! [Laughter]

Rosen: [Laughter]

Landowska: And that was in industrial psychology. And I have a Master's from USC [University of Southern California] in clinical psychology, and then my PhD from USC. Then I went back and became a Gestaltist and got all the latest modalities a few years back.

Rosen: Your Ph.D. is in what?

Landowska: Psychology.

Rosen: And today, your occupation--?

Landowska: Oh, a little bit of everything! I am a house mother for the Kappa Deltas and the Alpha Delta Pis, sixty-eight girls.

Rosen: At where?

Landowska: At Texas Christian University [TCU]. I am advisor for the yearbook here. I work for Willow Park Educational Services, working with the culturally deprived in rural Texas, under contract with the state. And I teach writing in Upward Bound at TCU, which is as far as school education is. That's all I do. I also write books in my spare time.

Rosen: What kind of books do you write?

Landowska: Poetry, children's books, and for the heck of it right now I'm working on a murder [novel]. So everybody I see, I think, "Oh! Wouldn't it be fun to murder them?" [Laughter]

Rosen: Do you write anything beyond books? Or aside from books?

Landowska: What do you mean?

Rosen: Well.

Landowska: Love letters, sort of there? [Laughter]

Rosen: No, no, no. But your interest in poetry as a child, you were--

Landowska: Oh, well yes, [my poetry collection published in 1984] *I Have No Name* was nominated for a Pulitzer [Prize], *Generations*, *No Sun in Grenada* [?]-I went to Grenada after the invasion there, and won an award for that, a National Poetry Award. And then *Threads*, which is a song of love to Alan Davis. And that won a Nortex Book Award in 1986. And *The Rainbow Night* didn't win anything. It was nominated, though, for a Newberry Award, children's book. But, you know, that's what I do with the writing. I've had a lot of luck just getting published. [It's] extraordinary, considering poetry.

Rosen: Anything you'd like to add? To bring this to a close?

Landowska: I don't think so. No. [Softly] I--no, I can't think of anything.

Rosen: I'd like to thank you, Ms. Landowska, for your time and your help in this project. I hope that it hasn't been too trying for you. After the children who are too young, students who are too young to have lived through the Holocaust, that by reading or listening to your tale it will enlighten them and helpfully prevent future organized genocide.

Landowska: It was not the first. And it won't be the last. That's a mistake people make, thinking this was the first. Remember the Armenians who were all marched out into that desert? That's what we have to remember. It can happen to everyone, it doesn't have anything to do with religion. It's a lot to do with people and how they feel about one another.

Rosen: Thank you.

[End of interview]