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Unknown Speaker: Good evening, and in the name of Snow College and the Tanner Lecture Series, I am pleased to welcome you tonight to our program. I'd like to give a special tank—thanks to Grace Tanner for the generous gift that she gave that made this series of lectures possible; also to the staff here at the institute who allowed us to move into this building when it was obvious that our program was so popular we would not be able to fit into the music building where we had originally planned to have it. I'd like to also thank Barbara Schwack and Zina Woods for the beautiful prelude music that was played. Our speaker tonight, as many of you know—who have read her book—is a remarkable person and an expressive writer and a moving speaker. She will be introduced to us tonight by the person most responsible for bringing her here, and that is Mrs. Sonia Acock.

Sonia Acock: There are two people directly responsible for me being here tonight, and I would like to honor them by having them stand. My mother and father, CeeRay and Geneva Peterson; please will you stand. Because without them, I would not be here. They have come from Pleasant Grove. And I want to thank my husband and my daughter and my son.

My sister Zina played the piano, sight-reading, when she came in the door tonight. I said, "Would you please play for Barbara?" Barbara and I play together in the Utah Valley Symphony in Provo. And I appreciate her playing this beautiful Jewish music. Thank you, Barbara.

Christmas Day. Wait. First off, Alicia wants you to know that all books come directly from Bantam Book; she makes nothing on these; she's not here on business, she's here as a gift.

Christmas Day, 1991, on the way to Salt Lake. I opened the book *Alicia: My Story*, as we were driving to our daughter's in Salt Lake, and I began reading it to my family. And I was so overwhelmed by the love I felt that I said, "We must, we must finish this book." My sister had sent it to me from California, and it was autographed, "To the dear Acock family."

I belong to a book group here in town, and the—of several women from the county, and we read books; everyone must read the book. And then we discuss it. We have been reading quite a few of Potok's books, and in January, when we were discussing the book that we would soon be reading, *My Name is A—The Gift of Asher Lev*, I said, "I have wonderful Jewish book we need to read; it's *Alicia: My Story*." And Elaine Bernam said, after we talked about it, "Sonia, call her."

I called my sister that night in California and I said, "Debbie, I'd love to have you come visit me. I'll pay for the gas if you'll come." She says, "What's the catch?" And I said, "You have to bring Alicia." She laughed, and she said, "To Ephraim?" And I said, "Oh, please." And she said, "Sonia, she goes all over. There's no way she's coming to Ephraim." And I said, "Well, call her anyway and just see."

The next night, about 10:30, the phone rang and I picked it up: "Hello." "You will pick Alicia up at the airport on May twenty-first at 11:45 a.m. in Salt Lake. I said, "There's no way I can do that. I don't have the money." I said, "Is she paying the—for her ticket?" "Oh, no," she said, "Alicia said you'd find a way." I called Elaine; I said, "Elaine, what are we going to do?" And she said, "Don't panic. We'll find a way."

I took the book to Gary Parnell; I said, "Gary, read this." He said, "I'm so busy." I said, "Please, just read it and see." After about sixty pages, Gary called me and said, "Get her, we will find a way." And I want to thank Gary and those responsible, and especially the Tanners for making this possible.

I want you to know that when I picked her up yesterday, there was a meeting of kindred spirits. God answers prayers and if you don't believe me you go out and look at the moisture that has fallen today; Alicia brought that rain with her, and God brought her here. He does hear prayers; he heard her mother's prayers and Alicia's prayers. You have heard my prayers by being here, my heavenly father heard my prayers by having you come tonight to honor her. May I present Sister Alicia.

Alicia Appleman-Jurman: Thank you, my darling. There's not much I can say after such a beautiful introduction, but Sonia was rightfully calling me Sister Alicia; this is my tenth time with your congregation. I had—I was very privileged to speak in all the Los Angeles area and in Grand Junction and this is my tenth time, and I feel like it's homecoming for me. So thank you very, very much for inviting me, and I'm truly honored to be standing today in front of you. I want to—to thank the Acock family for hosting me, because I just walked into like a piece of love; I feel very much loved.

As you know already that my name is Alicia, and I'm a survivor of the Holocaust. I'm also an author of this book called *Alicia: My Story*. This is the hard cover, which is already a collector's item; if you are interested, you can still receive it and buy it. And this of course is the love of my life: this is the book I wrote for the children, and it is going into schools now as required reading, like *Anne Frank*. And this is actually my dream: that children should read it, there should be boxes of little *Anne Frank* and *Alicia* alongside, and children should read it and learn.

I speak from fifth grade to university students, and very often I am in elementary schools, and the youngsters will come up to me from third and fourth grade and say to me—looking at me with those beautiful eyes and say, “Alicia, you wrote the book for the fifth graders; could you write a book for us?” And I said, “Sure, I'll try to write a book for you.” And for my college assignment, I wrote this book and it's called *Six Cherry Blossoms*. It has not been published because the publisher did—would cost twelve dollars to buy it, and I cannot handle a twelve-dollar book.

Anyway, this is how I have it, in this form; and it is six for the six million Jewish people who died, and cherries because I love cherries. My husband illustrated it for me on his computer; I had already—since, offers from some artists to illustrate it, but I couldn't hurt my husband's feelings. This is an allegory to the Holocaust; it's a story told like *Alicia*; it is told by a little branch from a cherry tree.

The king of Sedonia decided to industrialize and destroy the cherry orchard; and the little branch called Blacky was torn away from its mother and had fallen into a brook; and how Simon the Blue Jay, a family friend, saved that little branch. And there are all kinds of adventures of the hundreds nearly killed, Simon the Blue Jay. But eventually Simon flew Blacky over to safety, into a new kingdom, into Batavia, and anchored that little branch into an apple tree. And the apple tree gave it life. My apple tree is Israel and the United States; and I'm Blacky, that little branch, torn away from my family tree. And then eventually there are all kinds of adventures in it; it's really something; I really—I must say I love myself.

At the end—the children love it. At the end, I tell the children, “Yes, I grew cherries on my branch, but my children and grandchildren grew apples on their branches. But when you ate the apple, you could see a red streak running through the white meat, and then you can taste the sweetness of the black cherry.” And this is my story.

I’m going to tell you today how I wrote my book, why I wrote it, and what is in this book. I came to the United States in 1952 from Israel. I came to Israel in 1947; that’s when my book ends. I went to school there, and during the war of independence—1948, 1949—I was a combat soldier, and later a welfare officer in the Israeli Navy. I met there an American by the name of Gabriel Appleman, who came to help us save our lives. And I tell my friends I married him out of gratitude, but you know he was really a very handsome American. We were married in 1950 and in 1952 his father was very, very ill; he had a brain tumor operation, which was benign, but he couldn’t go back to work. We came back to help our parents. As soon as I was fluent in the somewhat complicated English language, I started telling my story. At the beginning, I told it to adults, but adults couldn’t hear me; it was too painful for them, it was too soon after the Holocaust.

So I took my story where it rightfully belongs: to the students and to the classrooms. And the students wanted to hear me. And very often, they ask me, “Alicia, could you write this story down for our parents? They would love to read it.” So I promised them, as soon as I stopped talking, I will start writing. And it took many years later, like twenty-nine years later; in 1982, my husband’s company moved us to Holland. He—they were building a refinery there. And there, from 1982 to 1985, I sat and wrote my story.

I used to get up at five o’clock in the morning, have a cup of coffee and a slice of bread, and go to my typewriter and transcribe the notes I have taken the night before. I used to type a chapter and then give it to my husband to correct the grammar and punctuation. English is my first language, but when I was writing this book, I was conversing with my parents, with my brothers, in three different languages: in Polish, Hebrew, and Russian. So my grammar was a little bit out of sync. I used to type twelve, thirteen hours a day.

At the beginning I had to tell myself, “Alicia, remember: tell the story the way you remember it when you were very young, like from five to fourteen, and then seventeen.” But after a while, I didn’t have to remind myself anymore; I went back into the past, so deeply back into the past, that I actually became that young girl, Alicia, again.

And I remembered everything. I remembered every house, every tree, every flower; all the wonderful times, the memories of my family, which were happiness; but I also remembered every anguish, every death, every tragedy. And many times, I cried bitter tears. When the night came, of course, the nightmares came. But just the same, the

following morning at five o'clock, I was there at the typewriter, typing away. If I think back at the years, I don't believe there was any force in the world that could have stopped me from finishing my story.

And when I finished my story, after three years, I had twenty-six chapters; but I also had a problem. After living so intensely in the past for three solid years, I couldn't really let go of my family again. I really didn't want to leave them again. I would have loved to stay in some kind of form, just to be on—in the same city where they were. But of course that was impossible.

I remember our daughter came to visit us and she was talking to me, and after a while she says, "Mother, where are you?" And I know my daughter was standing there—this lovely nineteen-year-old girl—and talking to me; and I was listening to her and everything was coming like through a tunnel, and I couldn't really relate to her because I was little Alicia again. And it took me a whole year to get myself back into the present time, telling myself over and over again that the people I love live in me, live through me. And now, I have to keep my promise to the children.

Some of you are probably writers, and you know—to begin with, you have to get an agent. And this is not an easy thing to do when you are dealing with a book about the Holocaust; people are very afraid of a book about the Holocaust. And so are the agents. And it took me a long time—first of all, I made sixty copies, and I let all my friends read my story, before it's even published. I say, "Whatever happens, my friends should know the story." And everybody was reading the story from manuscripts all over the country.

And then two years later, I remember one day at seven o'clock in the morning, I received a telephone call from New York, and the woman identified herself, and she says, "Alicia, my name is Sarah, and I am with a big agency in New York. Eh, I read your story, and I—"she didn't say I read your story—"I cried all over your manuscript." So I say, "Good. Did you read the story?" She says, "Oh, no, I don't have the time to read." So I say, "Well, how did you cry all over this manuscript?" She said, "I peeked." Well, I say, "Peeking, I don't think you will be my agent." She says, "No." I say, "You are afraid to stake your reputation?" She says, "Something to that affect." And then I had one more try: I say, "You know my book a little bit like Anne Frank's." And then she said, "Well, Anne Frank is dead." At that point, I told her, "I'm sorry I cannot oblige you."

And six months later, through friends of friends, I received a telephone call at seven o'clock our time, which is ten o'clock New York time; and the young man says, "Alicia, my name is George Greenfield, and I will be your agent." So I say to him, "My god, George! You drink so early in the morning?" (audience laughs) What else could I think? He says—he says, "Alicia, I'm not drunk. I love your story; just send me sixteen

manuscripts.” He distributed—hand-distributed all these manuscripts, and five publishers wanted the story.

Viking—the young lady called me, says, “Alicia, I’ll pay you anything for this story. I want it.” So I told her I didn’t write it for money. I will go with Bantam because Bantam is paperbacks; and paperbacks are the books the children can afford to buy in the schools. And I’ll tell you, when this manuscript reached Bantam, it was as though the angels kissed it. They didn’t make any changes at all in my story. Again, all they corrected was grammar, punctuation, and verification of my birthday, because my editor wanted to make sure that the reader understands that I was very young at that time.

Why would I put myself through such anguish of three solid years? For several reasons. I had four brothers. My oldest brother, Zachary, was seventeen years old when he and his friends organized a resistance group; he was betrayed, he was caught, and he was hung. And then we buried him at the Jewish cemetery; I swore on his grave, that if I lived—if [emphasis added]—I will tell his story, and I will tell the story of many brave boys and girls your age, who fought very valiantly; but fighting back was a sure death. And I stand very humbly in front of you today, as their silenced voice, as their speaker for them.

And also, as you know, six million Jewish people—men, women, and children—were singled out for total destructions by the Nazis and their collaborators, for one reason only: because of their religion; because they were Jewish. Half a million Gypsies also died because they were Gypsies, and four and a half million political prisoners. Eleven million innocent people died. But not only eleven million people died; but with them died something, which is vital for humanity’s survival. Humanity’s dignity died with them in the camps and in the ghettos. And it died of a disease called indifference. The world knew what was happening to us; the world was indifferent; the world was silent.

But you beautiful people have to build a secure future for yourselves. And in order to do that, you must turn to that page in history; that page in history belongs to you. Don’t be afraid to open a Holocaust book written by a survivor, like *Anne Frank*, or *Night* by Wiesel, or *Alicia*, because in these books you will find a legacy my tragic generation left to you. And it is a legacy of love, a legacy of believe in God, and a legacy of heroism.

So what is in this book? I remember myself from the age of five, when I was a little girl, living in Poland in the Carpathian Mountains, in a little village called Rosulna. My father had leveled one of the hills, build us a house; he diverted the river, put a pool around it, put a couple of drawbridges; and I felt like a princess. I had three older brothers, who bossed me around as older brothers do. I also had a younger brother, whom I bossed around as older sisters do. I had a father who absolutely adored me; he said, “I am going

to continue having children until I have my darling daughter.” And I will tell you; he had one handful of a darling daughter if I say so.

We had a beautiful orchard in back of our house; and when summer came, the black cherries ripened and the early apples ripened, I used to climb into the cherry tree and have myself some cherries for breakfast. And then I used to shake an apple branch and continue with this delicious breakfast. Since this was such a lovely place, we had many visitors, and one of them was one particular aunt who used to get up in the morning and sit under my favorite apple tree. So at the age of five, I was too polite to ask her, “Auntie, would you move, please; I have to shake that branch.” No, I couldn’t do that; I was too polite. But I did, however—I took a cherry, ate some of the meat; the rest I put between my fingers, aimed it very carefully, and shot it straight into my aunt’s cleavage. (audience laughs)

After a couple of shots like that, my aunt used to call to my mother, “Frieda, Frieda! How do cherry pits fall from your apple tree?” And of course, my mother came running into the orchard, and she looked straight into my guilty eyes—oh, I was punished; I never got away with anything! But not this time. You know, my aunt was a very bossy lady; she was walking around all the time, she says, “Alicia, don’t do this, do this; don’t this, do this.” She tried to make an instant lady out of me at the age of five; I was just little mountain goat. So, my mother didn’t like it very much, and I didn’t like it very much; so whenever I pelted my aunt my do—my mother just closed her eyes. She punished me in other ways.

When I was five years old, our hometown—our home burned down, and we moved to the city of Buczacz. Those who have the maps, would you be so kind and turn the page over? The pronunciation of the city of Buczacz has a lot of /ch/, /ch/s, because the Polish language has a lot of /ch/s. Did you find it? It’s the beginning of my journey. The city of Buczacz was really a very lovely city; it goes back in the history of—as you will read, my father was an officer there during World War I, and he loved the city. It was surrounded by forests and meadows; it had the river Stryppa in the center. It had 80,000 people, of which 18,000 were Jewish people, and the rest were Polish and Ukrainian people.

Of course, we children went to the regular government school; Poland is a Catholic school—Catholic country, so I went to a Catholic school. It wasn’t taught by nuns; it was taught by regular teachers. But once a day, for an hour, the priest came and taught the Christian children their religion, and Professor Kriegel took the Jewish children into another room and taught us our religion. But the way children do, we stayed with each other and learned from each other, so I had a lot of respect for my friends’ religion.

In the afternoon, however, I went to Hebrew school; and I learned how to read and write Hebrew, I learned all about Jewish history, Jewish traditions; about the people who dating back thousands of years. And when I think back at the times of the gifts my parents gave to me as you give to your children, this was the greatest gift my parents gave to me: this strong Jewish identity. Because later on, when the Germans came and the Ukrainians and Poles, and told us children that we are not human beings, that we don't deserve to live, and called us all kinds of names—do you know what they sounded like to me? They sounded to me like raving maniacs. I didn't pay any attention, what they were saying. I knew at all times, who I was. I was a Jewish girl from a very fine Jewish home, belonging to a peoplehood, and I was very proud of my identity.

I didn't really know much about anti-Semitism until I was about eight years old. In your family, you have brothers and sisters, and I'm sure you love them all well; but you must love one particular brother, one particular sister, in a special way. Right? Well, I loved my oldest brother, Zachary, in a very special way. For the simple reason: he loved me in a very special way. He was a very fine musician, a violinist, and he composed songs for me and played them for me.

But most of all, he was a soccer player, and I loved to go with him and his friends to the field. Whenever his friends saw me coming, they used to say to Zachary, "You're not taking your sister along, are you, Zachary?" And he says, "What do you mean? Wherever I go, Alicia goes." [Zachary] patted me over the head, and they were very unhappy. But they loaded me up with their blanket and their shoes and their ball, and I went up the hill like a happy donkey. But, you know, my brother was a goaler, and so whenever the—his friends were running with the ball, I used to trip them. (laughs) So, I was a nuisance, really; they were right, but my brother loved me and I loved him; and so, I was kind of a loveable nuisance.

My brother was a student at the conservatory of music in the big city of Lvov. In the late spring of 1938, he came home very badly beaten. Three Polish students fall upon him, beat him up, destroyed his violin, for one reason only: because he was a Jewish boy. When he came home, my father asked my brother as your father would ask you: "Zachary, how come you didn't fight back?" But Zachary couldn't; he was a musician, he had to be careful with his hands. Besides, Zachary didn't know how.

So whenever he—when he felt better, my br—my father took my brother into the meadows and trained him how to fight. And I remember the day my father and brother went off, I followed them. I was supposed to go to school, but I follow, and I hid in the bushes; and I watched my father train my brother, and I picked up a few pointers here and there. And I was there a whole week. And then when I came back to school, teacher looked horrified, say, "Alicia, where were you?" So I told her what happened to my

brother. She said, “I understand, but you have to do all your homework from that week.” And I did great homework.

Then during the summer again, my father trained my brother, and in the fall of 1938, my brother went back to school. And of course we were anxiously waiting to hear what happened. And the then letter came. And it says, “Dear mom and dad, The Polish students fell upon me again. But this time, I knew how to fight; I am fine, my violin is fine. And I left them with a couple of good punches, just to remember me by.” And there was a letter enclosed to me, and it says, “Dear Alicia, I hope you didn’t get into too much trouble with your teacher when our father trained us.”

As you know from history, in 1939, Germany signed an on—non-aggression treaty with Russia, and both countries invaded Poland; my country, Poland. They really split Poland into two halves: west—western Poland fell under the German occupation; eastern Poland fell under the Russian occupation. My hometown, fair Buczacz, fell under the Russian occupation. I was nine years old when the war started September 1, 1939.

I was a very curious girl, so I went to the center of the city to see what was happening. And I saw soldiers speaking a language I didn’t understand, running around and shopping; they were so happy, they were emptying all the stores. They had little red enamel stars, and they were giving them to the children, so I picked up a few for my brothers. And then when I came home, my mother asked me, “Alicia, what did you see?” So I told her, “Happy soldiers.”

But when school started in September, and I opened the door to our classroom, I was in shock, because where the Madonna and the baby were, there were hangs—the portraits of Stalin and Lenin, huge portraits hanging there. Even though I was not a Christian, I was very hurt on my—behalf of my friends. So my mind started ticking, and I say to myself, “I’m going to do some re-hanging.”

And I went looking all over for the Madonna and the baby, and I finally found her in the basement near the piano, wrapped up in the brown paper. And I picked up the package, and I was happily walking up the steps, when the principal is coming toward me; and she says, “Alicia, what are you doing here?” And I said, “Nothing.” I always looked very innocent, you know. She says, “What are you hiding?” And I said, “Nothing.” And she picked up the package, and she said to me, “You are going to get yourself expelled from school!” But what I was hearing is, “Alicia, you are good girl because you are loyal girl.” And of course I couldn’t do anything; we had to just live with those two pictures.

At the time, I remember, the Russians were not particularly anti-Semitic; they are now, but they weren't then. What they were against, however: if your father was a businessman, you were automatically considered an enemy of the Soviet Union, subject to be exiled to Siberia. The NKVD¹, which is known now as the KGB, came into your home at night and took families away, put them on freight trains, and they just disappeared into the Gulag in Siberia.

My father was an artist but was also a businessman, and we fell under the category of enemies of the Soviet Union and would have exiled to Siberia. But my mother's youngest brother a physician; the Russians needed him in the hospital. He claimed us as his family, so they gave us a passport for three months, renewable each three months. But we had our suitcases permanently packed just in case that knock will come at night and they will take us away.

What the Russians did, however, they encouraged fifteen, sixteen-year-old boys to go and study in an institute in Russia. My second oldest brother, Moshe, reasoned if he were to go to study there, maybe it will protect his family a little bit more. And we tried to talk him out of it, but eventually my parents let him go; and we sent him packages, and we wrote to him.

But after a while, all communication stopped. And one night, my brother came home. He ran away from school. The following night, the secret police came, the NKVD came, arrested my brother, and took him to prison, not in my hometown of Buczacz, but thirty kilometers away, to Chortkov. My father followed them, begged the authorities to let my brother go; he didn't commit any crime; he was just homesick for his family. But they kept him in prison for one reason only: so that he couldn't tell other boys what the school was like in Russia. And after a short while, we received a letter from the commander of the prison that my brother died. But they didn't tell us how, or wouldn't let us bring him home for burial. So the tragedy in our family started already under the Russian occupation: 1939, 1940, and 1941.

As you know from history, in 1941, Germany broke the peace treaty with Russia and invaded Russia. I was eleven years old at the time, and I remember so vividly, the Russians were running as though the devil was chasing them. And I'll tell you: the devil was chasing them. And then I remember one day, there was a total hush in our city, as though the city was holding its breath. And I went to see what was happening, and I saw a cannon with about six German soldiers kind of roll into the center of the city; and I

¹*Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del* was the law enforcement organization that was under the direct rule of the All Union Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1934 to 1946. The NKVD was also responsible for mass deportations, espionage, Soviet border protection, and running the Gulag system of forced labor camps.

looked at them and I say to myself, “What can they do with, with one cannon and six soldiers?”

We were hearing rumors, what the Germans were doing to the Jewish people. But you must remember something very important: this part of Poland used to be the Austrian-Hungarian Empire before World War I. So the Jewish people knew the German people as a cultured people, as a kind people, as a friendly people; they never feared the Germans. If the Jewish people feared anyone, it would be fearing the Russian Cossacks, but not the Germans. So people were hoping maybe the rumors were just rumors.

Take, for instance, my own father: my father was born in Vienna, son of a rabbi; a graduate from the military academy in cavalry; a decorated hero in World War I on the Russian front. How could he possibly imagine that these Austrians, together with the Germans, were doing such terrible things to the Jewish people? Even he, as an intelligent human being, could not accept it; it was simply not acceptable.

But very soon after the Germans settled into our hometown, we found out what they had in store for us. They asked all men from the age of eighteen to fifty, to come to the police in the morning for registration. My father fell under that age category, and he left in the morning. And we were expecting him home not later than for dinner, but my father didn't come home that day. He didn't come home the following day. And on the third day, rumors started flying all over town that all 600 men, mostly leading citizens, who were retained at the registration, were taken into the forest and massacred into open graves. You can imagine how I felt.

I adored my father. So I reasoned maybe, since my father was a—was an officer and a brave man, maybe he tried to escape, maybe he was wounded, maybe he is hiding someplace in the forest just waiting for me to find him. So I went into the forest day after day, week after week, calling his name, looking for him. And then one day I just fell asleep at the edge of the forest. My brother Zachary found me, lifted me into his arms, and he said, “Alicia, our father is not coming home.”

In 1967, the German consul in Los Angeles asked me to come to his office to testify against one of the murderers of the 600 men; they found him through the Rosenthal Institute. And the German consul read back the statement from this killer, and it said that all 600 men were killed into open graves the following day.

But you see, three days after the registration, the Germans came to us and told us, “You want to get your men back? You can ransom them.” So everybody gave everything they had, and what they didn't have, they borrowed. Wouldn't you? But of course, they

deceived us, they lied to us; nobody came back. And 600 families were stripped of every means of survival, including our family.

We were not allowed to live our homes; we were literally expelled—we couldn't even get any things out of the home—into an area they called The Ghetto. You probably heard of the Warsaw Ghetto, the Łódź Ghetto: they were ghettos fenced in. Ours was an open ghetto. We were allowed to live on certain streets; we had to wear white armbands with embroidered Stars of David. If you left that street and went to another street, anybody could kill you: being a Ukrainian policeman, a Polish policeman, or the German policeman. And how did they know who was Jewish, with the armband or without it? Simply. They were our neighbors. They lived with us; everybody knew everybody, this was a small town.

They didn't give us any food at all. In order to get food, we had to leave the ghetto, go to the marketplace, and buy it there from the farmers who brought it for sale. Of course, we children realized if our parents were to go out, they would all be killed. So we held meetings and we decided that we will go out and try to get food—buy it or trade for a piece of clothing—'cause we can escape easier; we are children. And we went out, and young children as young as five year old went out. Hundreds of them were caught and killed. And I will tell you that nowhere in human history were there such brave children as the children in our ghetto. I called them "The Little Stars from the Kingdom of Darkness". They were indeed little stars. They left us a beautiful light: a light of love; a light of dedication, commitment; and a light of bravery.

Of course, we Jewish children couldn't go to school. Just think for a moment. Here I am, living already in Poland under the Russian occupation; and here new strangers wearing these green uniforms with green leather coats, with guns and whips, came to my hometown and make all of these declarations, stripped me of my human rights, kill my father, and everything is "You can't, you can't, you can't"; until something inside me revolted and I say to myself, "Well, maybe I can do one thing."

Namely I organized my Jewish friends, and when school started, we all marched into our classrooms, and we sat down in our seats. And you can imagine the poor teacher when she came in, and she looked horrified. She said, pointed out, "You, you, you, and you, have to leave and you know why." I was deeply hurt because, even at the age of eleven I couldn't understand the association of because of my religion, that I shouldn't have any rights at all. But I wanted to make my standing, my point, that yes, I am a human being, regardless of what somebody says. We left. I loved my teacher; I wouldn't give her any troubles. And we left.

It was—actually ironical, because, you know, through the five years—two, three years under the—under Polish, in the Polish school; and two years under the Russian occupation—I was actually known as the Whispering Willow. Namely, whenever my friends didn't have an answer to the questions, the teacher asked them, I used to whisper it to them in Hebrew. And of course, all the time I was expelled from the classroom. So I spent a lot of my time standing in the corridor there.

And of course, the principal used to come by and say, "Alicia, what are you doing here?" and of course, I never knew what I was doing here, because truthfully speaking, sometimes I did whisper, and sometimes I didn't. But the teacher thought sometimes that I did when I didn't, and there was no way I could convince her. So there I was, standing in the corridor, and the principal says, "Okay, Alicia, come into my office." And she sat me down on her chair and she opened a book of Shakespeare, to *The Merchant of Venice*, and she says, "Study, study, Alicia, I'm going to ask you questions." And so, you see, I and Shakespeare don't get along too well.

Anyway, on the way out, I decided there must be some way I could learn. We had a huge tree growing close to the window of our classroom. The following morning at six o'clock, I climbed into that tree, and I sat shivering in the cold leaves; and then the sun came out, and at 7:30 the teacher opened the window. And I had a great view: there was the blackboard, there was the teacher, and there were all my former friends. And I was learning there, for quite a few weeks.

Until one day, the teacher put an algebra question on the blackboard and she asked the children for a common denominator; none of the kids raised their hands. I knew the number! In all my excitement I raised my hand; but I raised the wrong hand, and I came tumbling out of the tree. And I screamed. I remember my friends came to the window to see who was screaming outside. And the teacher came out, and she looked at me—I wasn't really hurt; my pride was hurt more than anything else—and she says, "Alicia, sweetheart, what am I going to do with you? You cannot go into the classroom, and you cannot climb into that tree." And I loved my teacher.

So I told her, "You know, one day, if I live through the war, I'm going to go to school forever." And you know what? I go to school forever. I always come in and I always sit in the first row. And when the teacher calls my name, "Alicia Appleman", something inside me lights up with such joy; 'cause I am a human being; I have the rights to enter a classroom; nobody is going to point to me and say, "You have to leave." And I tell it to the students, that this is the greatest gift that God and your country can give to you, is this ability to enter a classroom and say yes when the teacher calls your name.

The first time I came face-to-face with the German SS happened in 1941. I was eleven years old. I was playing chess with two boys; the boy ten and eleven, their father was a colleague of my uncle; they were refugees from Germany. We were very absorbed in the board when suddenly the door flew open and two SS men entered, and they gave a command, "Everybody out!" The father of these boys realized what was happening; he went over to one of them and, pointing to me, he said, "This little girl is not my daughter. Please let her go." He begged them to let me go, but he wouldn't. And then they pushed us outside, and then I saw other people being pushed from other homes; and then the beatings and the killings started.

And those who survived were taken to the railway station; there was a freight train waiting for us; and then for good measure, they let the dogs loose on us. We had nowhere to go, but inside the cars. They locked the cars from the outside, and the train took off the hill. After while, I heard some commotion inside the car. You see, European freight trains have windows. Later when the Germans were taking the Jewish people to extermination camps, they put barbed wire on the outside; but our window just had bars.

So the man standing near the bars realized that, if he could spread the bars, maybe he could throw some children out and save some lives. Apparently adults realized: wherever this train was going, with babies and sick people, was not going to a good destination. The father of these boys turned to me, said, "Alicia, you are next." So I asked him, "What do you mean, 'I am next'? What about your sons?" He looked at me—and I will never forget the look on his face—he said, "I've sworn to save humanity but humanity has gone insane. And my children stay. But you, Alicia,"—and I didn't even have a chance to say, "I want to go; I don't want to go". He just lifted me up and handed me into a man's arms, and he called after me, "Roll! Roll! Follow the tracks home!" And another man picked me up, and then I was being pushed through the window and I was flying for a second. And then I felt a heavy thud all around me.

And then I don't remember very much; I just remember my head was hurting me badly, and I was kind of hallucinating; I was following the tracks home, and the train turned around, was trying to catch me, and I was screaming and screaming. I woke up six days later, and I was in my own bed, and I had a concussion. I was very badly bruised, but I was alive. There was another little girl who also came home; she died of internal hemorrhage. And the rest of the children, as the train turned, the SS shot them in flight. So I was the only survivor; [The event] was late—later on became known: in German, *actionnes*, actions, acts of murder.

When I felt better, my brother Zachary asked me to go to the Jewish committee, called the *Judenrat*, to tell them what happened. You know, the Germans were so efficient, what they did in one part of the ghetto, the people didn't know in the other part. So I remember, I came to the office, there was a waiting room and there were two men sitting

behind the table. I told them my story; then they asked me to wait in the waiting room. Then I heard my brother speak, and he said, “Look. Six hundred men including my father were already murdered, thousands of people were taken away—and it could not have been to a good destination—we must organize and we must fight back!”

And then I heard the man say to Zachary, “Zachary, I understand you; you are seventeen years old, and so are your friends, and you are frustrated; and I know the ache in your heart. But, Zachary, I want you to remember one word, and I want you to engrave it deeply into your young heart, and that word is retaliation. Because if you kill one German, they will take hundreds of Jewish men, women, and children, and they will massacre them. Can you take this upon your conscience?” And there was a total hush in the room, and I walked in; and I saw my brother standing there, his face was pale, his fists were clenched like that, and he just lowered them. But my brother fought back. And this is how it came about.

Out of the six million Jewish people the Nazis murdered, over a million of us were not taken to concentration camps. We were murdered in these actions, acts of murder, into open graves. If some of you are familiar with Babi Yar, this is how it was done. Who did all this murdering, and how was it done? It was committed by specially trained troops, the Gestapo, the SS with the collaboration of the Ukrainian and Polish police. So you have here murderers who are criminals. You might think perhaps Hitler way to—went to his prisons and opened the prisons and said, “Okay, criminals, go right ahead and murder the Jews.” But that was not the case.

The SS and the Gestapo were educated people, were professional people—doctors and lawyers and musicians and teachers—and they became killers by choice. And I will tell you something: they were despicable cowards! Because the only time they felt brave is when they were killing women and children and babies into the graves. I faced them at the graves three times. They didn’t have any mercy. None whatsoever.

They didn’t all live in my hometown; they lived in the city of Chortkov. And they came at two o’clock in the morning on their motorcycles and cars; went directly to the Ukrainian and Polish police; and together they surrounded the ghetto tightly, and then they attacked each home individually. If there were two doors, both doors split open. They turned over furniture; they broke every piece of glass; they made a tremendous amount of noise to scare the people who might be hiding under the floor and some other hiding place. After they made all this noise, they stayed in the house quietly; they made us believe they left. And they listened to a baby cry or somebody cough; because that was a frightening experience, have somebody knock over your head, trying to find you. And this is how they did find hiding places, when baby—when a baby cried. And they took the people out, and those who resisted—because people did resist—were killed instantly and the rest were taken into open graves and killed there.

We survived the first action; my brother built us a hiding place. Once they finished killing us, they left the ghetto and we could walk on the streets again. My mother went outside, and she found two little girls, five and six, sitting on the sidewalk and crying. They were taken with their parents to the graves, but somehow these children got lost and returned to the ghetto. And my mother brought them into our room.

A few days later, a young girl about sixteen by the name of Lana showed up, and she was crying because she didn't find her family, and was very happy to see her sisters. I remember the day Lana walked into our room; my brother Zachary was there. And I was only eleven years old, and I looked at these two teenagers, and I just wished that they would become friends or fall in love. They were so beautiful; love was just beginning for them. My heart ached for them, because I knew if these actions were to continue, how are they going to live? How are they going to survive?

Where was Lana during this action? She was in the village; she was preparing a farmer's son for entrance examination into high school. After a little while, the same farmer asked Lana to come and teach another boy, and he told her, "You can take your sisters along." So Lana and Zachary, who became friends, decided it would be a good idea for the children to be away from the ghetto, away from these actions. Lana worked very hard, the boy passed the examination; and then the farmer took the three girls, tied them up, put them on the wagon, brought them to the police, and the police murdered them. You can imagine how my brother felt. How would you feel?

He went to the farmer and beat the farmer up. And he could have killed him. But my brother was not a killer. But from that day on, he and his friends organized a group called *Nechama*, revenge. There were some farmers who took Jewish families into hiding, kept them a little while; then took their meager possessions away from them, told them that they are taking them to a safer place. Instead of it, betrayed them and killed them themselves; or tied them up, brought them to the police, and the police killed them. And that was devastating because if a Nazi kills, a Nazi kills you. But your own neighbors! Kind of a coldness grips your heart, and I know that feeling 'cause I was betrayed by people I trusted. And when that happened, my brother went to the farmer, burned his barn, and beat the farmer up; again, didn't kill because he was not a killer.

Sometimes my brother was missing for half a day, a day; this time my brother was missing for three days. And I went all over the ghetto asking people, "Have you seen my brother? Have you seen him?" No one has seen him. And then the late afternoon, I came across a group of two boys and two girls, and I heard one girl say, "Here comes his little sister. Here comes his little sister." And I picked up, and asked, "What about the little sister?" And one of the boys stepped forward and said, "Alicia, I will take you to

your brother.” We crossed the bridge, we came to the prison yard, and there was my brother hanging. And I sat near him and the Ukrainian policeman came up, pulled out his gun, put it to my head, and said, “*yaka bezah strellu(??)*,” “I will shoot you!” I say, “*strelai(??)*, shoot! I don’t care.” And all the time he came, he put his pistol to my head; I really didn ’t care at all.

And then the following day, at night when the policemen went inside the prison, my brother’s friends came; we cut my brother down, brought him to the Jewish cemetery, and buried him. And I swore on his grave, if I lived, I will be his silenced voice. And I have literally devoted my life to being that silenced voice.

In our tradition, as in all traditions, if you are a witness, you have to speak up. So I have to tell you what happened to my third brother, Bunio. The SS and Gestapo came into the ghetto and rounded up close to 600 youngsters—fifteen, sixteen-year-old boys—and took them away to a camp. And yes, one of the boys tried to escape; he was caught. And then the SS men asked all of the boys to come outside to make a circle. And then they counted, eight, nine, ten. They shot every tenth boy. My brother Bunio was the tenth boy. And I had to tell my mother. Was devastating.

At that point, I swore to myself, that I would protect my mother and my little brother with my life. If anybody has to die in this family, I will be the one; but I will not come to my mother and tell her that she lost her fourth son. Nineteen forty-two was a bitter winter. We didn’t have any food; we did not have any fuel. The only clothing available for about fifteen people was my mother’s shawl, her jacket, and her shoes. I put them on, and I went outside to get some water for our household. And I just came into the hall, and I put the pails down.

I was about to enter our room, when suddenly the door to the hall flew open and the Ukrainian policeman entered; he had a yellow pad, and he called my mother’s name, Frieda Jurman. And I nodded my head and bolted and started running. And he called after me, “Hey! Where you are going? You shouldn’t be running!” But I had to run. I was tall enough to be mistaken for my mother, all bundled up. But if he came close to me and looked at me and asked me a question, he would see that he had taken a twelve-year-old girl, and he will come back and take my mother; and that I could not allow.

So I ran all the way, and finally when he closed me in the prison cell, I said, “Thank God.” But the prison cell was filled with mothers and, later I found out, fathers. They were taking young parents away from young children, so that the children would die of hunger and exposure.

The following morning, it was still dark outside; they took us outside. And there was a room and there was a table; a police—a Ukrainian policeman was sitting there. People had to pass and register, gave—they had to give their names. It was my turn, and they gave my name, Alicia Jurman. The policeman lifted up his head and said, “Alicia, what are you doing here? This is not supposed to be for children. This is just for parents. They are going to take you to a terrible place. When the Germans come, go down on your knees, beg for your life. Maybe, because you are a child, maybe they will let you go.”

But you know, as this policeman was talking, I was getting angrier by the moment. Do you know who *he* was? He was my friend Olga’s father. He was the man who, every day, hugged me and kissed me; said, “Alicia, I love you like a daughter.” And I loved him like a father! But here he was sitting, this traitor—not just registering us; but he came in with the Nazis, into the ghetto, helped them kill us! And this is what I meant, being betrayed by somebody you trusted; kind of a coldness settled around my heart. So, this fury and coldness; I just stood against the wall.

And then they came. You’ve seen them in the movies and television, in those green uniforms; to me, they looked like angels of death. And I say to myself, “Never. I will never go down on my knees, and I’ll never beg of my—for my life! I would rather die as a proud Jewish girl.” And I just stood there. And Olga’s father jumped up and smacked me over the face. And then they took us out; it was still dark outside, there were sleighs lined up; and they put us on the sleighs, and the Ukrainian policemen surrounded us with their guns in our backs.

And we left, and I thought, if we were going to turn to the right, they will take us and kill us at the forest. But we turned to the left; we passed the bridge. We were at the center of the city. I looked up where the ghetto was, and I started crying. Suddenly I realized the anguish my mother must be feeling: when she went out, she saw the pails of water. Where was I? Where was her daughter? Do you know what I wished on that morning? I just wished that the sun wouldn’t come out, and there would be total darkness in this world to match the darkness in my young heart. But the sun came out, and it was a beautiful December day, 1942. I was twelve years old.

And as we were traveling to the villages, the children were going to school; and they looked puzzled at us: What was wrong with these people on the sleigh? And it crossed my mind: maybe if I could roll into a ditch, maybe I could save my life. But then I remembered the word, “retaliation”. So I just sat there. In the late afternoon, they brought us to the prison in Chortkov, the same prison where my brother Moshe died; and they brought us into a room and they asked us to make a circle. And two SS men went with a bag to collect valuables. We didn’t have anything; we were so poor. But I saw some of the parents still had their wedding rings, and they threw them in the bag. And

then they came in front of me. I had a pair of earrings my mother gave me, little hearts, when I was maybe five years old. I never took them off. So I took one earring off, and I put it in this—threw it in the bag; I tried to take the other one off, and I couldn't. So I told him I needed more time. But one of them just stepped forward and tore the earring off.

So I called him *dutoifulle(??)*, “You devil!” And then, you don't call an SS “you devil”. So he hit me over the face, threw me on the floor, and just crushed me with his boots. Next thing I woke up, I was in the prison cell, on a burlap bag, bleeding from my mouth, from my ear; but most of all, I could not breathe; I felt like somebody crushed my ribs, crushed my whole heart. And then soon the door opened and they gave us water to drink, which I found out later was contaminated with typhoid germs. And I drank some of this water.

But what I also remember, which is not in my book: there was a window in the prison cell; there was snow on the windowsill, and a bird was pecking in the snow. And I say to the bird, “You know, bird, they are going to kill me here. So I'm going to give you my soul, and you fly away with my soul; at least my soul will be free.” And then I changed my mind, and I said to the bird, “I'll give you my soul one moment after these murderers pay for their crimes.” There was such a need in me to see justice done. And as I was talking to the bird, the door flew open and more SS men came in; and then I just saw boots with iron spike just come toward me and just crush me, and I just sank.

I woke up two and a half weeks later, and I was in a strange room. I was taped up; I felt very ill. I was wearing boys' pajamas, and there was a man and woman standing over me I have never seen before. And the man asked me, “Al—What is your name?” And I said, “Alicia.” So I asked him, “What happened?” He said that the Germans in the prison asked for the Jews to come and bury the dead at the cemetery. “And we found you there; we lifted you up and you were still alive, burning with a fever. So we put you in the grave and buried you while the Germans were watching. And then when the Germans left, we took you out of the grave, put you under the straw of our sleigh, smuggled you into the ghetto, and here you are.” And that was Mr. Gold and Mrs. Gold.

And he was a very brave man. Had they found me—theirs was a closed-in ghetto. Had they found me under the straw of their sleigh, they would have killed everybody on the sleigh. What was he going to do with a girl raving with a fever? If there was an action, he would probably stay and die with me. And the pajamas I was wearing belonged to his son, a sixteen-year-old boy, an only child that the Nazis had just murdered two days earlier. But this was his determination to fight back, is to save one girl out of the grave. And he saved me.

Because seven weeks later, they returned me home. I was actually coming home. (AA coughs) Excuse me. You can imagine how happy I was; I was going to see my mother and my little brother. I didn't have any problems to get inside the ghetto. But when I came into the center, I saw signs, "TYPHOID," "TYPHOID." What the Germans did, they send a dozen people contaminated with typhoid into the healthy ghetto to get everybody sick. And then they were claiming that the Jews deserve to die because they were spreading typhoid germs. Can you imagine such evil?

So of course, by the time I reached our house and opened the room—the door to our room, my heart was beating violently. And then I saw two bodies on the beds. And I came near my mother, and she just turned her feverish face, with those glazed eyes, and looked at me; suddenly she recognized me, and she says, "Alicia, you came home." And I said, "Yes, mama, I came home." Both my mother and my little brother were very ill with typhoid. So now I try to get all my energy instill—invest in them, to try to save their lives. If I live, perhaps I could save them, just pull them through the crisis.

But I had a very serious problem: even though my brother build us hiding place in our house, I couldn't take my mother and my little brother there if there was an action, because in their fever, they were screaming and crying all the time. So I had to find a place to hide them. The only place I knew was to literally dig a hole under one of our beds. The landlord helped me remove the boards, and I was digging furiously, night after night; I was working against time, I didn't know when an action will start again. And I was spreading the soil all over the ghetto. And finally I thought I had a big enough hole, and I kind of breathed easier.

And soon there was a knock on the window that the ghetto's surrounded. So I took a blanket, and I put it in the hole, and I helped my mother. And my mother and my little brother passed the crisis, but they were still very ill. And then I lifted my little brother into her arms, and I decided that I will lay on top of the opening; I will take the boards we removed from the floor and put them in front of me. In case somebody poked under the beds, maybe they will believe that they were touching the wall. But even at the age of twelve, I realized this is not going to work because they come into the homes and they look under beds where people are hiding. So I had an idea.

You know, the Germans always called us name: damn Jews, *ferflufte*(??) Jews, excuse me, stinking Jews, all kind of names, which didn't bother me. But I thought, you know, I had my names for them as well. Let—I wanted to—return a compliment to them. We didn't have indoor plumbing. We had—we used pails for the night. So I took the pails, and I spilled them in all of the bedrooms—heavy, very heavy in our room—and I say to myself, "Okay, when you murderers come into the room, I hope you slip and break your necks. And what's on the floor, that's what I think you are." And of course, I was very frightened, and I climbed under the bed, and I laid down on the opening, and I say to

myself, “No one is going to touch my mother and my little brother. They’ll have to kill me first.”

And very soon, the whole house shook, and the door to our room flew open, and all I could see is those terrible boots. And they were, “*Ferduncte und ferflufte(??)*,” they were cursing and cursing, and one of them says, “We’ll get them next time.” But the boots didn’t move into the room. And then when—finally, after forty-eight hours, when I saw people walking on the streets, I knocked on the hiding place, and the landlord came out. And he was sniffing around; he says, “Alicia, what is this terrible smell in this house?” You know, I was very proud of myself. So I told him what I did. And he patted my house, and say, say, “Oh, good girl, Alicia; good girl, Alicia. Now clean it up.” But confidentially speaking, you know, this house never smelled right again. But I was walking around thinking to myself, “I saved my mother and my little brother.”

I would like to introduce you—I am very honored to introduce you to a very brave boy by the name of Milek; this is how you pronounce his name. I knew Milek since I was five years old, since I started coming to my uncle for summer times. I spent my vacations—I loved my uncle, Doctor Kurtz. And I decided from a very early age that I will be studying medicine, and I’ll be in partnership with him; and this boy Milek who was two years older, decided also to be a physician.

And he helped me catch cats, and we bandaged them up and the cats were running all over the park bandaged up; and everybody knew Alicia came for the summer. And we had wonderful summers. And if you think a little girl of five, six, seven, eight, nine loved a boy two years older; I loved Milek with all my heart. They lived in with my uncle and Milek lived in the city of Stanislavov. When Milek lost all his family, he came to Buczacz with his friends, and he helped me survive my mother and my little brother.

In 1943, the Germans decided that Buczacz is going to be *Judenrein*; the word *Judenrein* means “clean of Jews”. Jewish people cannot live in this ghetto anymore. We have to go a new ghetto. The reason they did it, because the people who survived had safe hiding places; so they uprooted us into a different place where we didn’t have hiding places, and they eliminated us like that, killing us by—through elimination. And so my—we—they told us we can go to the ghetto of Kopechine. So my mother and my little brother went Milek and his friends, and we just settled in into this new ghetto when the German declares, “This ghetto’s also going to be *Judenrein*,” but they didn’t give us a place to go. So that meant this is where we are all going to die.

So you might rightfully ask us, “Alicia, how come you didn’t run into forests or into villages? You should have run someplace to try to save yourselves.” Right? It’s a good question. Do you know what I will answer you? “Yes, we did try to run in the forests

and into the villages, but there were the Ukrainians and Poles waiting for us, and they chopped us to pieces there.” And how would they know who was a Jewish child? It wasn’t a matter of blond hair or blue eyes; it was a matter of the anguish engraved in all those poor, little eyes. And so, especially the AK, the *Armia Krajowa*, known as the great Polish heroes, they were vicious on Jewish children.

So we decided we better stay and die together. And then the terrible day came, when the ghetto was surrounded; I was in the hall and the man of—on charge made this declaration, “Yes there is a hiding place in this house, but it’s small.” So, if a mother and father had two children, only one child can go in. You can imagine when I heard them say it, I caught his arm and I say, “Don’t tell my mother. Please, don’t tell my mother. I won’t go in there, two boys who have sisters, we will not go in, but don’t tell my mother”; because I knew what my mother will do: she’ll push me and my brother in, and she will stay herself to be killed, and that I could not allow. So I held onto him, I literally kissed his hands, I say, “Please don’t,” and he says, “All right.” He looked at me with such pity, he says, “All right, Alicia, I trust you.”

But when we went into the cellar, my mother wouldn’t go without me. She says, “Are you coming, Alicia? Hurry up! It’s a matter of minutes! What’s the matter with you?” And I told her there was a wooden, a wooden form like that, and people went through this into the, into the hiding place, into the tunnel. And my mother was holding up her arms—we’re catching each other—says, “Come on, Alicia, I will catch you. Hurry up!” And so I told her, “You know, mommy, lower your arms, I will slide in.” My mother kind of looked skeptical, “Why?” But I never lied to my mother, so she just lowered her arms; the minute she lowered her arms, I took the wooden box and I closed the opening. And then I heard this scream of anguish from my mother, and it, like, broke my heart, and I started crying.

But I put all kinds of junk on top of that area, hoping that when they come in the cellar and look for hiding places that they will not imagine somebody’s under there. And then I looked for the boys, and the boys were gone. And I decided that I will just kind of climb to the attic, but I really wish is to disappear into thin air, literally. And I was on my way, climbing the ladder, when suddenly I heard the baby cry.

We had two babies in our house; babies could not be taken into hiding places, ‘cause they cried out and they betrayed the hiding place. So very often the mother was knocked unconscious and the father stayed and gave the baby a strong tea, drugged the baby, and hid the baby. And one of them was sleeping and one of them woke up. So I had to make up my mind, am I going to save the baby or save myself? I love babies, so I went—opened the door and closed the door and found the little ball with the tea, and picked up the baby, was dropping the drops into—actually, I leaned over with the baby, was like,

and dropping the drops into the baby's mouth, and he was closing his eyes and I say, "Hurry up, close your eyes so I can push you and hide you."

It was just a matter, maybe, of half a minute when suddenly the whole house shook, the door flew open, two SS men entered with all this terrible noise; both babies woke up and started crying. And one of the SS went where the babies were, pulled out his gun, and shot the babies through the mouth. And out. I must have said something because my head got—felt like it was being torn off.

You know, some historians, some novelists, claim that the Jews went like sheep to slaughter. That is a wrong statement. I have seen farmers take sheep to slaughter; they never touch the sheep. The reason the Jewish people went peacefully is because they were deceived; they were told they are going to relocation camps, working—even in Auschwitz, at the extermination camps, they were given towels, soap; brought into shower rooms with shower heads, where water could have come out; instead of it, becyclene [Zyklon B] came out, and they died a terrible death.

And what was it like for us, who were taken into these graves? I'm going to tell you the story of a five-year-old girl; she's not in my book. I couldn't write about her; I was afraid if I will have to type it over and over again, my heart will break and I will not be able to finish my book; and I desperately wanted to finish it.

When I was taken out of the house, I was brought into the prison yard; and there I sat near a mother who had a baby, a little boy about twenty months old, and a little girl—a beautiful, little girl—five. And she told me how old she was. She turned to her mother and she says, "*Momushe, kejemi, jemi(??)*; mommy, where are we going?" And the mother says, "*Ejemi tota tushe(??)*; we are going to daddy." And the little girl jumped up and she—kind of like a dancer and so—"We are going to daddy! We are going to daddy!"

The following morning, when they pushed us out, the mother and the baby were walking in front of us; I took the little girl's hand; in the other hand, she was holding a doll. Somebody was shot in back of us and we were pushed forward. The little girl dropped her doll. One of the SS men came up, picked up the doll, and handed it to her. She smiled at him. And then he put out—pulled out his revolver and shot her face away. And I carried her; and I still carry her.

It was my turn to be shot when suddenly I heard somebody call, "Alicia Jurman, run! Alicia Jurman, run!" You know, I thought that I was in heaven. Who's calling me? And then I turned, and then I saw my friend Milek standing there; and his hands were going

back in kind of a madness, back and forth; and he jumped up to an SS man, pulled out his gun, and started shooting. And those who were very close, because the grave was at the edge of the forest, started running into the forest, including myself; and I remember running and falling and picking myself up and crying for this boy because I was sure that Milek died there. But Milek didn't. He lived and he joined us few boys and girls who could fight back later—was very bright—brave partisans, 'cause there wasn't a question of retaliation anymore.

And then after he was liberated, he and his friend Benjamin went to the library to take out books on biology. He still wanted to study medicine. On the way back, they stepped on a live mine. The mine exploded; Milek was killed instantly, and Benjamin lost half of his leg. And we honor this boy as a real hero, not only because he was a brave partisan or because he saved my life, but after the war he still wanted to serve and save humanity; and humanity, who betrayed him so bitterly by killing everybody he loved. Put yourself for a moment in his place, and you will realize what beautiful—what beauty, what excellence, was in this sixteen-year-old boy. May his memory live forever.

I survived the war. My mother, if—I met my mother eventually, and eventually the SS took us to be killed; and one of them shot at me, and my mother threw herself in front and she died. And then I was taken to the graves and I escaped. My little brother was betrayed by his school friend, and he didn't live. I was the only survivor of eighty close family; and you might think, perhaps, I could go to my home and look for a photograph of my family? I would have loved to have a photograph. No, we couldn't go into our homes; they were occupied by Ukrainians and Poles, and if you entered, you never came out alive. Hitler was dead; Germany was defeated. But those few survivors never regained their human rights. And by few survivors—. We had 18,000 Jewish people in our hometown. More were brought in for—from surrounding villages and cities. 40,000 innocent people were massacred into our hometown. There must have been 6,000 children. Five survived. I am here; there were three boys and one girl, and they are in Israel. This was the survival rate.

So I left my hometown and I went to western Poland, and that's where I found the first children from concentration camps. And I organized an orphanage for them, and I went through their anguish with them. And eventually, I joined a smuggling group; because, you see, the Poles wouldn't let us live in Poland, wouldn't let us out of Poland. So we had to smuggle ourselves out. And here I am two days short of fifteen—that's a picture after the war—and I thought I was a great little smuggler. (audience laughs) And I joined this smuggling group until I got sick with pneumonia.

And then in 1947, I found myself in Belgium, in Marquain, in an orphanage. I was the only girl from that area; the rest of the children were survivors from Theresienstadt, from Hungary, from Czechoslovakia. And we had absolutely nowhere to go; nobody really

wanted us. If we could have just disappeared into thin air, this would have been a great solution.

But then one day, a young man came to us; he was a discharged officer from the Jewish brigade, who fought alongside the British in World War II. And he made this proposition to us; and he says, “Boys and girls, nobody wants you. And you don’t want to stay in Europe because that’s one big cemetery of your family; we want you in Israel. But to come to us, you have to take a chance: fifty-fifty. You may be torpedoed by the British; you may be drowned or you may be killed. Do you want to take this chance?” What would you do? You would say yes; we said yes. We would rather drown in the ocean than live on this cursed land.

And we were brought on tracks to Marseille, and other children came from other areas. And then we were put into a freighter they—that was a freighter designed, New Jersey, maybe a hundred years ago, to carry about five, six hundred heads of cattle. They scooped the belly out, and they put platforms in; and they put us in like sardines. Thank God that we didn’t have any, you know, oil there; otherwise it would have been a mess. But for twenty-one days we sailed and bailed.

And eventually, on the twenty-first day, I saw stars in the skies, and I say to myself, “God, what a beautiful sky.” But they were actually lights from the port of Haifa. We arrived in Palestine; we arrived in Israel. But very soon, the British flew—plane flew over us, and within half an hour, three British frigates surrounded us. And the British captain announced on his horn, “We are going to board you and take you to a concentration camps in Cyprus.” And out captain said, “We are children coming back from the world of Hell, coming back to the home of our ancestors, and you cannot board us.” And we children from the world of Hell took on the British Navy and fought them for two hours.

What did we use for ammunition? Garbage. (audience laughs) We threw garbage into their clean decks; and, you know, after two hours, they get—got angry at us, and they threw tear gas; and we started coughing and sneezing. Then they boarded us, and they took their vengeance; because quite a few children were thrown overboard, then crushed between the two ships. Some of them were clobbered over the head and died. I have pictures, given to me by my captain who later on was the head of the Israeli Navy, of coffins taken off of our ship.

And eventually, they boarded us. And imagine you—you can imagine that I was there on the forefront. And a sailor came—a giant of a sailor—and lifted me up and wanted to throw me overboard. But my hat fell off, and my hair tumbled out; and that split of second, I took my fist and rammed it in his face. You know, our father trained us; I must

have picked up something. And I will tell you, he was a giant of a sailor; because later on I looked him up and he had a blue shiner. Didn't help me any, but still. And all this thing I'm telling you: my book was published in England, in hard cover and paperback; and the English researched it, and it is just the way it happened.

And then we were in Cyprus. It was a camp surrounded by barbed wire. There were towers, manned by British soldiers, by our allies; I got so angry that I broke out in an eczema. I was scratching and itching and scratching and itch—and I tried to escape—so very hard, but there was no escape. So we stayed there for eight months, and in December, 1947, Golda Meir came—who later became prime minister of Israel—and took a thousand children out of this camp. And I was one of the thousand.

And finally, I came to Israel. And I remember, I came to a skull—a school called Mikveh Israel, “hope of Israel”; it was a—it was an agronomical, and it has good studies of chemistry and physics. And I came to the gate, I handed my paper to the man at the gate; and I was about to pass through the gate, through the dirt road, when the man called me back and says, “*Y'el dohn it(??)*; girl, this is not how you enter a school in Israel.” He went over, picked up an orange, peeled it for me, put it in my hand; and I took this orange, put it to my face and just kind of kissed it. And holding this orange like a living thing, I passed through the gate. There was a dirt road surrounded by palm trees, and I looked around and I say, “Lord, this must be Paradise.”

But in my young heart, I knew that we will have to fight another war; because Palestine was partitioned in September by the United Nations for Jewish and Arab homelands, and the Arabs did not accept it; and so this resulted in the War of Independence. And these children fought like lions for their land, together with the Sabra children. Especially, there was one hill called Latrun. Jerusalem was surrounded by the Jordanian Army, and food or water could not come to the people in Jerusalem. We had to take this hill in order to relieve their hunger and thirst, and these children climbed on that hill and died on that hill. And if I were to speak in their names, I know they gave their lives gladly, as I would have given mine, so that the Jewish people have a homeland—and gather, now, the Jews from Russia and from Ethiopia; and that America, as a wonderful friend.

And so ends my story, with the inscription I put in your books; that a very tragic page in history was written for my generation. You have your page yet to write. God willing, and it's my wish for you, that you write your page with happiness, with love, with *Shalom*; but most of all, with a celebration of human dignity.

I know when I finish my presentation, I kind of finish my audience and finish myself. But if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask them; I will answer them to the best of my ability.

Yes.

Male 1: What happened to the kids who were left in the concentration camp in Cyprus?

AA: Which one? The—what happened to children?

M1: Yes.

AA: They came to Israel.

M1: All of them did eventually?

AA: Yes, all of them came to Israel and, I would say, 45 percent of them died defending Israel. I have, in my school, eight walls of names of children who lived through concentration camps, lived through ghettos, were brave partisans, and then they died fighting for Israel. You see, we were—six hundred thousand people against five million enemies. I mean, the odds were just against us, but still we kept on fighting. Do you know? There were child—sixteen, fifteen, sixteen-year-old children who fought.

Yes, sir?

Male 2: You ever return to Europe, to where you was from?

AA: The question is, “Did I ever return home?” I didn’t return home, physically, but when I was writing my book the three years, I was there. I asked my son Daniel—you know, after I finished writing the book—I said to Daniel, “There’s one hiding place in our home that was never—never discovered; that mean, it’s still there.” Could he go with me some day to Poland, to look at it? And he looked so horrified; he says, “Mother, do you remember what you looked like when you were just writing this book? What will happen to you if you go back and you see that everybody is gone? I mean your heart will break.” And, you know, my son is right: there were some people who went back, and they had heart attacks and they just never came home again. It’s, it’s kind of a dangerous thing to do.

Yes, ma'am?

Female 1: What—whatever happened, like, with the orphanage?

AA: Oh, whatever happened to the orphanage? Yes, they—they came; they were taken to Israel, and about a year and a half ago, I received a telephone call, and a woman says, “Alicia, I am one of your orphans; my name is Regina.” And so, of course, I remembered her, and she was crying; so I say, “Regina, why are you crying?” She kept crying, so I say, “Why don’t you give me your number. Don’t cry on long distance.” (audience laughs) So, I took her number and I called her back, and she was still crying; then finally, got together, and of course I remembered her very well. She married one of the boys. There were two brothers there: Moshe and Pinuin; and Pinuin was the boy who was putting bread in and polluting this water, and of course I never gave him away, because this was a—his security to hide a piece of bread for the night. And so we talked, and she says, “Alicia, do you remember the suitcases of money you had under your bed? If you had them now, I think I would help myself”; because I always talk to the kids, “Just take some money and buy something for yourself,” and they never did. And so she says, “If you had them now, I would help myself.” So you know what I said to her? “So would I, so would I.” (audience laughs) But they came to Israel.

Male 3: Was your—

AA: Yes?

M3: Husband a survivor of—

AA: My husband was born in Brooklyn. My husband came to help us; he served in the American Army for three years; and then he realized that, unless we have some help, that we will perish for—that that’s going to be a second Holocaust. There were many American young men and women from America and from Canada and from—even from England, from South Africa, who came to help us. And they were kind of more of a moral help than anything else, but they came.

Yes?

Female 2: The old gentleman with whom you and your mother stayed out in the fields; did you ever find out what happened to him?

AA: We are talking here about Wujciu—very difficult to pronounce it; name like “uncle” in Polish. He came—I brought him home, after I was liberated, for one wonderful day. And then—. Remember, I sewed in money in his coat, send him back with the letter to this Polish girl; and finally, this Polish girl, I’m sure, took good care of him. Had my mother lived, we would have taken him with us; he had epileptic seizures; what could I, fourteen-year-old girl do? Except secure his future. So, I know he would never go hungry again. And I know one thing: after he went to Heaven, there was a great reception for him, because he was really a saintly man. It is true that we also kept him alive because if it wasn’t for us, he would probably have died of one of the seizures. But he was a truly beautiful man.

You know, he was—he had a special love for me. But whenever I asked to delouse his shirts, said—say—we had lice, and I always asked, “Wujciu, can I delouse your shirt?” And he says, “Alicia, you’re not bringing more Jews, are you?” ‘Cause I always brought people I found to him; I say, “No, Wujciu, I am not bringing any. I just love you, so I will delouse your shirt.” (laughs) He was—he didn’t have any hair, didn’t have any teeth; but if you would paint the sun, this is how you will paint: a round face, with beautiful eyes, with a heart of gold. When I talk about him, I still cry because he was the one who really kept a spark of love and believe in humanity in us.

Male 4: Alicia?

AA: Yes.

M4: As I read your story, I couldn’t help but think, “Food didn’t seem to be passion like it is with us Americans,” you know; and I thought to myself as—the little bit of bread you get—eat how could you, how could you—. You think that came from God, or you think—feel like it was a blessing to have enough to get you through nourishment; because to me, felt in a constant fear, always, in my mind, that I’d never have enough to eat.

AA: Well, I was always very hungry. I knew hunger—You know, I used to put my fists in my stomach to not let the intestines fall aside to hurt me. But as to my—believing in God, who kept me so hungry, since this is a house of God, I will—permit me to read you something from my book. I should know the pages exactly; I typed this manuscript about six times. (audience laughs)

When I lived in the ghetto, there was a wonderful woman by the name of Bella, who had two children: her little girl died, but Danny, her little boy, lived. Her sister, Rachel, was my friend; she died of tuberculosis. When I came home, after my mother was killed, I

brought her to the Jewish cemetery, to Keve(??) Israel. And there I was standing and Daniel, this boy, came to me, and he asked me [reading]:

“ ‘Alicia, do you think there is a God? Do you really think there is one?’ Danny suddenly stopped and asked in a pleading voice. ‘Please tell me if there is a God. I have to know.’

“I looked at him in surprise. There was an urgency in his question. Then I remembered that I had had a similar need when I was Danny’s age, eleven. I had gone to Reb Srool with my question, and while I respected the answer he gave me, I could not quite accept it.”

He was a very religious man and he said it was God’s will, which I could not accept.

“We sat down on the stone fence of the cemetery under a big tree. It was still raining, but not very hard.

“ ‘I have always believed there is a God,’ I said to Danny. I was brought up that way. I always prayed to him, and the sweetest memories I have of my family are all connected with our Jewish traditions, and with God.’

“I tried to remember the words Reb Srool used when I had asked him almost the same question, but I wasn’t wise enough to explain during the years when we were being hunted down and murdered by the Nazis. Many times I had heard adults say, ‘If there is a God, how can he be silent to our cries of anguish? How come he doesn’t punish murderers?’

“ ‘When I heard people say that, Danny dear, do you know what I thought? I thought that God was ashamed of the people on this earth and was shocked by what they were doing to one another. But that he couldn’t do anything to help us.

“ ‘But look, do you see those raindrops? They could be tears falling from the skies. Maybe God is crying with us, for He has lost so many people He also loved. I don’t know whether you should believe in God or not. You will have to decide for yourself. But everyone should believe in something or somebody, and right now, the way I see it, God needs us to believe in him. He is as alone as we are, and as lost as we are. Somehow we will have to prove to Him that people aren’t all evil, that they are capable of love, of love of one another and love of him; unconditional love. We will have to do

good deeds, to have God respect us and thus regain our self-respect. We will have to fight evil with good; we really must.’ ”

I really—I never stopped believing in God. You see, to me, God was somebody that I had to honor and I—the only way I could honor it, by being a good human being. And I knew that God doesn’t shoot babies. And this is my relationship; until today, I expect from God only what I am willing to give to him, and not more.

Yes, ma’am?

Female 3: Did you—I know that, when you were on your way to Israel, you thought that your uncle left you some money, but you never saw him. Did you ever see any of your family?

AA: I never saw this uncle. This was my mother’s brother; his name is Ephraim Kurtz; maybe some of you have ever heard them play the violin on the radio; he used to play the violin. He found me through Vienna; he left me this envelope with one hundred dollar bill, without a note or anything. So, I imagine there must have been more money in—in the note. And I swore on my mother’s grave, I’ll never see him again, in anger. And I could never break this pledge because, in our tradition if you swear on somebody’s grave, you have to keep your promise. I couldn’t go to anyone; I couldn’t go to the greatest of rabbis and say, “Rabbi, could you absolve me from this pledge?” He could say, “I am sorry. Only the person on whose grave you swore could say to you, ‘Now you don’t have to do it.’ ” And so I never saw my uncle again.

You know, children do these things. In the same way, I swore on my brother’s grave and I kept my promise to him. One day, when I’m gone, maybe I’ll meet my brother, and I just want him to put his arms around and say, “Alicia, you were a good girl.” That’s all I want, really; that’s all.

Yes?

Male 5: You remember the flower girl song? And can you sing a little bit of it for us?

AA: (laughs) This is—you know, unfortunately I am recovering from the flu. This is a very beautiful song; I will give you the meaning of it. It is called—the song is sung by a flower girl who sells flowers to military people. And one day, a young captain came in, and she fell in love with him. And she—when she wrapped the flowers for this captain,

she wrapped her little heart around it. And from that day on, she sings, “I am selling flowers and I am waiting for him to come back. And all kinds of military come back, and where are you, my young captain?” So, I will just sing the first stanza; forgive my voice. It’s in Russian. (*sings in Russian*) And then one day, the captain comes. (*sings in Russian*) He took his heart, (inaudible) and he left. (*sings in Russian*) “Where are you, young captain? You here, a young captain? Where are you, my dear love?” (laughs)

I learned it from a sergeant, and he had a magnificent voice, a truly magnificent voice. On this happy note, I think I will bid you a very good evening, and I wish you all the happiness and love and *Shalom*. Peace.

US: Just want to thank Alicia again for the marvelous presentation she’s made here tonight, and the way that she has moved us and caused us to remember something that we may wish to forget, but we must never forget. Those of you who—there are some people who wanted books that Alicia has written, the—her story, and were not able to get them. Those books, we can order them if you will come up and sign up for a—on a list here, so that we can then obtain them for you if that’s what you’d like. So, one more round of applause for Alicia.

AA: Thank you.

I am going to sing you another song, and this is—“I Brought Peace Unto You”. And this is a wonderful song—Welcome my people, *Hevenu Shalom Aleichem*; we brought peace unto you. Maybe you know the melody.

*Hevenu shalom aleichem, Hevenu shalom aleichem, Hevenu shalom aleichem,
Hevenu shalom, shalom Shalom aleichem.*

Brought peace unto you.

SA: I want you to know that not only do we have the warmest snow on earth in the heart of Utah, but we appreciate her coming, don’t we? Thank you for supporting her. This is a celebration of life and love and family. Thank you so much for sharing with us.

End of Interview