

**INTERVIEW WITH ELIZABETH SWEET**

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**TRANSCENDING TRAUMA PROJECT**

**Council for Relationships**

**4025 Chestnut Street**

**Philadelphia, PA 19104**

## INTERVIEW WITH ELIZABETH SWEET

**INTERVIEWER:** This is an interview with a grandchild of survivors and it is July 20, 1999. I wonder if we could start with you telling me your name, your age, and where you were born.

**ELIZABETH SWEET:** My name is Elizabeth Sweet. I am fourteen years old, and I was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**INT:** And do you have any brothers or sisters?

**ELIZABETH:** No, I'm an only child.

**INT:** And can you tell me where you go to school, and what grade you're in?

**ELIZABETH:** I'm starting at Harriton High School next year.

**INT:** You just graduated eighth grade.

**ELIZABETH:** From Bala Cynwyd Middle School.

**INT:** That's great. So that's a public high school you're going into.

**ELIZABETH:** Yes.

**INT:** And you went to a public grade school?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes.

**INT:** What about any kinds of hobbies or interests, involvements and activities?

**ELIZABETH:** I like horseback riding and I enjoy some parts of school.

**INT:** Like?

**ELIZABETH:** Like I like math, and I like to read. And I'm starting to do sewing type projects.

**INT:** Great. Well, what don't you like about school?

**ELIZABETH:** I'm not a big fan of science. And I'm not a big fan of projects.

**INT:** It's a lot of work. Did you think it was a lot of work in eighth grade?

**ELIZABETH:** It wasn't too bad.

**INT:** Wait till high school! (Laughs) But you love math.

**ELIZABETH:** Yes.

**INT:** And how did you get interested in horses?

**ELIZABETH:** I had, at my first camp, they had horseback riding, so I went there. I'd actually been...because like, My Little Ponies.

**INT:** I remember! (Laughs)

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. And then as I got older, I just started joining up for riding. A bunch of people in the neighborhood had ridden at the stable where I ride now.

**INT:** And what do you like about it?

**ELIZABETH:** It's like an actual sport type of thing that I feel like I'm comfortable at, because I'm not a big fan of sports of any other type. And I like working with the animals.

**INT:** Do you like animals in general?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes.

**INT:** And horses in particular?

**ELIZABETH:** Horses and dogs.

**INT:** What is it about horses?

**ELIZABETH:** They seem to be intelligent, and they're extremely strong, and I find them very beautiful animals.

**INT:** Well, that's a neat hobby. And aren't you going off to camp, a horseback riding camp?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. For the next three weeks.

**INT:** What's that like? You were there before, right?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. This is my third year.

**INT:** Wow. So what do you do there?

**ELIZABETH:** We do a lot of horse-oriented things, and they have very, very minimal arts and crafts programs, basically it's a place to keep us while other people go horseback riding. And it's very small. It's all girls. It's got 25 girls.

**INT:** Oh, very small.

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. And it's run by the same people who own the stable where I ride.

**INT:** So did you get friendly with all the girls?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. I know most of them.

**INT:** Oh, that's good. So that will be great. Okay. Could you describe your religious affiliation? How would you describe it? Are you connected with anything?

**ELIZABETH:** No. Not really.

**INT:** And how would you identify yourself?

**ELIZABETH:** I'm sort of part-Jewish, part-Christian.

**INT:** Okay. And what about organizational involvement? Do you do any kinds of volunteer activities?

**ELIZABETH:** Last summer I volunteered at the local library, and I've been with my middle school, we work on projects for homeless shelters. We make crib quilts. And I did that twice a year.

**INT:** Nice. What about any kind of groups you belong to?

**ELIZABETH:** No.

**INT:** Clubs at school?

**ELIZABETH:** No. I will probably start next year.

**INT:** Okay. So you're an only child. Can you tell me your mother and father, their level of education and where they were born? Start with your mother.

**ELIZABETH:** My mother was born in Munich, Germany. She graduated, I think she got her Master's, I know she got her Master's, and then she continued on after I was, once I was about five, she graduated from a special school for psychotherapy.

**INT:** And what does she do? Does she work now?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. She's a psychotherapist. She has her own private practice. And she's working. She does part-time.

**INT:** And what's a psychotherapist?

**ELIZABETH:** She talks with people and she mostly works with adopted women, usually, or either parents, or either they were adopted, or they have adopted a child. And she also sometimes does consultant work. And so she talks with them and works with them to try to work out problems.

**INT:** But mostly with people who are either adopted or adopted a child. That's interesting. And what about your father?

**ELIZABETH:** My father was born in Phoenix, Arizona. He graduated, I think, I know he did a graduate program in the University of Wisconsin. He's a molecular biologist, and he's working on immunology at Smith-Kline Beecham.

**INT:** What does he do?

**ELIZABETH:** He's a researcher. He's working on auto-immune diseases now.

**INT:** Like AIDS?

**ELIZABETH:** He did a lot of work on AIDS and cancer before, but now he's working on some type of arthritis, I think, that's like self-generated. It's very confusing. (Laughs) I don't understand it.

**INT:** Do you know how old your parents are?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. My mother just turned 50, and my father will turn 55 in October.

**INT:** And how would you describe them as people? Could you start with your mother? How would you describe her?

**ELIZABETH:** She's very gentle and kind to me. And she's also, she can be patient, but she can also be extremely impatient. And she's been very good to me. (Pause)

**INT:** How about a sense of humor? Is she serious?

**ELIZABETH:** She likes to laugh with me, and she likes to be funny. And I have a very good relationship with my parents. I spend lots of time with them.

**INT:** What about your father? How would you describe him?

**ELIZABETH:** He's extremely loving. He's very accepting.

**INT:** What do you mean by accepting?

**ELIZABETH:** Like of people's differences. Like he does not judge. He's not judgmental, unless he finds a reason to be. He always gives people a chance. He has lots of involvements with what I do and everything.

**INT:** Well, let's talk about that. You say that both your parents, it sounds like are very involved with you. Let's start with your relationship with your father. If you can sort of describe that relationship. How does he get involved with you?

**ELIZABETH:** He's always been someone that if I was sick and Mom had to do something, he would always make sure to take off from work. And he drives me to school every day, and he works very much with my homework. If I have any problem, he's always there to help me, in particular in math. And he always checks over my papers for me. Like when I'm doing an English paper, he'll help me check over grammar.

**INT:** Is he patient?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. And in sixth grade he helped me learn how to do highlighting and taking notes. He was very helpful with my schoolwork.

**INT:** Does he do things with you, like outside the house?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. When we're at the shore, he's the one who always takes me to the beach. He takes me swimming. And he tries to get me involved in other activities. Whenever I want to do something and he's able to, he makes sure he can do it.

**INT:** So he tries to make time for you as much as possible.

**ELIZABETH:** Yes.

**INT:** How else would you describe him as a person? You said very accepting, loving. Did you say that?

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah.

**INT:** How else would you describe him? Is he a more serious person?

**ELIZABETH:** He works very hard. And he's not someone who's lazy at all. And he tries to do his best. He's very much a perfectionist like I am.

**INT:** How so? How is he a perfectionist?

**ELIZABETH:** He doesn't like doing half-hearted jobs. When he does something, he wants it to be done correctly the first time. He has a great sense of humor. He's very

good with children. He's always been, like whenever I'm with my friends, they always seem to like him very much because he makes lots of jokes. But he can also be very serious.

**INT:** Can you talk to him about stuff?

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah.

**INT:** About anything?

**ELIZABETH:** Most things.

**INT:** Like if you were having a problem would you go to him?

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah. Definitely.

**INT:** All right. So now let's talk about your mom and your relationship with her. What's that like?

**ELIZABETH:** We do lots of things together. She's been taking a knitting class with me. She takes me shopping all the time. I do much more activities with her than I do often with my friends. It's easier to find time.

**INT:** What do you mean by that?

**ELIZABETH:** It's like, whenever I go shopping it's more often with her than it is with just a bunch of friends. Or if I do an activity, I like to go with her. We went to a concert last weekend with my family.

**INT:** And your relationship with her, does she also help you with your work?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. Besides math. (Laughs) She does lots of stuff with my English and history and whatever. And she tries to help me with whatever I need help with.

**INT:** Any other ways of describing your mother? Is she affectionate?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. She's very affectionate.

**INT:** Is she a serious person?

**ELIZABETH:** No. (Laughs) No. She likes to have fun. And she likes to make sure that kids are very well taken care of. Neither one of my parents can stand for any like sort of, I mean, I think I've been punished once. I went to sit in a corner because I was being rude. (Laughs)

**INT:** That was about it.

**ELIZABETH:** That was about it.

**INT:** Is that because you're a good kid, or is it because they just don't discipline you?

**ELIZABETH:** I think it's because they've raised me very well. I'm not the type who goes off and dyes my hair black one day (laughs) just because that's what everyone else is doing.

**INT:** Right. Well, thank G-d for that! (Laughs) Okay. How about your grandparents? Let's talk about your grandparents. Let's start with your father's parents. Can you describe them?

**ELIZABETH:** I didn't have a very like close relationship with my grandfather or my grandmother until she moved here. But my grandfather, I didn't know him. I don't feel like I knew him very well. I knew that he was very, very -- he was intent on getting his way, and I think I take after him in some respects. I've noticed like similarities in the way we look. But I don't feel like I knew him very well. We saw them about once or twice a year.

**INT:** They live far away.

**ELIZABETH:** They lived in Albuquerque. Now my grandmother has moved here, I feel much closer to her.

**INT:** Your grandfather passed away, right?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes.

**INT:** How long ago?

**ELIZABETH:** In fifth grade. That was about...

**INT:** Three years ago?

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah. Three or four years ago.

**INT:** So now your grandmom lives nearby?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes, nearby. And we spend lots of time with her, and I enjoy being with her very much. She seems, she reminds me much of what the perfect like English lady used to be. Like wearing always nice clothes, and being always polite, and always generous, and always very giving.

**INT:** She sounds lovely.

**ELIZABETH:** Yes.

**INT:** So you have a close relationship with her now? Closer?

**ELIZABETH:** Much closer.

**INT:** Would you say she's affectionate to you?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes, very.

**INT:** Okay. So how about your other grandparents? Your mother's parents. Start with your grandfather.

**ELIZABETH:** My grandfather, he lives in New York. And he's always tried to be very much a part of my life, and always very giving. Whenever I needed anything he would make sure to get it. Both my grandparents. And he's very...(Pause)

**INT:** What's he like?

**ELIZABETH:** He's very, he seems like very much what the typical Jewish father, or grandfather would be like.

**INT:** What's that?

**ELIZABETH:** He's very small, and my grandparents usually speak Yiddish when they speak to each other. And he grew up in a very small community, Jewish community in Poland.

**INT:** Well, what's he like as a person?

**ELIZABETH:** He's very, if there's anything anybody wants, he'll try to get them, especially anyone in the family. If they needed anything, he'd do his best to get whatever they want. He likes them to have almost as much as he could, give them a perfect life.

**INT:** Does that mean he's like a generous person, would you say?

**ELIZABETH:** Very. Definitely very generous.

**INT:** Is he funny? Is he serious?

**ELIZABETH:** He likes to make jokes.

**INT:** Are they funny?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. (Laughs) Most of the time. He likes to do things with me.

**INT:** Do you have a good relationship with him? How would you describe your relationship?

**ELIZABETH:** I feel like, because he still lives in New York, I don't have as much of a close relationship as I do with my grandmother. But I feel that we have a good relationship, and I like to see him and everything.

**INT:** Why does he live there?

**ELIZABETH:** Most of his friends are there. And I think he likes staying there very much. He likes it there. But he's been talking about how he misses it, because everyone seems to have moved here.

**INT:** Oh. All his friends are moving here?

**ELIZABETH:** Not his friends, but all his family's here, so he seems like he sometimes gets lonely.

**INT:** And your grandmother. How would you describe her?

**ELIZABETH:** She's not typical. She's always been very over-protective of me.

**INT:** How so? Give me an example.

**ELIZABETH:** Well, anything I needed, even now, if I don't feel like I want to stay alone or anything, she'll come over like, no matter what.

**INT:** At the drop of a hat she's over here.

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. She's always, if I ask, if I needed anything, she'd go crazy trying to find it. When I was younger, and there was the Cabbage Patch craze, she went in Montreal, she went to Canada, and she made sure it was her mission to find them there. It was her mission to get Beanie Babies for me now.

**INT:** That's nice. But how would you describe her as a person?

**ELIZABETH:** She's very sweet. She's very loving. (Pause) She's not typical at all.

**INT:** Yeah, you said that. What do you mean by that?

**ELIZABETH:** She's like not the typical person. She likes to... (Pause) I don't know exactly how to...

**INT:** She's not boring?

**ELIZABETH:** No. No. Not at all. She seems to do things which most people wouldn't think of doing.

**INT:** Like?

**ELIZABETH:** Like, I mean, she just does some strange things, and I think that's a result of the Holocaust. And that's what my parents have always made clear.

**INT:** Like what?

**ELIZABETH:** Like she doesn't like being on the, she likes being on the third floor of her apartment building, not the fourth, because she doesn't mind that, but she thinks that's too high. She thinks the first or the second would be too low, and it would be too easy for people to come in. Even though I feel we live in a very safe neighborhood.

**INT:** Do you think she's fearful of the outside world?

**ELIZABETH:** She's very brave and very strong, but I think she doesn't, she's a little worried. She's very worried.

**INT:** What does she worry about, do you know?

**ELIZABETH:** Anything she can.

**INT:** Just in general she worries.

**ELIZABETH:** Yes.

**INT:** Does she worry about you?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. Very much.

**INT:** Does she talk to you about her worries?

**ELIZABETH:** No. Not really.

**INT:** So how do you know she's worried about you?

**ELIZABETH:** My mom and I talk a lot. I mean, I know she's worried. She always talks to me saying, "Oh, are you sure you'll be okay?" Like whenever I'm home alone for like an hour or two, she's very worried.

**INT:** How about your parents? Are they over-protective?

**ELIZABETH:** No. I don't think so.

**INT:** Okay, I was wondering if you could tell me anything you know about your grandparents' Holocaust background. You could start with your grandfather. What do you know about his life before the war? His family?

**ELIZABETH:** I know he was the youngest of, I think it was like seven or eight children. But most of them did not live into adulthood. I think, only, including him, four did.

**INT:** Before the war, you mean? They died before the war or during the war?

**ELIZABETH:** I think some during. Two during and one after. He lives here. He was older.

**INT:** Do you know where he was born?

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah. I think the western side of Poland. It was a very small village, I've been told.

**INT:** Does he tell you this?

**ELIZABETH:** No. I mostly hear it from my mother.

**INT:** What else do you know about his background? Were they rich, poor?

**ELIZABETH:** I think they were fairly poor. And one story I've been told many times, was that he kept a chicken in his room because he always loved chickens, and it was sort of his special pet, I think.

**INT:** Oh, was it a pet? Really?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. It was his pet. Until his mother came out, and then she found out and then she cooked the chicken. (Laughs)

**INT:** Who told you that story?

**ELIZABETH:** My mom.

**INT:** Wow. How old was he when that happened?

**ELIZABETH:** A child.

**INT:** And do you know anything about what happened to him in the war?

**ELIZABETH:** During the war he was sent to Siberia, and I think that was part -- in school we studied the war, and that was because they had split Poland, like Stalin and

Hitler when they did their agreement, they split it, and so most of the people were sent, or some of them were sent out.

**INT:** And he was in that half?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes.

**INT:** And what did he go through in Siberia, do you know?

**ELIZABETH:** I don't know.

**INT:** Do you ever think about it? Do you ever imagine it?

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah. I don't imagine, but I've wondered. And I just haven't really gotten to the point where I'm ready to ask.

**INT:** How come?

**ELIZABETH:** I'm not sure. I really don't know.

**INT:** What about your grandmother? Do you know where she was born?

**ELIZABETH:** Also in Poland. I'm not sure where. She was, I think a fairly middle-upper class family. I've heard much more of her story. Her father was, she was an only child. And when her father died, I think she was about ten or eleven, maybe a little younger. And she was sent, she and her mother went and lived with her grandparents. And her mother, she had lost a lot of children like in childbirth, like when they were very young. And so that very much upset her.

**INT:** Upset her mother.

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. It became sort of almost a, like she became almost like mentally ill.

**INT:** Because of losing the children?

**ELIZABETH:** I think it was through this also. I know she was, after a while she was hospitalized, and that's how she died. Because when the Germans came, I think they poisoned most of the people or something.

**INT:** In the mental hospital.

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. And so she basically lived with her grandparents.

**INT:** How old was she now, do you think?

**ELIZABETH:** I think she was fifteen, sixteen.

**INT:** That's about your age.

**ELIZABETH:** A little older, maybe. I think actually a little older, maybe seventeen. And she had gone to school because her grandparents were fairly wealthy. She had gone to school in like a town, and so she had lots of Christian friends. And she wasn't like, at that point she wasn't being put down because she was Jewish. But she was able, the Germans had come to her parents' house, or the soldiers, her grandparents' house. And she was coming home from school, I believe, and I think someone notified her, saying that "the soldiers are at your grandparents' house. Don't go there." And so she was able, because I think she heard the shots. Yes. So she was kept in hiding by like her teachers and friends who were not Jewish. And then she pretended not to be Jewish, and she also pretended to be slightly retarded, so she wasn't questioned as much. And that's basically why she wasn't killed or nothing happened to her. And she worked for a family sort of as a maid, I think. And so that's how she basically survived.

**INT:** What do you think about that, the fact that your grandmother could do all that? She could pretend she was Christian, she could pretend she was retarded.

**ELIZABETH:** I think it's very amazing. I've always admired her.

**INT:** How did you hear this story?

**ELIZABETH:** Actually my mother was telling it to my dad's cousin's wife. I mean, I had always known, I heard the entire story through them. Like at that time we were in the car.

**INT:** Through your grandparents?

**ELIZABETH:** No. Through my mom. But she was actually telling it to someone else, but I was also there. But I had always known that she had always been disguised and everything.

**INT:** How did you know that? Do you remember?

**ELIZABETH:** My parents had always told me since I was young, I believe. They try not to keep things from me.

**INT:** They were pretty open?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes.

**INT:** When did you become aware that your grandparents were survivors of the Holocaust? How old do you think you were?

**ELIZABETH:** Very young. Fairly young.

**INT:** Like how young?

**ELIZABETH:** I'd say, I don't know, probably before four.

**INT:** You just always knew.

**ELIZABETH:** I always knew that that was why my grandmother was a little strange.

**INT:** "Strange," meaning...?

**ELIZABETH:** Over-protective. And always worried and making sure I was always safe.

**INT:** So did your mother say to you things like, "Well, she went through a war"?

**ELIZABETH:** I'm not sure. I don't know.

**INT:** But you just always kind of knew.

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah.

**INT:** And you said earlier that you're not sure why you never asked. Did you ever go to your grandmother and talk to her about it?

**ELIZABETH:** No.

**INT:** Did she ever tell you those stories?

**ELIZABETH:** Nothing real. I mean, she knows definitely that I know, and I think she'd be very open if I asked her about it. But I haven't gone to her and specifically asked.

**INT:** But she never would just come out with a story while you're in the kitchen having a cup of tea or something.

**ELIZABETH:** No. Not that I remember.

**INT:** And how would you feel about asking?

**ELIZABETH:** I'm not sure. I think I'd be a little worried, or sort of scared, almost.

**INT:** Scared because...?

**ELIZABETH:** Just I guess not really scared. More shy. And sort of...

**INT:** Uncomfortable about asking?

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah.

**INT:** Why do you think you'd feel uncomfortable asking your grandmother?

**ELIZABETH:** I'm not sure.

**INT:** Do you think it might hurt her, or the information might hurt you?

**ELIZABETH:** I'm not sure.

**INT:** And the same with your grandfather?

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah.

**INT:** Okay. Do you want to know more about her story?

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah. But not, I don't think yet.

**INT:** Do you read books about the Holocaust?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes.

**INT:** What have you read?

**ELIZABETH:** A lot of children's books. And we just studied it this year in school.

**INT:** Like, The Diary of Anne Frank? Did you read that?

**ELIZABETH:** No, I have not read that. I've wanted to. But I definitely read a lot. And so I've always had lots of children's books about it. And we went to the Holocaust Museum.

**INT:** What did you think of that?

**ELIZABETH:** I thought it was really nice. They did a very good job with that.

**INT:** Yeah. Was there any material there that you found very disturbing?

**ELIZABETH:** I don't know. We didn't have enough time there, I felt. It was very well done, but I don't think we had enough time.

**INT:** Would you have liked to stay longer?

**ELIZABETH:** Probably. Because we were rushed to go and see, but to be able to talk to people. But we didn't really have enough time to absorb enough information to really ask questions.

**INT:** What about at the end where they show the videos? Did you get a chance to see that?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. I saw part of that. And I thought that was really interesting.

**INT:** That was pretty powerful.

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah.

**INT:** How do you feel about the fact that your grandparents went through the war? Does that have any kind of an impact on you, do you think?

**ELIZABETH:** It gives me lots of admiration for them, and it makes me, it's not something I'm ashamed of at all. I think it's very wonderful that they were able to go through this, and that they're still surviving, and they're doing well, and they're so strong and everything. So I guess I'm sort of proud for them in a way.

**INT:** Why do you think the Holocaust happened? You studied it in school?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. Because of racism, basically. Mostly it was racism and hatred that was built up. We studied the rise of Hitler. He always used to blame, he was brought up in a way that he blamed things on others. And I think that was a way of getting out that blame. And because he was so powerful that people followed him. And in Germany, my mom has always, whenever she talks about when she went there later on, she always says, like she tried to cross the street, and there were no cars anywhere. But someone pulled her back because the light was red. They followed, so it seemed like it was part of their spirit that they followed directions.

**INT:** No matter what.

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah. And so I think that was also part of it. And I think most could. I think that a lot of people were very unaware that this was happening.

**INT:** Do you think something like that could happen here?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. But I think people are trying to be more aware. And trying to, I think probably with all the spying that's going on, I mean, it's getting larger and larger, and regulations, I'm sure it could happen again, as with Kosovo. But I think there's much more prevention against it, they're trying to prevent against it.

**INT:** Did you ever personally experience any kind of anti-Semitism?

**ELIZABETH:** No.

**INT:** Do you pay attention to this on the news?

**ELIZABETH:** I pay attention sort of to racism.

**INT:** Just in general.

**ELIZABETH:** In general. Not pay attention, but I'm always very much aware of it.

**INT:** How do you feel about it?

**ELIZABETH:** I think it's awful. And I don't understand, really, how people can feel like that. Because I've always been, I mean, my parents have always made sure I'm very open.

**INT:** To all different people.

**ELIZABETH:** All different people, yes.

**INT:** Your mother, did she ever talk to you about the war, what her parents went through, or just you overheard her talking?

**ELIZABETH:** I mostly overheard her talking. But I have a feeling that if I asked she'd be very open and very willing to talk to me.

**INT:** So again, it's a question of not asking.

**ELIZABETH:** Yes.

**INT:** The ball's in your court, sort of. They would be available.

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah. (End Side One)

**INT:** What do you think the impact of the war has been on -- well, you talked about your grandmother feeling over-protective, and she worries, like she doesn't want to be on the first or second floor of a building. She's afraid someone might break in. Are there any other, anything else you think might be an impact of the war?

**ELIZABETH:** I think that's one reason why my grandfather is very generous. The type of thing, I think he sort of has the feeling inside that he might lose things, so he wants to make sure, sort of live life to the fullest and make sure everyone around him is very happy. And I think that might be part of it. And that's also probably the reason why my grandmother is very, they both try to have a lot of family.

**INT:** Closeness to family?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes.

**INT:** Because they lost them?

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah. And they're very, I mean, like everyone in my family -- well, not my father, but -- anyone on my mom's side of the family is very enthusiastic when we find like sort of a new relative type of thing. Like when we find that more relatives are closer.

**INT:** Didn't you find some Russian relatives?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. They knew they were. I mean, we knew them and we had contact with them, but they recently moved here.

**INT:** And how are they related again?

**ELIZABETH:** I think that it was on my -- I'm not sure exactly. I think it was on my grandfather's...I know it's someone's, I think it was my grandfather's brother, one of them, she was his, one of them is his daughter. No, his granddaughter. But she's like the same age as my mother.

**INT:** And they were living in Russia?

**ELIZABETH:** Russia. And then they moved to Israel. And that's where their oldest daughter is now with her husband.

**INT:** Oh, but they live here.

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. Other than her, they all live here.

**INT:** I see. And what are they like? Do you get to talk to them at all, or it's too hard?

**ELIZABETH:** Sometimes, yeah. Not a lot, because it's sort of there's a large language barrier. But they're, we're trying to incorporate them very much into our lives. They're also trying to do part of that.

**INT:** Do you think that's because of the Holocaust?

**ELIZABETH:** It could be. Yes.

**INT:** What about on your mother? Do you think anything affected your mother, coming down, being raised by your grandparents?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. She said it was very difficult for her, because her parents were also raised in a different country, and she began to be raised in a different country. Coming here from Canada was very strange.

**INT:** She lived in Canada for a while.

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. She didn't have any, she wasn't used to having like school clothes. She was used to uniforms. And just the way of life was very, very different.

**INT:** How old was she when she came from Canada?

**ELIZABETH:** Ten.

**INT:** Ten. Any other impacts? Do you think that the war filtered down to your mother in some way?

**ELIZABETH:** I think it's made her stronger, and very, I think that's actually one reason why she's so accepting of others, and very liberal. Like she doesn't, she's not like against anyone unless she thinks they're being, unless she thinks they're a bad person. Like someone who's like an abusive person to their child, like she'll try to -- I think that's actually part of why she's, because she had her parents so different, and she didn't know exactly why. I mean, she said whenever she did something wrong, her mother always, she somehow always got a part of the story that way. But I think it affected, like that's part of why she went into psychotherapy, to sort of understand different people and why they're doing things.

**INT:** So in order to understand her own parents? Is that what you're saying?

**ELIZABETH:** I think that could be part of it.

**INT:** Could you just talk about, one thing we didn't do is I forgot to ask you to describe yourself. I asked you to describe everybody else, and you made references, "I'm like my father this way." But if you had to describe yourself, what would you say?

**ELIZABETH:** I try very hard at school. I am very much a perfectionist.

**INT:** Where does **that** come from?

**ELIZABETH:** My father. (Laughs) Definitely. My mother likes to have things done, but I think most of it's from my father. And both of my parents are very intelligent, as their parents are, and I think that's been passed down. I'm not stupid, I don't think. (Laughs) And I love animals very much. I'm not very much of a people person. I prefer to do things with my family, rather than others.

**INT:** Why is that, do you think?

**ELIZABETH:** I'm not sure. Partially because it's who I am and how I was raised, and that might be something that's been passed down, the fact that family is very important.

**INT:** Do you like being with your friends?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. I like to be with my friends, but I...

**INT:** You prefer being with your family.

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah. And I've always felt a connection to animals.

**INT:** I'm with you on that one. (Laughs)

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. (Laughs) And let's see. I concentrate a lot on school, and I don't like things to interfere with that.

**INT:** Because you like school so much? Or because why?

**ELIZABETH:** Because I like to do well. I like to succeed. And I understand that I have to work hard. I'm an A student, and I think that's because I work very hard.

**INT:** What happens if you don't get an A?

**ELIZABETH:** I used to be upset, but not much anymore.

**INT:** So you're not as hard on yourself as you used to be?

**ELIZABETH:** No.

**INT:** Any other descriptions? That's pretty good.

**ELIZABETH:** Not really.

**INT:** Would you describe yourself as a more serious person, or a more fun person, or you can be both?

**ELIZABETH:** Both.

**INT:** When things upset you, and you're sad, or you're angry, or you're upset about something, to whom do you go?

**ELIZABETH:** To my parents. But I often keep lots of stuff to myself. Like, I mean if there was a big problem, I know I'd definitely go to my parents. But I do like to keep things. I'm not a very outspoken person about like different problems.

**INT:** So how do you deal with them?

**ELIZABETH:** I usually try to think things over. And just try to work them out. And if I get stumped, I know I can definitely go to any member of my family. Or my friends.

**INT:** So first you try to figure it out yourself. What else do you use to cope with difficult times?

**ELIZABETH:** Riding. Horseback riding is definitely a way. I mean, that's a way I can get myself sort of just free, sort of just of everyday problems. I feel different, and sort of like, it gives you, it's not a sense of, it's sort of a sense of you're not just a minuscule person. You actually have some power. Because you have this huge animal, and you can sort of control them and have them do things that you like.

**INT:** And how does that make you feel?

**ELIZABETH:** If I'm feeling like really down about school, it helps me feel up. And I like riding out in the open, and just sort of, and when I jump I just sort of feel free.

**INT:** That's wonderful that you do that. How often do you do it?

**ELIZABETH:** I try to do it at least once a week. I'm going to start doing it more if I can.

**INT:** Any other hobbies?

**ELIZABETH:** No. I like to read.

**INT:** Do you do music?

**ELIZABETH:** No. (Laughs) I like to listen to old music. I used to play the violin, but that didn't work very well. No. (Laughs) And sometimes I like to write, just sort of random things. They're not very good most of the time, though.

**INT:** Stories, poems?

**ELIZABETH:** Stories, usually. It's sort of a way to express myself. Sometimes when I went through a really bad time, I'd do some poetry.

**INT:** That helped?

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah.

**INT:** Do you want to talk about bad time?

**ELIZABETH:** That was in sixth grade. I think that was around when my grandmother was diagnosed [with cancer]. No, that was after. But I had fallen, I took a really, really

bad fall off of a horse. I went straight into a wood wall, head first. And it made me very wary of riding. And there was so much pressure from school. That we were reading like college material in sixth grade, and we had to self-teach ourselves most of it. And it ended up being that, instead of even having a math teacher, I was forced to do it that way for math, too. I wasn't forced, but I chose to do it that way. Because it was just going too slowly for me. And so that became even more of a problem. I was basically my own teacher, with like a book in front of me, and it wasn't working.

**INT:** So all that pressure?

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah. And I was in a special program, and it was just very insane. I was up till midnight most of the nights working.

**INT:** In sixth grade?

**ELIZABETH:** For sixth grade, yes.

**INT:** That is insane. (Laughs)

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. (Laughs)

**INT:** So how did you handle that? Did you write poetry then?

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah. And I talked to my parents. My mom took me to see someone. I think that was then. And I continued that for a little bit.

**INT:** Did that help?

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah. I think so. And I was also going through, I had chronic daily headaches. I was diagnosed with that. And so I had to deal with that.

**INT:** Do you still have them?

**ELIZABETH:** No. I think that was mainly from stress.

**INT:** Wow. So you had a lot to deal with.

**ELIZABETH:** Yes.

**INT:** But you got through it!

**ELIZABETH:** Yes.

**INT:** Okay. So you basically try to rely on yourself, but you know your parents are there.

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah.

**INT:** That's a lot of good self-descriptions. Could we talk about G-d? If you could tell me what your thoughts are about G-d, do you believe in G-d? Well, let's start with that.

**ELIZABETH:** I don't think so. I believe sort of in fate, not that you have a destiny, but that you have a place. But my parents have never pressured me to believe in this or that, or told me, "Oh, we're going to go to synagogue or church." I've never done that, except for bar or bat mitzvahs or some communion or something like that. I don't think I'm very religious. I'm not religious at all. I'm sort of more intent on finding my own way.

**INT:** And as far as your identity, you said you were sort of half-Jewish and half-Christian. So is that a problem for you?

**ELIZABETH:** No. I think I actually like it, because we get to celebrate different holidays, and I get a different, like my one grandmother always does like Christmas cookies and stuff. And then my other grandmother always does traditional Jewish cooking. And I think it's very nice to have the mixture of the two. And we celebrate Passover, we celebrate Easter. So we have like, so we do both.

**INT:** Everything.

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah.

**INT:** What about your view of yourself when you grow up? Would you care who, I mean, first of all, do you even want to get married, and secondly, do you care who...

**ELIZABETH:** If I found someone who I really loved, then I would get married, but it's not like, oh, yeah, I'm going to get married, type of thing.

**INT:** It's not a definite.

**ELIZABETH:** No. I mean, if there's no one who I think that I could live with for the rest of my life, then I wouldn't. It's not like, oh, I'm going to take some person just because I want to get married. I don't think it would matter. I mean, my parents have always, not enforced, but sort of exposed me to different people and different lives.

**INT:** So it wouldn't matter.

**ELIZABETH:** No.

**INT:** And what about goals for yourself? Where do you see yourself in ten years?

**ELIZABETH:** I know I'm definitely going to continue on with school. Definitely college, and most likely graduate school of some sort. For a long time I didn't know. Right now I'm sort of planning on getting a vet degree, a veterinarian degree, and I would

love to do horse training. But I also, because of how much I love math, and I find that it's very, it comes naturally to me. I might do something, I might try something that has to do with that.

**INT:** Some mathematical field?

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah. Not teaching, though.

**INT:** What about, another thing I wanted to ask you, just to back up. You talked about your own coping skills, and how you handle things. How would you see your mother's coping skills? What does she do when things are difficult?

**ELIZABETH:** She definitely would talk to someone if it was something. Being a therapist herself, I know she'd have no trouble going to see someone. She did that when she was divorced from her first husband. And I know she's definitely very open to that. She's very open to other types of, different types of like chiropracty, or homeopathy, and she goes for massages, and just anything.

**INT:** To help her just relax.

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah. And she likes to talk to her friends.

**INT:** How about your father? How does he cope with stress?

**ELIZABETH:** With stress, I think he basically lets it build up on himself, because he works better under pressure. (Laughs) That's basically how he gets all his work. I think that's a lot of why he gets his work done. I'm very different. I can't work under pressure. And I don't know exactly what else he would do. He's not big on homeopathy at all. So I think he basically lets it build. I'm not sure.

**INT:** Does he have friends that he talks to?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. I don't know how much he would talk to other people. I think he's more interested in family. He definitely has some good friends, but I don't know.

**INT:** Do you think that's a guy thing?

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah. I think it's more of a guy thing, that you would sort of keep things to yourself more. And since he was raised by a Protestant, it's sort of like, "Oh, I'll suffer." I mean, he fell off a bike, and he hurt his wrist, and that was in the spring, and in the fall, he said, "I think it's broken." (Laughs) And we hadn't heard anything about this.

**INT:** So he's not a complainer, that's for sure.

**ELIZABETH:** No. No. Very unlike my mother and I.

**INT:** Oh, you guys complain?

**ELIZABETH:** Oh yeah! (Laughs)

**INT:** How are you like your mother and how are you like your dad?

**ELIZABETH:** I work a lot like my dad. I mean, I like to get things done. I definitely got my logical thinking from him, not from my mom. I'm not as energetic as my father at all. I'm more like my mom. And I definitely complain a lot, like her. But I think I got my love basically of animals from him. He didn't grow up with animals, but he's always been very used to them, and I haven't met any dog or anything that hasn't liked him. Sort of like very special, I think. I definitely have his working skills. My mom was never, or at least until college, she wasn't very big on school, and she didn't work very hard in school. But my dad was, like my mom would put it, a nerd.

**INT:** Are you a nerd, also?

**ELIZABETH:** I don't think I'm a nerd, but I certainly work very hard. (Laughs)

**INT:** Could you describe some of your friends? You don't have to say their names, but just describe some of them?

**ELIZABETH:** Let's see. Well, my closest friend, she's Jewish. And her family was always, she's very, her family's very big into the Jewish faith. Not like extremely. I mean, they're not Orthodox, but they're not like, they go to synagogue regularly. They follow, like they don't eat pork.

**INT:** What's she like?

**ELIZABETH:** She also works very hard. Most of my close friends are all very good students, and we all work hard. I know I can always depend on them if I'm ever absent. And she's also very smart. She's more of a people person than I am, but she also loves animals. I'm not sure.

**INT:** How about some of your other friends?

**ELIZABETH:** Like I said, most of them are good students. They're definitely, it's definitely a broad range of people.

**INT:** All different backgrounds?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes. Very much all different backgrounds. But most of them are actually Jewish, but just because it's the area we live in. Most people in this area, it's generally a Jewish community.

**INT:** Oh, you think there's a high percentage of Jewish kids in your school?

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah. I think it's more.

**INT:** So you don't think you gravitate to the Jewish kids.

**ELIZABETH:** No.

**INT:** It's just the makeup of the school.

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah. But some of my close friends also aren't Jewish.

**INT:** Okay. I guess that's just about it. Is there anything you want to add for the tape that we haven't talked about?

**ELIZABETH:** I don't think so.

**INT:** I want to thank you very much, Elizabeth. It was a pleasure.

**ELIZABETH:** Thank you.

(END OF INTERVIEW)