

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Elisabeth Model**  
**September 11, 1990**  
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## **PREFACE**

The following oral history testimony is the result of a taped interview with Elisabeth Model conducted on September 11, 1990 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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## **ELISABETH MODEL**

### **September 11, 1990**

Q: Okay. The camera is on. Would you tell me your name please?

A: Elizabeth Model. Dickman Model. Dickman was my maiden maiden name.

Q: And where and when were you born?

A: I was born in Bayreuth in Bavaria in the as they say. That had a great influence on my early youth only when Mother was Latvian at the. There was always singers coming and staying in our house and things like that, and started later to resent it terribly much because I hated...started to hate. Couldn't be helped. I had one little episode when I was a little girl. I met this fabulous old gentleman who looked like Wagner. I feel into his arm when I was 12 years old. He was a poet and a writer, and he was a Latvian and so far he was a friend of Wagners and came to rehearsals in Bayreuth, and so I met him and he went off to Munich, sent me tickets. He was wonderful. And one day he called me in the street and said I have to come. I said why. He said, "I have to talk to you." So I run. There was this old man pacing up and down and he said, "When I die, all these things, they'll die with me." I said, "What?" He said, "About When I heard, I said, "I don't want to hearing anything about Wagners. But he said you have because with me he dies. And he's die I don't want to have anything to do with the Wagners. so far that I just didn't want to have anything about them. That's strange but...but what can you do when you're 16 you know.

Q: Tell me...tell me about your childhood. You had an unusual one.

A: I was...I was a...We were the fifth, fourth and fifth children of my mother. We had a wonderful, wonderful. All of them. Very happy family life. Absolutely. In Bayreuth. My mother was absolutely . My father was more of poet. Very nice. And then when I went to Munch I fell for that because my father had taken the drawings of a child to a Professor and he said, "Ah, she's very gifted. Why don't you send her? So I had the first permission when I was 16. When they called me back, I was too young and I could go again. But Munich was very important. But the second time, I was in Munch...I remember the first time feces on the wall and Jews. That was the start of Hitler. And he...it was terrifying. But we didn't...crazy people. They thought it was crazy people, but it wasn't. And it went on. And then in my studio where I worked as a pupil...there was a young girl, beautiful girl and she came one day with a hack and cross, with a swastika. I said, "What are you going..." She said, "Oh, one of my boyfriends gave it to me." I said, " You better don't wear it because the has this hack and cross." So for me she kept it back, but then she wear it again, and that was the beginning. Hack and Cross. Swastika. All over. And it took away the joy. And then I got anonymous telephone calls. I should go to this place far out of Munich and these were the people I had refused to meet and be friends with, and they took...

A: Explain. I don't understand.

Q: Well, I...I got a telephone call for example, "Be at 9 O'clock at Corner, Munich at 9 o'clock. And then telephone thing. I didn't go of course. And the next thing is I got a letter that my father died and I should go immediately to Bayreuth. I knew also that wouldn't be true. This was the revenge of certain young punks because I refused to walk and go out with them you know. So that it was the beginning that I knew I was...I was on the list you know. But...and I was on their list. But of course, I didn't bother. I knew that I married and went to Holland and I forgot about. But I couldn't forget about, because I think I mentioned that I married in 1922 and in 23 we visited Bayreuth. And in Beareth, there's a beautiful old Beareth opera house which got Wagner to Beareth. offered him that house, but, of course, it was not big enough...to Doctor Wagner. But it was gorgeous...Beareth....and I loved it and I showed it to my husband and then down that opera...little opera hill came down a troop...a troop of singing boys with the old flag. and everything. And my husband had a terrible temper and he wanted to go over and tear that flag down. But my father kept him back, said, "Don't. These are only stupid boys." My husband was very prophetic. It was 1923. He said, "How can you say that? In 10 years these boys will be your judges, will be your teachers, will be your...whatever it is." And he was right. Ten years afterwards. 23 to 33. He knew it. He said it to my father. But we knew and I knew it. Married to him, I mean I knew. He was politically inclined, which he proved later too and I learned a lot of things and I got interested in...in politics.

Q: So in 1923?

A: That was in 1923 when my husband said to my father, "In 10 years you will see those boys." And that was right. They are your judges and they are the...that's it. Yeah.

Q: Where did you go after Beareth? After 1923, after that visit, tell us?

A: I was...I was married in Amsterdam. It was wonderful. The most marvelous life anybody could have. My children were born there. Lots of friends. It was a marvelous life there. And I could paint and I could draw. I didn't start at that time first, but later I did. And it was just marvelous. I took to Holland like as if I was born there. And I felt I always talked the language without an accent. It was my...I forced myself to listen you know. And nobody thought that I would not be born in Holland. That was wonderful. I loved it. And then, of course, a tragedy came. And my husband knew it before hand. He said, "They come. They will come." And I knew they will come.

Q: Excuse me. I want to pause and stop the tape for a moment please. Okay, we are back on tape. Huh...You had a...you had started to talk about the year 1933.

A: Yes.

Q: During Amsterdam. What happened in 1933.

A: You know that was that terrible....the beginning in Germany. And of course, we were terribly not only touched but all the refuge coming and we tried very much to do for them, the ones who came and we...it was just a restless time. And my husband knew immediately. He said, "This is the beginning." And my mother said the same thing. We knew it. And then I became ill

and had fever, and I was sent away for a few months. And...uh...it was alright and I came back and it was very much better and then came 38. That was Kristallnacht. Wasn't it. And my mother was still in Beareth because she didn't want to leave. She was very proud. She had no money in Holland. She had her money in Germany of course so she didn't want to leave. And the Gestapo came and the same night I went to Germany immediately. I had my Dutch passport. I could do that. I went to Beareth and started a fight of 7 days with the the , with these people because I wanted my mother out. And before they gave a exit reason that she could leave, they had of course a hundred thousand things to day. I was every day for 7 days there and fought with those people, and told them what I thought about them. I did! I told somebody...one man that...one of the that I know you. Your father was a fine man. He was really a noble man. I said, "Oh you seem so...and why do you make a effort to besmear my whole family?" "Oh, no, we don't know. We don't." But he did. But in any case, after 7 days I got the permission to go to the bank and get my mother's fortune go to the Nazis. The bank director know me as a little child. He said, "Listen, I know you, but it's better that you go. Your mother couldn't come out. I'm sorry we have to take the money." So they took my mother's whole fortune. That's why she didn't come to Holland. I went to them opposite in that old palace which was once a palace and then was a Nazi place and got a visa for my mother to exit. But we say I didn't get it, but it was there. And then I said, "Okay, I will go." But when I came into the house...I forgot to tell you, my...the pictures...the pictures of my youth. You know, I had so many. The beautiful portraits of my ancestors, they were hacked to pieces in that Kristallnacht. My mother's apartment looked unbelievable and the beautiful picture. I didn't mind my picturers, my drawings of my youth but the picture of my beautiful grandmother. And so I left and my mother followed in a few days. I purposely did that and when she came without trouble. She could come over, but she left everything and came like that to Amsterdam and I was...we were happy to have here. But the Kristallnacht was something which has to be thought of you know. I was there. I saw it. I saw the destruction. It's sad. Terrible. I had a friend who came to me, not a Jewish friend, and she belonged to the aristocracy there and she said, "You know we are so desperate." Her father in law was a very high, you know, very religious. And she said, "Believe me, we are not all like that. Believe me. We think it's terrible." But of course, they couldn't do anything. There were the Nazis and they have the power and in Beareth they had especially power because there was a teacher who helped Hitler before and the Wagners, of course. I didn't even talk about the Wagners yet. Huh? Would you like to know about the Wagners and my family? Now my...I only remember that we always had singers coming and staying in my father's house who were singing for . With their little children, they always talked about and grandma, but it was who was the power of course behind the throne. And I remember there was in white and between and the youngest daughter and her husband , he was the greatest anti-Semite, the Englishman. So we saw them walk all the time. Beautiful old ladies, smiling, angelic, but the devil as we all know.

Q: You saw them?

A: Yes, of course we saw them. And my father knew Seigfrid and when I was graduating Seigfried gave me permission to play the piano, his piano, in our...I know that when I left school I played by Greek on the piano, on Seigfried Wagner's piano. Yeah, he was nice. It was she who was the bad one. But Seigfried was very nice. Whenever he saw me, he waved to me. You know that's...that's passe, of course. And so I left. My mother left and that was all about Germany and I didn't want to hear about Germany anymore.

Q: So this happened in 1938.

A: Yes, that was in 1938 and we settled her down and then, of course, "we knew what was coming. And then I got...I went to Switzerland. I worked in the....No it's very important. I had fever and the doctor said I must go away, get away from Amsterdam, from that fever place so to say and I went to Arosa. And I met a friend and he said, "Go to this hotel outside of Arosa. I was there and my husband left me and on the first evening I went down, consoled myself by putting on a long gown, evening dress which I loved, and I'm called to the telephone. And my husband called me. I had just arrived you know, and he said, "You have to come back." I said, "What?" "There is the invasion of Vienna." I think it was...not yet, I mean the Nazis went to Vienna. I forgot. In any case, I said, "I can't. I have high fever." He said, "Then I'll call you tomorrow." And I come out and there stand two elegant Germans. They said, "Ah, . We observed you are so beautiful. Will you come out?" I said, "I am not accustomed to go out with strangers." They said you must speak a very educated talk. I said, "Oh," I said, "You listened?" "If you listened," I said, "then I tell you that I just heard that you invaded Austria." "That couldn't be," he said. This gentlemen is the of some paper. I said, "But it is true." And I let them stand there. But I knew that I was on their list so I had letters. That was before Arosa. That was in . And I had bags...my husband wrote me every day. And I went to my bag to look for them in the bag. The letters had disappeared. So I knew...the chambermaids. They're all German chambermaids. They had taken my letters, and the next day it was brought back. And so I said, "I cannot stay here in that hotel with those." So I went down to the gentlemen and said, "I will not stay here in the hotel." He said, "Why not?" I said, "Your guests. I don't like your guests." And I wonderful chance. One of the skiers saw me from Holland. He came. He said, "You know this lady is here in the hotel. Don't you know here?" I said, "Yes." I called her up. I said I have got to get me a room. That was the lady from Holland. She said, "I will." So she got me a room. I took a sleigh and left everything in the hotel and I knew I was on their list and that was true. That was the beginning. But they...but I was on the list. They had stolen my letters from my husband and so on. And that was now 39 I think. So that was...we knew we were... how could I say... not only my husband, but I was too on the list. And there it was. And then, you know, the invasion and we knew it. I said to my little housemaid when we went on vacation for a few days in August. I said, "Stay here." She said, "Why." I said, "Best. The Nazis come." She said, "It couldn't be." I said, "Yes." We were on vacation and after the second...on the second day the maid comes in and while we were having dinner and said that three gentlemen are outside. They come and then a screaming starts. My children never forgot it. There was these three Gestapo people there and two Dutch policeman and they wanted to have Mr. Model into prison. Yeah. And they screamed. That was the worse thing. And I went up to him. I was so furious. Said, "Why do you do that." He said, "He's in our books 6 years." "What for?" "Smuggled dollars." I said, "My husband smuggled dollars?" "Yes, Ma'am. American Bank." He didn't really do it. So I immediately dumped into a train, left my children there, went to Amsterdam and came to my house and the maid said, "You know, they were here with Mr. Model. They opened every drawer and looked and left my in pieces and everything. They looked for papers and, of course, they couldn't find it, so that was the beginning of the prison. At the same night at 11 o'clock at night, my maid comes...that little maid...a very patriotic Dutch girl and she said, "There's a gentlemen...I had sent away...there's a gentleman and he's one of those who was here with Mr. Model when he came with the Nazis," she said, "and he said he insists that he has to talk to you. I said, "Okay, if he insists. Put him in

your room." So I went there and it was one of the Dutch officers. You know I told you there were the Gestapo and then two Dutch officers. And he said, "Please, Mrs. Model, trust me." I said, "Why should I trust you?" He said, "I am the other international law that we are forced to be with the Nazis when they do something with Dutch citizens you know." And then he took out a little match box and in that matchbox inside he had what he only could written. He had written...he had 9 people I should warn. And I warned them of course. He said, "Please trust me." I said, "But why should I trust you?" He said, "I tell you a story. Last year...two years ago...I don't know...we had caught a young German who came due, he said, who came over with 5 and the police called your husband because when they asked him, "What do you do with the... He said he delivered something to Mr. Model. Now he said...the policeman said latter...We knew Mr. Model had a perfect name. He wouldn't smuggle. So they called my husband. My husband said, "I can't come. Come to me." So they came. Three policeman with this young German Jew and my husband said, "Do you know me?" "No." My husband said, "I have never seen that boy." But he said, "Let me be alone with him." So the police left, went the other room. They were very polite and my ...my husband said, "How did you get my name?" He said, "I bought it." So he said, "What?" "Yeah, there is an exchange in Berlin and your name was on the highest list. I paid 800 marks for your name as the one who helps everybody." I swear it this was the truth what I tell you. So he had my husband's name and gave the police knew he wasn't smuggling. So my husband said the police that they should not put him back to German...send him back to Germany. And he vouched for him and he gave him money that he could go in that..." which at that time was only a detention camp and not a...later became that terrible camp. So my husband got it done that that boy who got him into difficulties was not put back to Germany. And this was the policeman. He said, "And I was there when your husband pleaded not to put that boy back. And I said to myself if I ever can do something for that man will. And now was my opportunity because when I came there I knew I will help." And he said, My colleague...colleague I don't know." But the funniest thing is that next day in the afternoon, the colleague called me and said, "Ah, he so wonderful. We got him something to eat in the morning before he went to the Gestapo headquarters." Imagine. They're all heart that because they saw how wonderful he was. In prison...the prison...they said, "He's so wonderful...he had...he gives courage to everybody. He said to them when they walked in the prison yard, he said, "Don't worry. They will not last out here. Then will not last 10 years," to the people you know. That was him you know.

Q: Before I ask you more about your husband, I'd like you to put your purse on the floor. It's a little distracting. You should try not to touch the mike up here. Okay?

A: Did I?

Q: Tell me about your husband and how did he get involved in helping people. My husband as a young man already was involved. When he was 18, he was already a leader for young people. And when I met him he had...was always in politics but against everything....against the common man you know. So I knew that and I was happy and I became just like he was. I helped everybody as far as I could, but I wasn't as powerful as he. Everybody could come to him and they did. They did. I told you the Nazis told me. They knew since years that he was helping everybody and told me themselves. And I said, "What did you say to me?" Now isn't that stupid. I got so mad. I was alone. He was "Karloff". The name of the Nazi hunter who took my husband

was Inspector Karloff. Never will I forget the name. And he said, "I think he's a wonderful man myself." And I said, "And you keep him in prison yet?" "But he's our enemy?" I said, "What do you expect?" You know he's too naive. Can you imagine? And so they kept him and kept him and kept him. And he could...he...he didn't get my letters. I got his letters which were desperate. He never got a letter and I wrote every day. I sent somebody to the prison. (Sigh) He didn't...and they didn't give it to him. And he was tortured because there were bombings from the English at that time. But they were lost and then I get an anonymous telephone call from The Hague when he was about 4 weeks in prison. And he...there was a German speaking and said, "You don't know me but I know about you and I know about your husband. I would like to see him." I said, "He's not here." "Where is he?" I said, "In prison," and bang the telephone went down. I should not say in prison. He was in prison. And that was it. A week after that, the same thing. "Can I talk to Mr. Model?" I said, "He's in prison." "Wait a moment," he said, "I come." So there came a tall, nice, portly German who said, "I did not put my car in front of your house, which was nice with the Gestapo of course. But I have to tell you that I am not your enemy. I'm your friend because Mr. Model did something so fabulous once for me. You know he always did things. I want to help him." I said, "You only can help him when you get him out of prison." And he disappeared, you know, and that was it. And then I didn't hear anything and then one day I get a telephone call Saturday morning and the same voice said, "I see clear. I talked to that Karlo. And that was it. And then in the afternoon at 2 o'clock a taxi comes and my husband was home. But that wasn't the end of it. Every week one of the Gestapo people came to the bank and got him to The Hague or to Rotterdam, and he never told me what happened there. He never told me. But every week twice, three times, they called him again. Cat and mouse you know. H

Q: What was the excuse first for putting him in prison.

A: Oh, he was the collector of the...of the dollars all over Europe, which wasn't true at all of course. It was...it was actually the...uh...you know...then...yeah...then I was at the Gestapo for the eighth time. I never came...I always went to the Gestapo and he interrogated me, and on the eighth time, he said, "Something terrible has happened while I was away." I said, "What has happened?" He left...left the other man go and I was alone with him. And he said, "Some people have...I had forgotten about this even..." "Some people have offered money for Mr. Model's release." I said, "What?" "Dollars," he said. I said, "We have no dollars. My husband has no dollars." We delivered it to the Dutch. We were supposed to deliver it. "No, no, no. 4 thousand dollars or 8 thousand dollars." I don't remember. In any case, suddenly I...he said...he mentioned a name, Mrs. Levy. This Mrs. Levy, she was at my door, but I didn't receive her. He said, "Yes, but she was not Jewish." She had the name....she was a German who worked together with the Mexican Consul to get money out of the people. And he said...when I was in prison...I forgot to tell you that men came in...a banker and said, "Outside is a lady. She can help to get your husband out of prison." And immediately I knew. Impossible! I knew that wouldn't be possible. So I said, "I don't believe you." "Oh," he said, "Yes." I said, "Oh, it costs money." "Yes, it costs money, but what is money for the release of Mr. Model?" I said, "It's nothing, but for me it's something because I don't have any dollars." "And anyway," I said, "I can't. "Who's the lady?" He said, "This is a Mrs. Levy." So I knew the name you know. And when I was there he said, "Mrs. Levy came to him and offered the Gestapo...imagine, he said, 4 thousand or 6...8 thousand dollars...I don't know...for the release of . Of course, he couldn't do that. I said, "No, you couldn't do it, of course." That was the beginning and I knew darn well that they had...they wanted...we



would have paid...they would have paid 4 thousand dollars and then they would have come to us and give us 8 thousand dollars because that's what they did. But I didn't do it. I knew my husband would hate it, and he said later he was so glad for that I didn't believe them and didn't let...I didn't see Mrs. Levy ever. But she interfered with my life because she wanted money. Later after the war, I heard, she was taken into prison by the Dutch with the Mexican Consul because she cheated and got money. I know people who paid her the money. But very nice people, Cohen, from Amsterdam. I heard that they paid the money. I didn't because first of all, I didn't have it. Anyway, that was...that was the beginning you know. And then we get a telephone call from the American Consul, knew my husband, of course, my husband works for an American bank. And he said, "Mrs. Model, you have to get him out of the country." I said, "Don't I know that? Don't I know that?" And before the Nazis came, on the day before the Germans marched in...I forgot to tell you...I had in my living room about 13 people who all wanted to leave the country with my husband because they knew where he is there is action and they can do something. But my husband said, "I cannot leave. I have 40 people who depend on me." But I will help you and we got in touch with other people. And there was a cousin of mine. He said, "I am a criminal but I don't go." He said, "I cannot go if he doesn't go." I said, "I cannot go if he doesn't go. I stay, of course." It was...ah...I never can forget that afternoon and they were all there and the Belgium Consul even offered us that we could go, and he said he wouldn't go because some 40 people are depending on him. He cannot go. And he looked at me and I said...funnily enough I had...he said to me later, "Why did you not say anything." I said, "I had a feeling we would get out anyway." Real funny thing. I have a feeling we'll get out.

Q: What did your husband mean '40 people are depending on him.' He had a bank and 40 people were depending on him. He couldn't let them from one day to the other without money, without anything. That was him. He said, "I cannot." My mother was one of them. You see. He said, "I couldn't do that. 40 people. I...I cannot go." And when he said that, I said, "We will go." I...I had absolutely the feeling we will go somewhere. We could do it. It was my...it was not made up. I felt we could leave. And if so, he finished everything and when the American Consul said try get out and then a few other people called and the Underground called us and we were twice put...it was the most awful thing. Twice we were put on a list...an exit visa...visa, which was the most important from the Nazis. But we couldn't no visa. We had nothing. Let me think back. Then that's another time when the....when the was a friend there officially they gave the visa...we gave the permit...permit, but it was not the business of course. And called me and said we have another...we had another visa...exit visa...visa...exit for you. I said, "But we have no...have no visa for...from where should you go." But then the American Consul said, "Mr. Model, try to get in touch with the American Consuls." How it really happened, I don't know. But the time went and the exit visa was gone and we get another call and they said, "If you don't leave now, you will never leave." That's the Underground. So my husband again went to Rotterdam where the American Consul was, and he said to him, "It's desperate. I will be killed and we all will be killed if you don't give us the..." "I can't do it." But...then my husband said, "I would...you would be responsible to Beareth because my husband worked for the bank where Beareth was...something. He got a little frightened and he said, "Okay. Let your wife come on the..." And I came. And he...he took our notes, but this was it. But then in the meantime it was Friday and Saturday morning my husband went...on Monday, we were supposed to go to that transport. I had to tell my mother that we leave. I had to pack two bags. And my sons had 40 degree fever or something. Any case he said, "You have to come immediately." He called me

from Rotterdam. I was not permitted to take a taxi but I did, jumped into the train and arrive, and there he stands and he smiles a little bit. And he said, "I think we will make it." So he had told me that while he was talking to the Consul he remembered his other Spanish visa. He went to the Spanish Consulate and there was one girl left. And she said, "I can't do anything." He said, "Here are...I don't know how much money he gave her...Dutch money. Please. To your favorite charity, but please put a Spanish visa and she did. She did. That was our savior...that unknown girl put a Spanish visa in our passport. And then he went back to the Americans Consulate and said to him, "Here, I have a Spanish visa." Then, of course, I...I had to sign different things and at 3 O'clock on that Saturday afternoon, here comes out a very looking man. I forgot his name, thank God. He gave me my passport, gave me his hand and said, "Here is your passport." For you, I miss my golf. I swear it. That's what he says. And I said, "But you saved our lives." He said, "For you, I missed my golf." And then we went to Amsterdam and I had to tell my mother that we will leave and we didn't...and my sisters after me died when my husband was prison, and then I.... It was terrible, of course. You couldn't tell people, but I had to tell my mother and my brother.

Q: You had to leave without your mother?

A: Of course. We couldn't take her. And then. I must think back. Then that was Saturday. And on Sunday, my husband went to see my mother. He was so wonderful to her. And while he was gone, I get a telephone call from that man with whom my husband worked Underground whom I knew very well. I mean my husband didn't tell me, but I knew. I knew the work of that friend of ours. And he said...it was 3 o'clock in the afternoon, Sunday afternoon. Monday morning, we had to be at 7 o'clock with our two bags on the Grand Central Station. We would be smuggled into a transport. And that ...and he said, "I'm sorry. He has to be 8 o'clock...he has to go to Grand Central Station. Don't ask any questions he said. So when my husband come in, I said, "You have to be at 8 o'clock at Grand Central Station. Didn't know what...but he said, "I will be go." So you can imagine, I died a thousand deaths you know when he went at 8 o'clock. He came back at 11 o'clock at night. And this is when he had to memorize the undersea port stations in which the English bombed...the ones with the Nazis...when the Germans wanted him to bomb. And this was the list from that was the head of the Underground in The Hague who had a blueprint and said my husband has to memorize that blueprint where where the U-boats are really built. And that he had to do. He had to memorize. You can imagine. In 2 hours! And then the men from The Hague, who was the head of The Hague put...put his paper again and said, "Good luck," and left with the blueprints and they were in my husband's mind. He didn't tell me what he had done, of course. I heard it only then in...in Spain because he was so desperate that he could lose the memory of that. Imagine, in they will be delivered...But he said the man from The Hague said, "We waited for you. We had to have somebody with memory and brains." So that...so that was the last thing, and then the next morning we went to the station. It was horrible. My mother was standing in a corner. My brother was standing in a corner, and then we went into a train. That is it. And that was goodbye. Goodbye. Goodbye. It was horrible. And then we went the train. Halfway on the way to Brussels the door opens and out comes a very tall, good-looking German officer. I think his name was Mr. "Von Hagen, Colonel von Hagen• or something. He bowed to me and he said, "Mrs. Model, I have to borrow your husband." And he was a German officer. He said, "Don't be afraid. I would like to talk to him." My husband had to go. I was sitting in that train. My children got frightened. You can't imagine how awful that was. After 20 minutes, he came again and that was the man who had just heard the name Model. He

had heard about my husband, and he always wanted to know whether we are a family of a German General from Model. And my husband said...I am not s family...we knew who we were, of course... I am not, and now and please let me go back to my wife. She will die a thousand deaths because she went through quite a lot. So he said, "Mr. Model, I only wanted to say you we heard so much about you and I am glad I met you," and he let him go. Now that same Mayor or whatever he was kept his hand about me because I had a little basket. The kids called it because it was a little basket which we had from our boat into which I put three little on this side. The books I had from my husband, and a few drawings I had made of my husband and my mother and a friend. There were in that little basket which the kids called you know because I carried it myself. So wherever we stopped in Paris...in...first in Brussels...in Paris and we had to go out and walk a little bit, this Gestapo man who was with that .... with that German officer came over to me and said, "Open that basket." And every time he said it, that officer came said, "Leave her alone." That went on four times. Four times he kept his hand over me. He said, "Leave her alone." But in when he said goodbye, he came over. He said, "I kept my hand...hand over you Mrs. Model. What is in that basket?" I said, "You could have opened it. There are books, . But I didn't...I was glad he didn't, because when we opened on the boat these books because friends wanted to see it again, out fall drawings which a friend from Paris had made about Hitler and poems. Imagine that! That was my luck that he didn't force me to open that...that basket. That was a wonderful man. I wish I had...I could thank him. Yeah. So then we were in Lisbon...in Madrid. In Madrid, you know we could only met because.... Yeah, I forgot. When we arrived in Sandebastian, we were led to a hotel, and hardly had we entered that hotel when a young Dutchman come over and said, "Mr. Model, the Embassy from Madrid has already called three times. You have to call back. They have to talk to you immediately." So my husband called back. It was the Embassy, and the Ambassador said, "I was told that you bring news. Please, tomorrow, you...you come to Madrid." My husband said, "I cannot do that. I cannot just leave her. I have no visa. They knew that we had to. "But you will get it." So next day came the Dutch Consul from Optowa. I'll never forget it. They're lovely old people there who had no visa. Of course, my husband said you have to get them a visa to Spain too. And he came, and it took 4 days until we got permission from the...from the Spanish "thing• to travel through Spain to Madrid. And then we were in Lubrick, and he dumped us in the , and he said, "You sit here. If I come back after 2 hours," ...He had a funny feeling...I couldn't get...get rid of my knowledge. "If I'm stay a longer it's fine, but you have patience, and he dumped us in . The kids run around the of course, and I was sitting at with these other people also. And he came after 2 hours, looked terrible and said, "I couldn't talk to him." When I enter he came over to me, "Ah how wonderful the ... He said, "Ah, you know that I play golf with the German ambassador all the time. He's such a nice man." When my husband heard that, he said, "For God's sake," so he didn't tell them about the , but he had knowledge of a few other things and he told them that. And the officer said, "Yes, but have told that bring out the most important news about Underground. No?" Max said, "That must have been an error," you know. And he came to me and he said, "My God, if the man is Lisbon is the same caliber, I have to call America with my knowledge and then it's too late. But the man in Lisbon was wonderful. My husband spend the whole week with who was the Under Secretary and when we were on the boat he heard on the radio then...on the ship's radio...that the Dutch replaced and the from became the Ambassador. That was...he never knew....that baron never knew that it was the little Jew from Amsterdam who cost him his post. Yeah? Isn't that? The...the turn of events is just miraculous in a way, you know? It's just...you can't believe it sometimes. Yeah. And then we landed in Lisbon. It was nice to be there. You

could breathe again. The kids liked it, and he worked with the Embassy every day. Yeah. And then friends...they learned the boat was , which was a boat for 150 people where there were 500 on the boat, you know, all refugees. All refugees, of course, some spies too. We were five in a cabin. We paid three thousand dollars which was sent from America. My sister-in-law sent the money for the boat to pay for. We paid. Some didn't you know. There was a whole bottom of the boat was full with...with...uh...young immigrants from all over and they, of course...they didn't pay a penny, but we were...we could pay so therefore we pay. Huh? And there was guy "•on the boat behaved very badly. His wife at least. He didn't. And the Rabbi from Luxembourg, we were elite there, we were first class because we paid. But this couple who had money with no refugees, the son-in-law of the conductor, , and lovely wife and son and I think and then, of course, it spoke around immediately that my husband does bring from the bottom of the bunk, and a Dutchman. Everyday the kids...he organized those kids so they put the food which were above the table and put them down because they didn't get any food you know. The people down there was organized. Every day the kids went down and...and did that.

Q: Your husband told them to do that?

A: Yeah. We got more...we got food...more food, but our food too to divide too. But then one day that young man came, that Dutchman came and said a baby was born. And it's terrible amongst these many people. It's terrible...the wife...the young wife of a young Russian or Polish violinist...I cannot forget it. "We must have a room. We must have a room." So my husband started and we go to because they had a living room on the boat. They had a saloon on the boat. He said, Mr. , you have to give up your saloon. She said, "I can't." He said, "Why can't you?" "I have to receive people." My husband said, "Whom do you receive? I won't come anyway." Do you receive the Rabbi of Luxembourg, and Mr. and Mrs. something on the ?" No, she couldn't give her room. So that was number one. Then, he went to the Luxembourg Rabbi and he said, "I can't give it this room. A friend of my wife is living there." Then he went...of course, the people who had no living room and wanted out of first class...our friends wanted to give their bathroom, everything. But you couldn't then. Then the purser came to my husband who had observed my husband of course, and said, "You know, Mr. Model. I give him...give them my room because I saw how tough it is." So that young of wife then came to the purser's room. I give you these little sketches. Everything is the purest truth what I tell you, not that I want to make up, but it's true. It is true. So that young baby was looked after in the purser's room on top of the ship and not in the bottom of the ship. Yeah. So that was....I was so happy when was permitted in the radio room than the room of "Sandam•. And Madrid was replaced by that one he had made. So he was very happy and he became...." • became the Ambassador. No? That's another story. Huh?

Q: On the ship can you...On the ship can you tell us about Shigall himself.

A: No, I mean...I he was...he had nothing to say. Bella was everything you know. Bella was the ruler and she...she was standing on the bottom on the...on the rung. I was sick. I wasn't up very much. She said, "My daughter, my daughter, My daughter." "What about your daughter?" "Eva is still in Paris." Of course, Eva is a very nice person. I later met her. I helped her when she was in New York. Very nice woman. And she was married at that time and couldn't get, but she came out and that was her whole complaint. Only that Eva comes out. But he didn't say much I mean. She run around with a book on her back so my husband said, "Why do you run around

with that book?" Do you think some people can buy...." You know he was...he had a...he had, but Bella, Bella and later we saw them in New York a few times and he was always very apologetic you know, and I liked meeting him. The daughter came and I liked her very much. She was a few times in my house and her husband was selling. Bags full of sketch, not sketch, but were etchings and she went from rich people to rich. Sometime she came to me to have lunch. She's a wonderful daughter, and she sewed for him them at that time. You can imagine later it was different by that time. Just had to get money. He was brought over by the Cultural Mission or something but they...of course they paid for his apartment I'm sure but...so she sold these books which she got. She's a wonderful daughter. Really. Really wonderful. He was a...He couldn't say anything. He was rude by here. And then one day I see him in the street and he cried. She had died, and he was desperate. Then shortly afterwards he fell in with a young English girl. It wasn't so terrible you know. But he was a nice man. He was just a weak man you know. I had nothing against him. And Eva was wonderful. I saw her later when she married. Very nice. Had two boys, so she was very very nice woman. Eda. She was very rich, but she also gives. She was not like her father was, stingy. She gives. She gives pictures here and there. I admire her very much. Very nice, very nice.

Q: So you were...back on the boat. Are there other stories about the boat trip that you would like to tell?

A: Oh, yes. One day I was bed. I had high fever, and I heard singing and I went down. There were a few Viennese young boys with "Leader" and I went up to one and I said, "Aren't you ashamed? You sing a song of Vienna. There your grandfather cleaning their streets." He looked at me. He said, "So I sang But two young girls came down and said, "Oh excuse us because it was so rude and stupid of that man and I was perfectly right and she will see that I don't sing any...That's what he sang all the time with his guitar. So that was another thing, but he didn't sing it anymore. Yeah. About...about...because you asked me about the boat. Yeah. Otherwise, the kids had a lovely time and somebody tried to teach them the...the national anthem and they had a good time and my son, my older son, who had so much tears when his father was in...in prison and later in Paris when he had to go away. He cried and cried but then he comes to me and there was my old, smiling lovely boy who was his old self. He had...it was a miracle. There was...his father was there. He didn't have to be afraid that they come and take his father.

Q: Let's back up. Excuse me. Explain about coming into New York.

A: Yeah. I forgot. I have to tell you that of course. We landed in Staten Island, and there were...my sister in law and some friends, and he had taken an apartment in Fifth Avenue so we could go there and the kids started immediately to...it's wonderful for them. You know, the high skyscrapers and everything. They loved it. And, of course, it was terribly hot but nothing was bad. It was so wonderful to be in America you know. That was it. My husband got immediately a job, and that was also wonderful and so we stayed for a few week and a month in that Fifth Avenue apartment and then I looked around and found....and then we had to go up Riverside Drive at night to see somebody who asked him to see...I don't know who it was...and we stepped out of Riverside Drive on Seventy Second street, and I look around and I said, "It's lovely here." And I see...on the other side, I see something that looked like an apartment to...rent. I went over and this was the apartment I rented. Just like that. First one, and I rented it the next day. That

was...yeah...and I'm still there. Yeah. Now asked me some questions. I talk and talk because but please.

Q: Yeah. What is it like...uh...for you...uh...a young artist young artist with a husband and children first seeing the United States?

A: Well, as an artist, I mean I thought nothing but these two little things, but I wanted my children to get out of New York. I wanted them to learn English without an accent because I had seen in Holland when the children lived with their parents, they had an accent. They learned it. But then a friend of ours...I said I have to get them in a school outside of New York until a friend of ours she got us the addresses. And one afternoon when the kids...I put them in a camp....you know we had friends who had told us about a camp, so the kids were in a camp already after a week. Just gave me tips you know. There...You have to have a friend, you know...was one of them then you know, and I went then...we got a telephone call. A young man came and said and said we should come out on Sunday. And I said, "We will do that of course." And it was very chancy little man. He was...He was sent....I said, "Yeah. Sent to look us over." He said, "Yes." And he stumbled over a table where some photographs...the only thing I could take were photographs and the photograph fell down. He said, "Who did that?" I said, "I did." He said, "Oh, Mrs. Model, your children are in because our chairman "•is one of the big publishers and he loved children of artists. So it was. I came there and they immediately got accepted. Of course, my older one immediately was...in spite of he didn't know English he was in short time on top of his class. It's just fabulous. Peter always was was very intelligent, but immediately on top and loved and adored by the others. And " was...he's like that. So that was from the beginning and I had a wonderful time in the boarding school outside of New York.

Q: What was the adjustment like for you and your husband in the first year.

A: We got a scholarship, by the way. That's what I wanted to tell you. I was adjusted immediately. I didn't have any trouble whatsoever. I felt at home. I spoke English, of course, and my husband spoke English and we were immediately...we...we immediately felt that's where we wanted to be. We had some American friends and that was wonderful. And it was no trouble. I mean I...just wonderful, so we took...And that's it. I can't say anything but perfect results.

Q: What work did your husband do?

A: My husband was in the banking brokering business. But he had a...was a specialist. He was something very special also in that because after his work and somebody come to me in America and said, "You know I made a study of your husband's brain and I saw there were only 18 people in America who could do what he did," but I never knew what he did. So that was a little exaggerated, but it was surely truth. And he could work immediately, and it was very important. And people were awfully nice, Americans...the Americans we knew, but for one.

Q: Turn back. When you talked that the FBI had called your husband at some point. Could you explain about that?

A: Yes. That was very strange. He gets a telephone call. I must not forget to say something. When we were in Staten Island and that immigration officer interrogated us didn't want to let us in because we had no hotel. We had only , which was address of my husband's office business. And he said nobody lives on . My husband said, "I know. My family and my friends are down there. They will tell us where we live. I can't lie to you," he said. "I can't tell you I live in that hotel where we were before, but I have no address. This is business." And he was very nice. But then finally my husband took out his Dutch career papers and he said, "Why didn't you tell me before?" He said, "I didn't need to. I have a perfectly valid passport with a perfectly valid visa," which was true. And he didn't want to do it, but then he had to do it. And so that was the reception. And then we were boat...the boat left us to Manhattan skyline and we saw it was beautiful, Staten Island. Not Ellis Island. It was Staten Island. Yeah. It was beautiful. We were at home. The kids were at home immediately. There is no doubt. My youngest son said to me...after a week, he said to me, "Mamma, can you believe...if I tell my friends in Holland that I am accustomed to skyscrapers, they wouldn't believe it." I'll never can forget he said that. It's true.

Q: Tell me about the FBI.

A: Oh, yes, so the FBI knew of course then through this immigration thing that he was a Dutch career you see. So they approached him and said they trust him. Could they use him to be their...when they need...when they need something to know about Holland and all that." So that was when they called him, very often. And about people whom they had, you know...and my husband, of course, never said anything negative about the people. Then, afterall, we didn't know them. We only know one friend and we said he's a very rick and wonderful man. But this is way asked. He never told me really what they asked him, but he went constantly. In the first year, he was constantly called to help them because they trusted him. He was a Dutch career. They believed. And they saw the papers you know. So that was very good, of course. And I...when we suddenly became citizen, he was...you know I talk a lot, and then he said But my husband always warned her, "Mina, you get yourself in deep water. Don't do that." Mr. Roosevelt was in there too, but he was a leftist organization. Don't forget you must tell these interrogation officers for the citizenship, you must tell them that you were a member of these things. He was so asked me, "Did you belong to any organizations." "Yes," I said, I belonged to that but I left after 2 years. That was true. They knew everything. And he knew that. Through the FBI, he knew. They would ask everything. So I was safe. I wouldn't have thought about it, that I was a member once. But that was the truth and I was so happy. And they were very nice because I was not a member any more. All these little things come back now when you ask it you know.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add to your story?

A: To that?

Q: To any of it.

A: I don't know what you want to know about...about my...my life. Didn't you say...

Q: Anything. Yes...What...what I'm interested in is are there...is there any more stories that you want to tell about the Nazis and your involvement with them.

A: I really don't...I don't want to remember so much about that now. We were free of them and, of course, I left my family and all of them. That was tragic and terrible.

Q: How did you lose your mother?

A: In the concentration camp. She was there. And my brother was sent away and the kids were sent away. This is my book then, in this book. It was terrifying. It was terrible, of course, and my husband's sister died in...That was the other thing, and..uh...after the war....ah...you know, it's really...we should...we started a new life, and we were very happy here. The kids were happy here. My husband was happy here too. It's only terribly that I had to lose him so early. But otherwise, it was a wonderful life. We had nice friends, and I had my...my work. You asked me about my work.

Q: Please describe for us.

A: We had a wonderful...I had immediately nice friends. I became a member of the women's association, and I exhibited there and I got a gold medal. I told you that. And I could work and I had a one-man show, which was very nicely then. I had...they were very good to me. I mean I was really...they liked what I did let's say. And...uh...I was happy. That's it. America was good to us and is good to us. So what more do you want?

Q: Can you think of anything else? Thank you very much.

A: Is that really what you wanted to know?

Q: Oh, yes. Oh yes.

A: I...I...I was so afraid I would not be able to tell what you wanted to know.

Q: You are marvelous. You are absolutely marvelous.

A: I talk. I talk.

Q: Ah, but the way you talk.

**Conclusion of Interview.**