

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Liane Reif-Lehrer
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Liane Reif-Lehrer, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on October 24, 1989 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Research Institute's collection of oral testimonies.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

LIANE REIF-LEHRER

October 24, 1989

Q: Would you... Uh, welcome. And would you tell me your name, please?

A: My name is Liane Reif-Lehrer.

Q: And where and when were you born?

A: I was born in Vienna, Austria, Zweitebitziek, on November 14th, 1934.

Q: Uh, tell me about your parents. Uh, what did your father do?

A: Uh, my father was born in Poland, and came to Vienna to go to medical school. And then uh went on, after he finished medical school, to study dentistry; and then opened a dental practice uh in Vienna. Uh, my mother was also born in Poland; and came to Vienna, I think, probably for some frivolous reason--like a vacation, or to buy clothes or something like that. And somehow met my father. Uh, and they were married; and uh my mother stayed in Vienna. And uh they uh...I guess things were a little bit rough at first, getting my father's practice off the ground. And I think during those early years my mother helped out--answering the phone and...and things like that. But then after that, she really did not work as long as we were still in Europe. And my father had a rather thriving practice, uh which was inside our house. There were two apartments that ...and they had the wall broken down

between them. So that basically we had this... I guess there were fourteen rooms on one level. At one end was my father's practice, and the other end were our living quarters. Uh, so I guess it...it was fairly thriving. And I think there was a fair amount of uh...oh, social activity--in the sense of going to the opera, and uh... I don't know. Maybe some theater. And uh I think once a week they went to some relatives' and played cards. And uh, you know, probably the usual kind of thing that any middle-class family in that era would have been doing.

Q: Uh, what about your...your very uh early years? Uh, you were born in '34. What do you remember of your very early childhood?

A: Well, my memories are very spotty. Uh, but uh...I remember ...I remember my father's office, and I remember my own room and I remember parts of the layout of the apartment quite well. Not all of it. I mean, I don't think I could draw you a map. But I uh...I remember the dining room, for example; and I remember the kitchen. Uh, I think I liked messing around in the kitchen a lot. And I liked... We had a cook, and she let me uh play around in there and do things; although I seem to remember my mother didn't like me to do that. Uh ,the cook used to let me stand up on a chair and help dry the dishes; and I...I think my mother was not too thrilled about that. Uh, one of the fun things that I remember is inter-act... We...there were other uh... I hate to use this word, but "servants," in the house. I mean, people who cleaned and uh scrubbed laundry and did all those things; and I think they were sort of fun for me. And I remember a fair number of...of things. Like when they uh ...they

used to roll up the carpets and the runners and take them up to--I don't know, the roof maybe--to beat them with those old-fashioned paddles. And when they rolled up... Especially there were long hallways in the apartment. So we had these long runners, and they would let me stand or sit on one end; and as they rolled it up and kept pulling it, I got a ride. Uh, and then when they folded the laundry, I remember getting a ride; you know, getting swung in the sheets. Uh, and I remember getting rides on brooms. You know, I'd put my feet on the two parts of the broom and they would sweep along. Uh, so I remember that. I...I remember ...uh I remember one of my governesses; uh, and I think she slept in my room, actually. I think in my room there was my uh sort of crib and...and maybe... I only remember that there was a crib, although as I look back on it by the age four it's hard to believe that I still slept in a crib. But who knows? And then right in...in uh line with that, there was this other bed where I think the governess slept. Uh, and I remember quite well the layout of my room and where there was a dresser, and I think there was a furry animal, and...and where the window was. Uh, I'm not sure I remember terribly much else about those early uh years.

Q: What about people? What about your parents? What do you remember about them? What do you remember about...? I believe you had a brother. Tell me about it.

A: Uh, I don't...I don't really think I remember very much from the Vienna era about people. Uh, actually it's very bothersome that I uh...I think I remembered my father when I was younger. But then, at some stage when I was probably ten or eleven, uh and of course we

were already in the United States long since by that time. But my mother always had a large picture of my father on her bed, uh her night table; and I remember a day when I looked at that picture and suddenly realized that the actual memory of my father that I remembered having then had been replaced by the memory of this photograph.

Q: OK. Let's get a sense of...of... You described a child having a good time in the house. Uh, as the Hitler years progressed and we move toward the years uh of uh...to the Anschluss, uh can you tell me what happened?

A: Uh, the only thing that I can tell you about from my first-hand recollection is about Kristallnacht, because I remember that with incredible clarity. Uh, my mother was holding me in her arms, and my brother was holding onto her skirt. Uh, and there was this knock at the door. And uh I re...I mean, I remember that it was a very tense time and it was in the evening. And uh my mother went to... We had one of these peepholes that has like a metal cover, you know, that you push aside; and my mother pushed it aside, and somebody whammed the back of a revolver and broke the glass. And then the superintendent called out, "Don't worry for life. It's just me; let us in." I thought two men came in, but my brother tells me actually were five or six. Uh and then, I mean, they were very unpleasant. And uh I think they kind of totally ignored all three of us, actually. They kind of rummaged through the house. And I...and I...they took a lot of things; but the only thing that I specifically remember them taking is that the cook... There was a white closet in the kitchen where they kept uh, you know, like towels and kitchen-related things. And...and there was a uh...a tall

can from these things called "pastilles," which came in either a one-tier or a three-tier kind. And this was the three-tier kind; and the cook used to save coins in it, groschen--which are sort of like pennies. And that must have been important to me, because I remember that they took that. And I was not disturbed...I don't remember being disturbed about them taking anything else. But I remember being disturbed about them taking that. And uh...so that evening is sort of like a frozen still photograph in my mind. But I...you know, then it blacks out on either side of that. Uh, and one of the things that I just recently uh said to my brother--who has often asked me, you know, "Why do you think backwards instead of living your life forwards?" Uh, and I...I mean, that's a hard question to answer. But about a year ago, when he asked me that, after we hung up the phone I sat down to write him a letter. I suddenly realized that I guess...I guess for him, because he has a continual memory of that era, it's perhaps a little easier. I mean, he sort of remembers what happened and then what happened and then what happened. And for me, I said to him, I feel as though there's kind of a black box there that I'm maybe constantly trying to pry open but I can't get it open. And uh I guess when I went to the reunion in June uh of the St. Louis survivors, I somehow...I suppose I was subconsciously or maybe more than subconsciously hoping that some person or some conversation or something there would just trigger something that would help to...to remind me of... But I...I can't get it back. And uh...uh I mean, my mother used to tell me a lot about how...how much my father wanted a daughter and how fond he was of me, and...and so on. And I sort of would like to try to go back and remember what that relationship might have been like, but I can't. I can't bring it back.

Q: Alright. You've moved to your father. And let's talk about what happened, as it were, on either side of Kristallnacht. You had started...your parents had started looking for papers to come to America, or a way to come to America? What happened?

A: Uh, my father uh... And I can't seem to get straight information from anybody; but my father was one of uh quite a few children. And some people say five, some people say seven, some people say nine. I don't know. I have a feeling it was either seven or nine. Uh, and there actually was a set of twins in the family. But, anyway, two of the siblings had come to America, uh I think maybe as early as 1920's. And there had been some talk in the family, apparently, of coming to America to join them. Uh, and I think as things got worse, that talk got more. Uh, but apparently my father's feeling was, you know, "Look, I'm forty years old. I don't know English. Uh, I wouldn't be able to practice dentistry or medicine in America without extensive re-training. How can I...? And, you know, I have such a good practice here. How can I just get up and go?" Uh, well, my father never made it to Kristallnacht. Uh, but anyway, they realized I think fairly late that they really had to leave. And so, uh on the morning of September 30th, 1938, my mother and father left the house in the morning to do a number of chores. And one of the chores was to pick up our passports, which they did. Uh, and then I guess at around lunchtime, they parted to do some separate things; and they were supposed to meet, I think, either at home or at the home of this cousin where they sometimes played cards. But anyway, they were supposed to meet in the afternoon. And my father never came back. And he was found dead at the bottom of a uh...a four-story stairwell. And the story over the years has been that he had been getting increasingly

depressed--especially because in August he had to close his practice and he was no longer allowed to to work. Uh, and a lot of people were committing suicide. And so I kind of grew up with uh...I mean, a very strange thing. I mean, it was kind of talked about, that he had committed suicide. Uh, but uh...my mo...my mother was very, very sensitive about that; and she...she was very adamant that I never tell anybody about that. And I think, really, that must have been a a very difficult thing for me as I was growing up. But anyway, you know, I didn't really think about it very much uh either. As an adult now, as I look back and I ask people, "Well, how...?" You know, and I hear from other survivors about the horrible things that were being done to people, my question has been: "How do you know that he jumped?" And, well, you know, and they say, "Well, we don't know that he jumped. But he was very depressed, and a lot of people were committing suicide." And uh...and my brother also provides a very rational uh reason, which is that he probably thought that the family would be better off without a male. Uh, and so it seems likely that...that he did this. But I can't help always wondering, with all the other stories I hear about, could somebody have pushed him? I mean, nobody would know the difference. So I don't know what the answer to that is. But, anyway, he never came back.

Q: OK. So you and your mother now were left--this is at the end of September 1938--uh without a father and husband.

A: And by the way, those passports that my mother got that morning were taken on Kristallnacht. So...

Q: OK. So we move from September to November. Kristallnacht happens. You are without passports. What did your mother do? What did you do? All of you?

A: Uh, I think there was a lot of scurry to try to get some new passports, uh which we ultimately did. I think there was probably a lot of correspondence with the Klinghoffer family, which was my father's sister in New York. Uh, and at some point--and I don't remember when this was, but I think I actually remember this happening--this enormous van came to the house. And my...my mother was really in, I think she was in really bad straights after my father's death. Uh, and this friend of ours who was a lawyer came and kind of supervised, I think, the packing of this van. Uh, and I don't remember what went into it; but I do remember what came out of it at the other end. And it was ... (Laughter) I mean, it was just a ridiculous assortment of some useful but many totally useless uh objects. But anyway, this van was packed, I suppose, without much thought and in a lot of hurry and sent off to New York; and it was in storage for three years until we finally came there. Uh, so I...I do think I remember the day the van was being packed. But then again, there is...

Q: What did you do? The van was packed; and then what did you and your mother do, specifically?

A: Well, somehow uh there was this...there was news, I guess, of this ship that was leaving from Hamburg, this St. Louis--or the St. Louis, as they call it here. Uh, and because people were

not allowed to take money out of the country--I think you were allowed four or ten dollars per person--uh I think we and a lot of people like us, who might not have bought first class tickets, uh bought first class tickets. Because you couldn't take the money anyway, so you might as well, you know, spend it on this. Uh, and so we...we got these tickets and we got these visas, uh which also cost a fair amount of money. Uh, and on...in early May of 1939, we took a train to Hamburg uh to get on this boat. Now, I don't remember anything about the voyage except, I think, I remember two things. One is that there's kind of a sense of fear that I still have whenever I have to uh go through any kind of checkpoints. And I think that part of that must have started at that time. And from what my brother tells me it was very scary in Hamburg, because you didn't know, you know, were you going to get on? Was something going to happen before you get on got on? And so on. Uh, and the other thing is that I remember and still have a little white sun-suit uh that I that I was wearing on the ship; and I just happen to remember--again, it's like a still photograph of me in this little uh white sun-suit with little shorts and discreet cover-ups on the...in the chest region. (Laughter) Uh, and then I don't remember anything else from from the ship. But uh...I mean, I know that the ship, of course, came to Cuba and we were not allowed in. Uh, and my brother tells me that uh this lawyer, whose name was [Kleinfeld (ph)], uh actually had already been in Cuba at that the time that the boat docked. And he rode out on a little boat to come and see us. Uh...

Q: Who was the lawyer? Was he a connection with you personally, or with your family?

A: Well, we were quite friendly with them then when we came to the United States. But I think

we were friends...I'm not sure that our parents were such good friends. I have a feeling that the friendship might have come about through the friendship between their son and my brother, but I'm not sure about that. But they certainly figured in our lives. I mean, I...I remem...they were always talked about. Uh, so he came to the ship, to...to see us, apparently; and then, I mean, what--(coughing) excuse me--what happened on the ship is...is of course well-known, historically. And the ship was turned back, and we went to France. And that's when I start to have much more coherent memories.

Q: Tell us what happened when the ship docked. What did you do?

A: You mean, when we got back to France?

Q: When you got back to France, yes.

A: Uh, well, we ended up first at uh a little town in uh centrally...central France called Loudun.

Q: How did you get there? Do you remember?

A: I don't remember getting to Loudun. But uh in Loudun, we were put up in this hotel. And I guess there must have been a group of about twenty of us from the St. Louis. Uh, and I remember this hotel, and I remember this...what I thought was a very, very large square in front of the hotel. But in my adult life--when I went back in 1978, I think it was, to Loudun-

-the square didn't look nearly as large as I remembered it. (Laughter) Uh, uh the things I remember from the hotel in Loudun: uh, I remember where our room was--it was a little room on the side. And uh...and I remember some fairly dramatic things. I remember having this little so-called boyfriend that I guess I played with. Uh... What I remember much more dramatically are two things. Uh, well, first off, there are some trivial things I remember. I remember my mother was always very neat and clean. Uh, and I remember that my mother was really horrified at the lack of cleanliness in this hotel, and that there were cats running around on the food preparation tables. Uh, and I also remember that she was absolutely horrified because there was no place to bathe or shower in the hotel. There were toilets, but no, you know, bathing rooms. And so my mother apparently asked the woman who ran the hotel where the town bathing facilities were; and the woman apparently didn't know. And my mother was totally horrified by that. And uh, oh, for years later my mother always did talk about "You don't know how much perfume this lady wore," and so on. So I remember trivia like that, and I remember somehow running around. And I remember uh...I remember once these two older girls sort of held me and made me watch while they were killing uh a chicken that was going to be used for dinner. And...and that was really...I remember that with great horror. You know, I didn't want to watch that, and they sort of forced me. Uh, so I remember that. But the more dramatic things that I remember is that one morning we woke up and there uh was this incredible commotion outside. And there were uh shots; and, I mean, I didn't know that they were shots, but that's what they were. And the Germans had come in to Loudun. And uh so, for I guess what must have been a couple of weeks we lived in this hotel, and uh a lot of the German soldiers either... I don't know if they also lived

there, but they certainly were around all the time and they had meals there. And one of the things that I remember, to this day, being incredibly puzzled about--because at this point uh I was only about five and a half or so--uh is that I was... First of all, you have to understand I was always a very "good girl," and I always did everything I was told. Uh, and I was told that under no circumstances was I to let on that I spoke German. Now, how they expected to perpetuate this hoax I don't know; because my mother spoke no French. My brother had had French lessons in Vienna, so he probably did have some command of French. But I was kind of cute as a little girl, and the soldiers would come up and talk to me. And I remember very clearly continually saying, as they spoke to me in German, "Je ne comprends pas. Je ne comprends pas." And I remember also thinking that there was something very funny about, I guess, having always been taught that you're not supposed to lie and here I was being instructed to tell this out-and-out lie. And also nobody explained to me why I was telling this lie. And so I was really very perplexed, I think, by this whole thing. But I did exactly what I was told. And I remember the soldiers saying all these things to me--which I, of course, understood perfectly--but just saying "Je ne comprends pas." So that was one thing. Another thing... Oh, even before that time, there was one other thing I remember. There was an air raid one night, and I...somehow I...I got away from my mother and I ran outside. And they had to come and retrieve me. I somehow thought it was interesting, or fun, or whatever. Uh, but anyway, uh...so for the two weeks or so that we stayed in this hotel in Loudun, in the morning the Germans would do these...I don't know. Whatever you call them--you know, maneuvers or something. They'd march around the hotel in formation, with their big boots and things. And uh my mother and my brother and I would watch from

the window. And there was one soldier...and I don't remember his face, but I remember, I remember his form. And I remember that he had sort of wavy sandy-colored hair. And I...I can't help wondering, in retrospect, maybe he didn't even know I was Jewish. I mean, or maybe he did. I don't know. I always sort of in the past assumed that he knew. But now I think, "Well, you know, maybe he didn't know." Who knows? But he threw me candies uh on a number of occasions. And my mother was sure they were poisoned, and...but I ate them anyway. And here I am. And then, on one of the last days we were there, he brought me a little doll. And I think that interaction through; I think that interaction very, very strongly colored my life attitudes. Uh, because I think...I think even then, you know, I somehow must have known that these were the bad guys. But this guy, who I have a feeling might have been you know eighteen or nineteen, uh was just nice, you know; and he was nice to me. Uh, and...and maybe I jump to conclusions on very naïve grounds; but several years later, when I came to the United States, and kids would and...and their parents ask me, you know, really ridiculous things to say to a child--like, uh, "How do you like America?" And, "Do you hate the Germans?" And I remember always saying, "No, I don't hate the Germans. There are good Germans, and there are bad Germans." And I ...I mean maybe this is simplistic, but I've always thought that it really had to do with this one soldier that somehow made me get a...a very sensible attitude, even though I was so young, about the differences between people. And I've always sort of very fondly remembered that.

Q: OK. So you were in Loudun, uh and you had these these memories. Uh, how long were you in Loudun?

A: Uh, we must have been in Loudun for somewhere between nine months and a year.

Q: What is your perception of your mother during that period?

A: I think...I think in retrospect--and I wish I had realized this more when she was still around--my mother must have really, basically, been an incredibly strong person to have gone through that. Because when I try to think back on it, I often think I...you know, I don't think I could have done the things that she did.

Q: That's not what I'm asking. I'm asking what your memory of her...

A: I...I know what you're asking, and I...I really had to give that preamble; because my...my sense of my mother during those years, and...and many years later, is that that she somehow never got it all together except for the practical things. That she somehow was so...I'm not sure what the right word is, but maybe almost frantic. I mean, she was... And who knows? I mean, maybe I would have been the same way. But I mean, she really...she was in mourning for my father for the rest of her life. And she only died in 1982 at age, you know, 84. I guess she was a woman who already had learned something like five languages, but she could not learn French. You know, it was not just there at that time. Uh, and I think uh... I wish I could remember the German word that that she used to use a lot. That she was just uh...she just didn't...she sort of didn't know what to do, you know, with herself or what was

going on, and so on. Uh, and I think the... What she had always told me was that after the Germans came into Loudun, that my brother--who was uh about thirteen at that time, I guess, uh or twelve or thirteen--said one day that he was not staying in Loudun, and that whether she left or not he was leaving. Now, I'm not sure whether my brother really said that in those terms. What my brother tells me is that there was a meeting of the twenty-odd some refugees in the hotel, and that it was decided that they should get the Hell out of there. Uh, and there were...there was only one family, or possibly a family and one other person, who decided not to go. And that family uh is the family of the two sisters that I showed you the picture of before. And it was a mistake, because they didn't get here until 1947. But anyway, so I don't remember that. What I do remember is that one night we left everything that we owned--which was not much, but we did have, you know, suitcases and valises and stuff. We left everything, and we left in the dark of night. And I think I have a...my recollection is that it was like midnight, uh with nothing except my brother's violin. And this group of us went; and somehow, in a way that was not quite kosher, got on a train that went to the south of France. Uh, and then uh so I remem.... I remember walking to the train station in Loudun, but I don't remember anything of this trip. But what my brother tells me is that uh when we got to the border--which I guess was Poitiers--and we had to go through this uh...you know, whatever you do at borders, uh that at that time, uh which was now 1940, the lower echelon people in these offices were still French people rather than Germans. And apparently one woman in this group of twenty went up to this woman in this office, and said, "Look, you know, I've really got to get across the border, because I'm here and my husband is already on the other side." And so this woman said, "Yeah, alright." You know, and

stamped her whatever you needed to get stamped. And then she turned and said, "You know, that's also the situation for all these other people. They also have somebody else waiting on the other side." And apparently this woman, in a rather nonchalant fashion, said, "Yeah, yeah. OK." And so we all got across. And we went to somehow uh to Limoges, and now that's where my memory picks up again. Uh, the first...I think the first night we slept in the railroad station; and I...I remember, I think I slept on a...on a scale. You know, the kind of thing you weigh the baggage on. Uh, and then the next night--and I thought it was just one night, but my brother tells me it was about six weeks--we were sent to sleep in an abandoned uh circus arena that was...I guess it was stone. And uh...and I remember waking up the first morning we were there and being all black and blue and sore uh from just sleeping on this...on this stone. Uh, but my brother tells me that we were there, as I said, for six weeks and that people graduated. You know, gradually people found places to live, and so you kind of got to move to the better seats. And then, apparently, the...the most desirable place was around the periphery of the arena. There were these uh...what I call orange crate make-shift beds that had straw mattresses in them. And so that was... for the last few days we were there, I guess, we got to sleep on...on those. And then, uh somehow there was a... this Jewish committee that found...you know, was helping the refugees. And they found uh a uh place that I think had been a pool hall, and there was a small room that must have been... I mean, it was really not a very big room. It might have been maybe twenty feet by twenty feet, or twenty-five feet by twenty-five feet. Certainly not...not any bigger than that. Uh, and there were about thirty women who slept in that room. And then, right above that, there was another room where all the...the men slept. And I don't remember there being any other

female children except for me. And I could be wrong about that, but I have no recollection of anything but adults. And my brother slept upstairs with the men; and I have a feeling he might have been the only, you know, minor in that group as well. But then, I mean, this is where I really start to remember. I mean, I remember this place well. And actually, I went back there in 1963 to visit it. And uh so we slept in this room; and at night we had these straw mattresses, and we'd line them up. It was body to body on the floor. Uh, and then in the morning, they would get piled up against the side of the room. And there were all these sort of orange crates, you know, really wooden kind of crates that got pulled out. And we sat on those and...and ate off them and...and so on. And uh so we were in this room for...I don't know, quite a long time. And I began going to school. My first year of schooling was in Limoges; and I remember walking to the school, and I remember the classroom. And I still have my three notebooks from that year. And I remember the teacher, uh who I remember as a quite not very pleasant woman. And uh she seemed very old to me then. I mean, she had sort of graying hair, uh you know, with a very harshly drawn back with a bun; and she sat up on a dias. And uh, I mean, I remember quite a few things from this; but two things that stand out in my mind. Uh one is that every morning she would come down every aisle of seats with a ruler and examine your head to see if you [had] nits or cooties--uh, lice, I guess. And uh I don't think it ever occurred to her that, by doing that, that she was actually spreading this. And so sure enough, one day I came home and one of the women spotted that I had lice. And I mean, my recollection is that there must have been five women every day who kind of attacked me and washed my hair with kerosene, and then combed it mercilessly with, you know, these incredibly fine-toothed combs until they cleaned my head

out. So that was kind of horrible. The other thing that I remember is I was ...I was very anxious to be very good in school, and I did very well at almost everything except penmanship. I mean, penmanship was so stressed in that thing, in that system or whatever; and I remember this teacher constantly after me, because on French r's and s's you're supposed to have this little bump, you know at the top. And I could never quite get that right. I mean, she did...she accepted all the others. I've never had a good penmanship, but she accepted everything else. But she was constantly after me about that little, you know, squiggle that I couldn't get right. So I remember that. The other thing that I remember is that everything was, in terms of food, was incredibly difficult to get. And so uh I...my brother was too old to get milk, but I was allowed to have about this much milk in uh something that sort of looked like a straightened version of a coke bottle. And my mother insisted that we share that. And so, every morning we would go down and collect this... this milk. Uh, the thing that I remember with great pain-- and it...I think it's only as an adult that I really have added to that a kind of feeling of maybe resentment--uh because I was cute I got sent into bakeries to beg for bread. And the line was, "I've got uh...I have...I have money, and I have ration coupons. But uh..." Or maybe we didn't have ration coupons, whatever it was, you know. "...we really need bread." And so that was my role. And I would...that bread was not only for us, but it would be shared with some of the other people. And when I was interviewing my brother last year--because I wrote an article about this-- I...I said to my brother, "Did it ever occur to anybody how incredibly demeaning it must have been to a little girl to have to go in and beg for bread?" And my brother, who is a very practical person, looked me straight in the eye and said, "It wasn't demeaning. It was bread."

And uh...but somehow I can't feel that way about it. And uh...and I guess...I mean, I guess we shared duties in that he had to...all the...you know, he filled out all the forms, and when things had to be packed or when you had to go to an office to ask about visas, I mean, he got to do all that. And, of course, I was too young to do that. But uh but I got this horrible chore to do, because I was younger and cuter I guess. Uh, so I remember that. Uh, and then I remember very clearly, two times uh...I think you were allowed a pound of potatoes per month per person and one egg per month per person, according to these ration coupons. And so, one time my mother heard that there were eggs out in this farm, which was...I mean, I remember just walking what seemed like miles and miles and miles. And we came home with these eggs, and my mother opened them and they were all rotten. And then another time, we heard that there were potatoes. And again, I mean, you know, it seemed as though we walked for just ages and we came home with these three pounds of potatoes. And I guess we were just... this is like such a feast that uh my mother just cooked the three pounds of potatoes. And I think we just ate them all up. Uh, and then there was a...probably the most wonderful birthday of my life happened in this period. I don't know how my mother pulled this off; but on my birthday, uh she came with a little brown paper bag. And in this paper bag was--I don't remember, I think it might have been like a peach, or...and one other big fruit and some dried fruits. And it was probably the nicest present I've ever gotten. So, uh so I remember that. And...and the two other dramatic things that I remember from that era is one that my brother somehow had a Bar Mitzvah in the midst of this. And I don't remember much about the Bar Mitzvah, except that he was given a...a silk...a beautiful blue silk string bag--which we had for years--and it was filled with uh, I don't know, just a lot of different

goodies that were kind of nice. Uh so that was one thing I remember. And the other thing-- and we still have one of these, and it's in my son's car, as a matter of fact. And I just said to my son the other day, "Don't you ever lose this!" Uh, somewhere, after...I don't know whether it was weeks or months, uh two things happened. First of all--and I can't remember which happened first--but one day these two guys walked down. It was sort of a mild hill, the street we were on; and these two guys came down the hill, and each of them was holding one end of a bolt of grey blanket cloth. And it...I mean, I still have it. So I can tell you with with great accuracy that this is the...the worst quality fabric I have ever felt in my life. I...I don't think it had an iota of warmth in it. But uh it was such a...I remember that nice feeling of these guys coming with this blanket cloth, and they just had like a knife or something. And they just stood there and kind of, you know, pulled off...I don't know, maybe a yard and a half. Uh, and everybody kind of got a square of this, and...and we got two squares. Uh and that was, you know, that was like manna from heaven. Uh, and as I say, that grey blanket is in...in ... One of them got lost somewhere; but the other one is in my son's car. Uh, and then I guess somewhere along those uh months, the little house right next door to where we were staying became free. And I don't know why we had the good fortune, but the little place next door was a one...I think it was just a one story place, and it had two rooms. And there was a smaller inner room, and then this larger outer room. And my brother and mother and I were given that little inner room. And the outer room was kind of divided in half. And the back part of it was given to these two sisters who were married to two brothers. And one of the brothers was named [Lutz (ph)]. I don't remember his last name. And he was almost blind. He had very bad vision, and he spent a lot of his time cutting out those kind of leather belt

loops that, you know, you hook one into the other and make belts. And I...I remember we used to help him do that sometimes. And he did that in the outer part of this room, which was like his workspace. Uh, so those are, those are some of my... Oh, there was one other nice thing that I remember from Limoges. There was a...a carpenter that we somehow got to know. Uh, and I think he was kind of a very mellow-looking guy, with maybe reddish kind of hair and beard. And you know, he seemed old to me then; but in retrospect he probably was thirty-five or something. Uh but he made a wonderful little set of toy furniture for me out of wood, and then he...he glued little pieces of wallpaper on the chairs, you know, to make it look as though they were upholstered. And uh I certainly had those for years and years after that, and always treasured them greatly. Uh, so I guess those are uh... Oh. One thing that I didn't mention, uh and this was from Loudun. We went from Loudun to Paris, to try to get visas; and that must have been like late in August of 1939. Uh, and I remember there was an air raid. My mother and my brother and I were in a hotel. There was an air raid, and for some reason we didn't hear it and we didn't wake up. Somebody came and banged on our door and woke us up, and we all rushed to this air raid [shelter] in the middle of this huge boulevard. And what I remember is that the smell of dog doo in that air raid shelter was just overwhelming; and I remember that sort of scary feeling of being down there and the sirens and the commotion. And then...and then we were told to go back to Loudun, and that we would get visas in, you know, whatever it was--six weeks or something. But then, of course, the war officially started. The Germans came in, and uh...and...and we never got back there. But...but that I do remember--being in Paris in the air raid shelter. So then uh... Well, I remember a lot about school. I mean, I remember doing design in school. I

guess that was one of my favorite subjects. It was uh...it was...it was a very controlled kind of art class. Design, it was...it was not the kind of thing that kids do now. And you know, you colored in and out the little squares and things.

Q: Did you have any friends?

A: You know, that's a very interesting question. I don't remember having any friends in Limoges. I must have known some of the kids in my class. My brother, I think, had a very nice sort of older boy, who was a pianist, who took him under his wing and I think did a lot for him. But I don't remember...I don't remember any friends. And I...I think it was a very lonesome time for me. Uh, but I, you know, somehow I...I played, and I played with the little doll furniture; and I uh...I think I spent a lot of time in school, and I think my mother played with me. And I...I do remember one thing, actually. And I think this was in Limoges, but I'm not sure. Uh, and I think this has also stayed with me for life. I remember my brother was playing with a group of kids his age, and they were running. Maybe they were playing hide-and-seek, or something. And I was trying to keep up with them. And I fell, and I remember having these enormous scabs on...on both knees for a long time. And I...I know I've always had a fear of falling. And when our kids were small, I...I just found it intolerable to see them run. And so I would always let my husband take care of that, you know; and I would sort of turn the other way. Because I didn't want to inhibit them. But uh I...I remember that day, I remember those bloody horrible knees. And...and you know, and uh...but I don't remember having any little friends of my own.

Q: Why... When did you leave Limoges, and why?

A: Uh, we had been in touch with my father's sister and her children, and they were trying very hard to get us visas. And apparently we would get a visa; the visas, I guess, expired in fairly short periods. And so we would... apparently, we would get a visa and there would be no ship, or we couldn't get to the ship. And then there would be a ship, but no visa. And...but apparently somehow things came together, and we left and went to Marseilles. And again, I thought that was just for a couple of days; but my brother tells me we were there for several weeks. Uh, and I don't remember Marseilles at all. But apparently my brother did a lot of uh leg work there, and it was a matter of just standing in line after line after line. And then, finally, everything worked out. You know, we had to get an entry visa for Spain, and an entry visa for Portugal, and an exit visa for France; and it had to be done in the right order, because, you know, one couldn't be had without the other one first. And apparently there was an incredible amount of... of red tape and bureaucracy and waiting lines, and there was no food; and it was just a mess. And I don't remember any of that. The only thing I remember quite clearly is getting on a train one night and going through Spain. Now I don't remember...I didn't remember, until my brother told me, that we stopped I guess twice in cities in Spain. But I remember sitting in this train, which was...I mean, it was like New York during rush hour. Uh, and I remember that it was like this sort of totally chaotic scene. I mean, there were women in babushkas with big baskets; and I think there was one woman who had a chicken in her basket, you know, tied up with a scarf. And uh this sort of

pandemonium scene, and being on this train. And then I don't remember anything else until we got on the ship going to the U.S. Uh, but my brother uh has a lovely story about going through the uh border check, uh at the Portuguese border. And he said... you know, I mean, there was no food on the train. It was a mess. It was dirty and everything. And then everybody had to get off to go through customs; and my brother said, "When we got back on the train, it was like a different world. You could smell fresh rolls, and it was all clean." And uh so he...he just, you know... I mean, when he tells that, he just breaks out into this wonderful smile. Uh, and I don't remember being in Lisbon. Apparently, we walked around there for two weeks, waiting for this ship--which was called the S.S. Exeter--to sail.

Q: Let's hold it there for a minute.

A: We skipped the St. Louis, huh? (Laughter)

Q: We'll change tapes.

TAPE #2

Q: Let's pick up now. You are on the train, and you have arrived in Portugal. Uh, what happens when you get off the train? Where did you go? What do you remember?

A: I don't remember anything until we got on the ship. And then I only remember something which is not very pleasant; and that is, that I guess on the ship uh there was, you know, suddenly food. I mean, real meals, and...you know, and a dining room which looked nice, and so on. But all three of us were seasick, essentially, the whole way across the Atlantic. And so uh I don't think we were able to, after finally getting to some nice food, uh to really avail ourselves of it. Uh, and I guess that's about all I remember about that trip, uh until we arrived in the U.S. And one of my earliest recollections, there was something that was very uh...it caused a lot of apprehension in me; because uh I had never seen an oral thermometer, because in Europe we use these underarm, you know, mammoth-sized thermometers. And these people, I think, in white uniforms came around; and I remember sitting in this big room in these chairs, and somebody came around and stuck an oral thermometer in everybody's mouth. Uh, so I think I was apprehensive, not only because I was little and I...you know, this seemed like really weird. Uh, but as an adult, as I look back, I have a feeling that I also was very aware that this was still another check point and that you could still be turned away. And I don't know whether somebody had told me that, you know, if you weren't healthy you couldn't come in. I mean, maybe my mother had been talking about that or something. But I remember that arrival time as being a time of...of apprehension. And then I remember being

picked up by the relatives. Uh, and what I...what I remember most dramatically... Well, first of all, there was this...I think it was a big fancy black car. I mean, not fancy by American terms; but to a small kid who, you know, just had not seen anything like this for a long time. Uh, and I was sitting in the back seat with my mother and my brother. And my mother was next to me, and she was at the window seat; and my aunt lived in uh...in the lower part of Manhattan, which was not a very nice place--uh, Avenue D. And uh as we drove into that neighborhood, my mother...I mean, I could hear her. I could hear her very audibly. My mother whispered in German, under her breath, something like, "Have I suffered so long, and come all this way, for this?" And I think that that was...I mean, that struck me as being... I mean, in retrospect... As I think back on it, I don't know what I thought at the time. But in retrospect, it seems like such an ungrateful statement to make at that moment. Because, you know, I mean, suddenly we were free. And uh...but I think she was so appalled. And I don't...you know, I'm not sure why she was so appalled, because it surely must have been better than, you know, what had been in France, and so on. But uh...but anyway, that's ...I remember her saying that. And uh so then uh we went and lived in my Aunt Lena, who was Lena Klinghoffer. Uh she had what was really quite a small apartment, and she had five children. And they were grown; but three of them were still living in this apartment. Uh, and Leon and [Albe (ph)], the two boys, were living at home; and the youngest daughter, Dorothy. Uh, and somehow she made the kids double up. And...and so my brother and my mother and I got one tiny bedroom, and we actually lived there with her for about three months. And uh I guess my mother went out apartment hunting and job hunting, and so on. Uh, and I mean, I remember a lot of anecdotal things happened in my Aunt Lena's house.

Like uh uh...I mean, everybody sort of assumed that, because we had been starving for the last two years, that we would eat anything that was put in front of us. Well, that was not true at all. My brother and I were the world's fussiest, pickiest eaters. And you know, and this food that was put in front of us was...I mean, it was very alien kind of...of food. Uh, and so we...we...and probably our stomachs were so shrunken anyway that we didn't need very much. And so we...we were very...you know, we didn't eat a lot of things that were put in front of us. And I think my aunt thought that was very peculiar. And uh uh...and then I...I remember, uh you know, my mother had always been very proud of the fact that she never learned to cook, and that she...you know, that other people had done things for her. And uh, of course, she very quickly, when we got out apartment, learned how to cook a certain number of things. But uh she would always say, "I don't even know how to boil water." And then one time my Aunt Lena got sick, and the kids were out. And...and I think my mother really...I don't know, she was supposed to make some porridge or something. And she really...she sort of couldn't do it, you know. Hard to believe. And I don't know; I sometimes get the feeling that it was like almost, you know, could she really not do this? I mean, how do you get to grow up and not know how to do this? Or was it all a put-up job? Well, I don't know. Uh, turned out that my mother was a very talented lady. And uh...and uh very quickly learned how to do all the things that...that were needed. And I think the really sad thing is that uh there was nobody around to really guide her about what she should do. And you know, and...and my Aunt Lena was not a wealthy woman. And uh so I think it was...it was necessary to uh... to sort of quickly get something going. And so my mother did uh the easiest thing, and the first thing that came her way. And she spent the whole rest of

her life working as a sewing machine operator in a factory. Which was kind of very heavy work, uh but I think... And she's a very hard worker, but... And I think it was not so much the hard work that bothered her; but I think she was...she was very, very bothered by the kinds of people that she met in the factory, and she felt totally alien from those people. You know, they uh... I mean, she was...she made acquaintances very easily, but she didn't make friends very easily. Uh, and I think the people that she tended to make real friendships with, insofar as she did, were always, you know, other people her age from Vienna, or other places like that, who sort of...you know, where they could talk about what had been, or whatever it was. Uh, and she just found the conditions in the factory appalling. Uh, I mean she was so...first of all, she was so European and so formal. And I mean, it...it drove her crazy that people called her by her first name. I mean, nobody every would have done that. You know, she was "Frau Dr. Reif," and not, you know... And all of a sudden, she's "Klara." Uh, she would come home, and sometimes... I think one time she even cried, because she walked into an office and some guy was sitting at the desk with his feet up; and he didn't take his feet off the desk when she walked in. Well, you know, you didn't treat ladies that way. And uh uh...and then, I mean, the whole new thing to her was the kind of language that people used in the factory. I mean, she had never heard anything like this before. And so she...you know, and...and gradually she learned to cope with it, and she kind of... You know, she would kid around with people at work; but I don't think she ever, you know, really felt happy in that situation. And as I say, it wasn't just the hard work, but it was really more that she just felt this was not her milieu. Uh so she was a very...I mean, she was a very...basically a lonesome, unhappy woman in many ways in her life. But, on the other hand, on the

surface she was not. I mean, she...you know, she always kept herself busy and very involved in this and that and the other thing. And she learned English, I think, relatively quickly. Uh, and uh she...you know, kept herself active and always knew where all the free concerts and free plays were, and took advantage of all those cultural things, and ran around to the museums. And uh uh...and so she did all those things. And I...actually, I should say that really was much later; because in the early days, life uh... in the early years, life was very very difficult. So after three months, when we left my Aunt Lena's house and got an apartment in Brooklyn, uh I think at her first job she was earning \$15 a week. And I think the rent was \$45 a month in this apartment, or maybe \$35 a month. So for...for a long time she hardly ate. I mean, you know, all her money went to paying the rent and feeding us. And uh...I mean, she was the usual, you know, Jewish mother. I mean, we came first always, everything, you know. Uh, and she gradually...you know, she...I...she never... I mean, she would have been a fantastic bookkeeper, and she would have been so much happier, you know, if somebody had led her into that when she...once she mastered the language. But they didn't. So she spent the rest of the time in the factories. And uh she...uh she really...she did not... I don't know what to call it. I mean, for example, my brother and I never worked. You know, and in retrospect that's really weird. Nobody ever asked us to contribute to the family income. Uh, our job was to study; and everything, you know, kind of rotated around that. Uh, so that...and in some sense, I mean, you could say that I was a spoiled brat once I came here. Because when I wanted to do my homework, I told my mother she couldn't wash the dishes until after I finished. Because the noise of the water running bothered me. So here's this lady who's been working in the factory and then, you

know, travelling and...and coming home. And I mean, I did help around the house a little bit. Uh, but I mean, she basically made dinner and she washed the dishes. I think I sometimes dried them. And uh so she did all this work, and then she...she did this incredible bookkeeping thing every night. She would not go to sleep until the amount of money in her change purse matched with this little...she had a little book she carried with her. And every...even if it was only two cents, it got written down; uh and it had to match to the penny. And she would go over it, and over it and over it again. You know, "Where did I spend that extra ...?" Whatever, even if it was only three cents, until that matched everyday. And it got to be funny, because in...in later years once I remember having a little argument with her about how much a certain dress that I had cost. And she just went right back and pulled out her book. "No, that was...you know, it was \$13.95!" (Laughter)

Q: What about uh you, during these years?

A: Well, uh I think I was kind of a...in some sense, a dual personality kid. I mean, I was...I liked to play, and I was kind of, you know, fun-loving and...on one side. Uh, but there was this other side of me that was serious and thoughtful, and I guess introspective and a lot of other things. And...and lonesome. Uh, not the kind of lonesome that... I wrote a poem about this, actually. More thinking about my mother; but not the kind of lonesome that goes away when other people are around, but just a kind of inherent feeling of...I don't know. Uh, I mean, only now in recent years I very often think that the only way I can explain it is, you know, maybe it's what happens to a kid... I mean, what happens when a four year-old kid is

told that she's never going to see her father again. Especially, you know, having been told that...that he was incredibly affectionate to me. I mean, what does that do? What does that mean? Uh, so I mean...I mean, I still am basically...I...you know, I love to dance and I like to sing. I'm a very uh...and I love to tell jokes. And my brother and I love to tell jokes. Uh uh...but there's a very incredibly serious part of my brother, which is much more evident I think in him than in me. But there's a very morbid part of me also. I mean, it's a...I don't, you know, it's...it's like a little sideline, but it never goes away. So uh...and then I think, I mean, my mother certainly tried very hard. But I think she did and said some things that were not really very good for kids growing up. She always told us that we were different. I don't think that was very good for us. Uh, we were supposed to be "aristocratic"--you know, in quotes. I mean, that was a myth. I don't...we were not aristocratic in Europe, either. I mean, we were just reasonable, middle-classed people. Uh, but uh so I always felt different. I felt different, anyway. I mean, you know, I come, here I am at age seven learning my third language, and sort of--if you consider the whole Judaic thing--my fourth culture uh by age seven. And I remember coming to school in the U.S.; and you know, all the little girls and boys around me are, you know, obviously talking about me. And I can't understand what they're saying. Well, I learned English really fast, let me tell you. Uh, but I always felt different. Well, you know, the more different you feel, somehow you stay different and you become different. And uh uh...and to this day, I still...I mean, no matter...I mean, I always feel different. And I think I never thought of it, but there was a Nobel Prize-winning physicist that they interviewed in the [Boston] Globe; and he said, "I always felt a little different, and it always hurt a little." And when I read that, I thought, "That's...that's

really...that describes me." Because I think subconsciously, somehow I've always wanted to belong to certain, you know...I don't know-- whatever, you know, groups of things. Not ever to belong to...uh, I mean, I rarely sign things and I don't want to belong. I don't uh...I don't like being associated with divisive things. I mean, I have very mixed feelings about, you know, even about belonging to the...the quality of being Jewish, or whatever you want to call it. Uh, because I think that's very divisive. I mean, I...you know, all the divisive things that have happened in history have happened because people are...you know, belong to...to some of these things. So that's not the kind of belonging that I want. But the...belonging to...to, for example, uh... Oh, you know. Within an academic environment, uh people who have similar interests or people who like to do some activity or something. And I always...I mean, I'm 55 years old but I still always feel that there is something different about me compared to all these other people. And it always...in some strange way, there's a difference. Uh, and then, of course, when I was little, the difference became greatly exacerbated because there was such an an emphasis put on learning and studying and so on. And that was not the favorite activity of most of the other kids at 1092 President Street. And so the other kids would come home and uh go out and, you know, play--this, that and the other thing. And I would very often...I mean, I did play outside in the street, too. But I did a Hell of a lot of homework. And in retrospect, I think I did a lot more homework than was ever assigned. Uh, so...and I, you know, I just...I mean, those kids were different. They were not interested. And I, at some very early age, decided I was going to be a scientist and I was going to do this and that and the other thing. And they, I mean, they didn't have any aspirations. And uh I suppose part of that was enhanced, in that, you know, I mean my mother just kind of

expected that we would do things and she knew that they were not going to do things. And uh...and I think she did not let that pass quietly by. Uh, so anyway, I uh...you know, I was...I played and I uh...but I didn't do any...I was not allowed to do anything dangerous. And that included uh... My mother used to have a fit. I mean, in those days people thought that if you walked up and down the stairs--and we lived on a fourth-floor walk-up--that you'd get a heart attack. So you know, so it was a major issue about my walking, you know, every time I had to walk up and down the stairs. Uh, I was not allowed to uh ride a bicycle, uh when the other kids were learning to ride bicycles; and I think...I think partly that was a financial matter. You know, I mean, it took a quarter an hour to rent a bicycle. Uh, but I think mostly it was a safety matter. But one of the things that happened very early on is that uh...I mean, I had this brother who was almost eight years older, who was a very...we were very close; and I had my mother, who was a very worrisome Jewish mother. And I think very early on, there were many times when my mother would say "Black," and my brother would say, "White." And at a very early age, I think I discerned that my brother's responses came from the head and my mother's responses came straight from the gut. And that, obviously, from the head was better. And uh so whenever there was...you know, whenever I had to make a decision between the two opinions, I almost invariably did what my brother said. Uh, and he was very protective of me; and we had a very sort of uh weird family situation, probably, in retrospect. But it was a very uh uh loving, and very uh you know sort of...we were always, you know, sort of kissing and that kind of thing. And, by and large, people did not yell, and...and so on. But if my brother heard my mother say something to me in the kitchen, because I...he had his own room but I studied in the kitchen, uh he would be right there.

"What are you saying to this child?" And uh I remember funny things, like uh if I had a cold uh my mother would say, "Well, maybe you should stay home from school and stay in bed." And my brother said, "You take two handkerchiefs, and hang one out to dry while you're using the other one. And go to school." Well, I mean, I went to school with the two handkerchiefs; and uh uh...so and I guess...I guess, I probably spent or tried to spend and probably did spend a certain amount of time with my brother's friends, who were much older than me. I mean, they were adults and I was still a kid. And I think they were trying to get rid of me a certain amount of the time. I mean, they did...my brother took me to my first museum. And one of his friends took me to my first ballet, and so on. Uh, and I remember once my mother getting involved, because my brother didn't want to take me someplace he was going with a friend. And my mother - I remember this is so ridiculous - my mother said, "You can't go, because Fred is big enough to walk between the rain drops but you aren't." (Laughter) Uh, so it was not a typical childhood, in that sense.

Q: OK. Thank you very much. You seem to have pulled a lot of it together. I think before we break, though, what I'd like to ask you... First of all, is there anything that you want to add that you haven't already covered?

A: Well, uh, yeah. I think maybe I'd like to mention that I talk about this very easily now, but that all the times when my mother was still alive and that she wanted to talk about some of these things, I really didn't want to hear about it. I didn't want to listen. Uh, first of all, because she would get very emotional, and I... And I mean, in retrospect, I couldn't tolerate

that. Uh, and I know sometimes now when I get emotional about something, I can see my kids responding in the same way. I mean, that [they] don't really need this. Uh, and so I really went through very many years, essentially, not thinking very much about this and making believe it never happened. And when the other kids or other people would ask me, "Well, what effect do you think your background had on you?" I would say, "Well, I was too young and I don't remember anything, and I don't think it had any effect on me." And I think uh--and I've been trying to write about some of these issues--I think that there's a certain age, and I see this in other people, when you have a period of great strength and you're sort of building your life and it's very easy to sort of not look back and push everything aside. And then I think there comes another period, when for me and for I think for other people also, somehow the back...background comes back to haunt you. And it wasn't really until after our kids were born, and...and uh you know maybe when I was about 35, that I started noticing that I...that certain things I did were not really logically explainable by...by things that were happening then. And that the only logical explanation of why I was doing certain things in that way, or doing them at all, had to do probably with some of the things that had happened very early in life in Vienna. And you know, my father disappearing and uh...and things that happened in... in France and uh...and in that school in Limoges, and uh... and that whole business of sort always being on the run for those years, and being scared, and uh... And I think there is a lot of interesting material uh to explore there. Uh, and uh...and to explore with other people who have had similar experiences. Uh, I think the unfortunate thing--and being a scientist, I mean, I would always like to have a controlled experiment, and of course there is no controlled experiment--but trying to pick

apart. Uh, and of course it's only conjectural, and it's like playing pick-up sticks; but somehow trying to define for myself, you know, what things that have stayed with me are really due to the things that happened because of the war and the things that happened in France, and so on. And what things are just because...you know, I mean everybody's parents by and large are crazy anyway. Right? And...and so you, your parents uh somehow inflict on you uh some of that craziness that they have. Uh, and it's hard to tell, because of course I don't know what kind of person my mother was before the war started. And it's only in recent years, and actually since she's died, that I've really thought enough about this to to realize that, you know, she might have been and probably was a very sort of, you know, happy carefree person in many ways uh but I never knew her. I mean, my mother wore black for years and years and years; and then she finally switched to navy. And it was, you know, it was only very very late, when I was already essentially an adult that she would ever wear anything that was red, or uh uh...and she always, you know, all the years she lived she kept up on [my] father's grave. She always you know, lit a uh yahrzeit candle. Uh uh she she always uh...you know, I mean, she always I think in...in many ways--in her thoughts, at least--she always lived in her past. Not...not in her actions, but you know... "If I only had my sister to talk to," and so on. And then one other thing that I should have mentioned, uh because I...I do remember this and it was very dramatic was right after the war was over. There was a blue letter that arrived from...I think it was from a cousin of my mother's who ended up in Israel--and I don't know if he's still alive or not--uh sort of delineating what had happened to many of our relatives. And I mean, that, you know, I remember it as being horrendous; but now, when I think back, that must have been just such an incredible

nightmare to my mother. Because the news in that letter, as you can imagine, was...I mean, essentially everybody was killed, and...and some of them in rather grotesque ways. Uh and I...I guess I wish I could have been a little bit more understanding of me in relation to my background, and I think that would have lead to...to my having a better understanding and appreciation of my mother uh during those years. Uh, my mother and I, by the way, got along very well uh until the other girls started dating. And then she got... END OF TAPE ...like our live-in baby sitters. And I had my very strong, very very democratic ideas about uh...you know, the way those people should be done, should be treated. And I...and I think in some sense there was kind of...I guess, she verbalized it often. She felt that we treated our live-in baby sitters better than we treated her. And that was probably true, because they didn't sort of interfere in our lives. And she somehow tried to continue to be a mother when she should have become a friend. And I think...I mean, in retrospect now that was because she was very lonesome. So there's a lot more, I suppose, to be said; but maybe I'll write it sometime.

Q: OK. I hope you do. Uh, thank you.

A: Is there anything else you wanted to...?

Q: As a postscript, yeah. We'll get to photos in a minute, but because you lived in the Klinghoffers...lived with the Klinghoffers for a while and there has been a great interest lately in Leon Klinghoffer, after the Achille Lauro incident, do you remember Leon? Can

you describe him as a child?

A: Uh, I remember...I remember all five children uh very well. Uh, I guess I sort of uh really liked at first the youngest daughter best, because she was so pretty and dynamic and she dressed so nicely. And I was a little girl, and uh...and I guess, I didn't take very much interest in the two boys. I think partly because they were involved in, you know, they ran this hardware store and they were busy; but I think also they seemed a little gruff to me. Uh, the girls, all - actually it's funny - the girls were all very well-spoken even, though the boys come in the middle. But the boys have much more of a vernacular New York way of speaking, and uh... But anyway, they...they were - I don't know, they just didn't uh...they were not so interesting to me when I was a little girl. And I did occasionally go to the store and so on. But the thing that I remember just incredibly about Leon uh is that, somewhere along the years there, uh my mother said I could have some piano lessons with this absolutely horrible teacher. I mean, it was a dollar an hour. And I don't know whether that was a lot in those days - I think it was not even a lot in those days. But she was...she was not a very good teacher. Uh but anyway. And I only took lessons for maybe a year or something, but somehow in the course of that year--or maybe it was a little longer--there were two recitals where I played, you know, a diddley something-- "In My Country Garden," or something-- for you know thirty seconds. At one of these recitals uh... and you have to understand that in those days I could never have anything that any of the other kids had, and I rationalized it very well. I always said I didn't want any of the other things. But uh at Easter time, you know, the other kids would get new suits, and I...I usually didn't, and so on.

Leon Klinghoffer appeared at my little diddley piano recital with this unbelievable bouquet of pink peonies, you know; which are these really huge full flowers. And I...I just will never forget that. I mean, that was...that made quite an impression. And just a few months ago, I was thumbing through one of my mother's old photo albums and on one of the last pages this, there was this bunch of flower petals, and in one corner one of these flower petals - you know, they were all brown, there was still a little bit of pink and I suddenly realized that those were probably the left-over of the pink peonies uh so that was one thing. Then I remember Leon Klinghoffer went into the army and I remember hearing that he uh I don't know whether - but anyway something happened and I guess he was in Europe and he became hard of hearing in one ear uh and then he came back and he met this very attractive doll-like woman who he married, Marilyn Klinghoffer. Uh and I remember sort of thinking, because he was not really very attractive physically, and uh I think he already then maybe had a receding hairline and uh so he must have looked very old to me, and here, you know, he married this incredibly uh pretty uh woman uh and they went on to have kids. And my mother kind of kept contact and went to the wedding and I don't remember where I was at the time, but I I didn't go and I didn't see Leon Klinghoffer for a long time. I did occasionally, like in college I needed something and I went to his store to buy it and uh but about what must have been maybe 1983 maybe one of the other members of the family had a bar mitzvah in Worcester and Leon came. And by that time, he had already had a stroke. Uh, and he pulled me over to him--and I remember it just brought tears to my eyes, even then--he pulled me over. And his speech was quite slurred, because of the stroke, at that time; and we just talked for a little while. And he said, "You know, I want you to know that

your mother was really a very good woman." Uh, and I...I remember being incredibly impressed that night uh by talking to Marilyn. And she was still so attractive-looking; and thinking, you know, "What a fantastic lady this is! I mean, she takes care of him, she works..." And you know, and she had told me all these stories about the some of the things she did for her kids. And I...I really felt this incredible feeling of respect for her; and I took her business card, because she was working I think for a publishing company at the time, and I put it on my bulletin board. And I said, "You know, I really think I ought to get to know Marilyn better." But then, of course, you know, she was in New York and I was in New England. And uh I guess I talked to her maybe once or twice more at another family function. And then there was this morning in October of '85. I was sitting at breakfast next to my husband, and he had the newspaper open. And I was reading something else. And I, out of the corner of my eye, I saw this picture. And the thought went through my mind, "Gee, that lady looks just like Marilyn Klinghoffer." And just seconds later, my husband said, "Isn't your cousin's name Klinghoffer?" And I said, "Yes." And he showed me this article uh about the highjacking of the Achille Lauro. And I...I couldn't believe it. And I think it was either later that same day or the next morning, we turned on the television and he had been shot. And I...I mean, I was just totally incredulous. Uh, well, I think would have been incredulous if it had been anybody that I knew on that ship, anyway. But somehow for it to be this person who was part of the family, that helped get us over here; and it was now, you know, forty-five years later. Uh, I mean, I...and you know, I kept...I kept thinking to myself, you know, "Statistically, what are the chances that these two events should be in the same person's life?" And I...it was... Anyway, I went down to that funeral. And that whole

family is very...they are very closed-mouthed about when things go wrong. I mean, in contrast to the people that I hang around with, who...who are very...you know, they sort of talk about this one's got this and this one just had an operation and so on. And so, when I was going down to the funeral, somebody--it was Dorothy, I think--said to me, "Well, you know, I think Marilyn's been ill." And because I have this morbid streak, I mean, immediately the worst thing crossed my mind. But I...you know, nobody had said anything. And so... But then after the funeral, everybody went to Marilyn's house; and she just looked like living Hell. And I, as I was leaving to go back on the train, I...I kissed her good-bye. And I ...and I said, you know, "Well, maybe you'd like to come up and visit us, or something. And I'll see you again." And she sort of looked at me; and she said, you know, "OK, darling. And uh...and I...I thought, "Something is wrong with this woman." And a minute later, I said, you know, "Don't be silly!" I mean, you know, how would you look if you had just been through this whole thing, and...and your husband had been shot, and so on? And uh...and then nobody said anything. And then I remember, in...I guess it was in December, we wake up to the news; and the minute the news went on, the first thing was that Marilyn Klinghoffer had died of cancer. And, you know, it was just...well, I...I never knew her that well. And I just...you know, I just felt very sad, because I somehow thought that I'd like to get to know her better and I never did. And all those other good things. But, so uh...that's the connection.

Q: OK. Thank you.

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A: Thank you.

DOCUMENTS & PHOTOGRAPHS

- (1) Uh this is my mother and my father and I think this was probably uh shortly after they had gotten either engaged or married, which I think must have been about 1925. They got engaged in '25; so this is from that general period. My brother was born in '27.

- (2) This is a picture that was taken shortly after my father's death. And uh uh that's me cheek-to-cheek with my mother, and uh that's my brother on the other side. And uh I don't know. Somehow, to me this picture says it all. It's just, I mean, all the faces look very grief-stricken. And especially--I didn't mention this before, but--my brother. Who, of course, was much older; was uh...he, I guess he never got along very well with my mother. But he really liked my father very much. And I think he was incredibly devastated. And I think during those times when my father was so uh depressed, I know he told me that that my mother just couldn't take it anymore and she would go off and do other things. And he would stand in a dark room, just holding my father's hand. And I think...I think he was just totally, you know, knocked for a loop that his favorite parent was taken away from him that way. And I think it really shows in his face. And I think uh...I think you can see in my mother's face that she is just totally, you know, broken up; and...and I have a feeling that I probably didn't really understand too much about what was going on. But I think I must have reflected all the feelings that were happening around me.

- (3) Uh, this June there was a 50th reunion of the survivors of the St. Louis uh in Miami. And uh

one evening, there was a dinner and a lot of people brought various artifacts. And this uh woman by the name of Mr.... Actually, a couple--the Irones (ph)--brought a photo album; and I was sort of thumbing through it, and I found these two photographs with me in it. And this one not only had me--and here I am, right here--uh but this one also had a picture of my brother looking absolutely miserable. And my first thought was that he look miserable because he was forced to wear a double-breasted suit with short pants. But uh I think he looked miserable because he just really knew what was going on; and I think he was very serious and unhappy on the trip. But I guess this was mostly a group of the children; uh and this is actually the woman with whom I roomed at the reunion, and who I had gone to visit about fifteen years ago. She lives near Philadelphia. Uh, so that was a great find.

- (4) This is a photograph of one page of our passport, which we have in a very well-preserved condition. It's the usual passport, with the swastika on the cover and a big red J; and uh it has a lot of information. It tells that we left from Hamburghafen on May 13th, 1939. And then it has a picture of my mother on one page, and our names with the uh the Jewish middle names--uh, Sarah for me--appended. And on this page, it says in French: "Refugees of the S.S. St. Louis. Reif, Chaje"--which is my mother's Jewish name--"et ses deux enfants, uh Friedrich et Liane"--"and her two children, Frederick and Liane." Uh, and of course there are many such passports. But for me, uh somehow especially because I didn't think about this for such a long time, every once in a while when this whole episode comes into my mind, I sort of think, you know, this...this can't possibly really have happened to me. This is some movie I saw, or some dream. TECHNICAL CONVERSATION. And then I go and

fish out the passport, and convince myself that it really was real.

Q: Alright. Liane, thank you.

Conclusion of Interview.