United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Alice Lang Rosen
March 6, 1990
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PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of a videotaped interview with Alice Lang Rosen, conducted by Linda Kuzmack on March 6, 1990 on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview took place in Washington, DC and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum'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.

ALICE LANG ROSEN
March 6, 1990

Q: Please tell us your name.

A: I am Alice Rosen. But I was born Freya Karoline Lang in Lambsheim, Germany, in 1934. And my parents lived in Lambsheim, Germany in small town--farm town. My parents and grandparents were farmers and butchers; but my father always wanted to be a businessman, and he wanted to get out of Lambsheim to go into the big city. So what, about a couple... And my mother was a businesswoman also. In fact, that's how they met--while in business. And they were working together, and that's how they met. And we moved to Lambsheim. No. We moved to Mannheim, a big city. I was about a couple of years old. And we were there. I started to school. I started first grade there. And uh soon after that the war broke out. And my father was sent to Dachau, first, while we were still at home. And my mother and I--I was the only child that my parents had--my mother and I, and my grandparents. And they closed my father's business, and no one could touch it, handle it. Was padlocked. I remember that. And my father came back from Dachau, and he was home for awhile. And then uh...we had to wear armbands that said "Jude"--Jew--on it. We all had to wear armbands. And uh...children stopped playing with me. And they would call us names. And then one day, a big guard truck pulled up in front of our house. Uh, the Gestapo. Many of them--5, 6 with the pistols out. And they came and told us that they were picking us up and taking us to concentration camp. We were not allowed to take anything with us. As we were. I remember them tearing our house apart. I remember very well. I was only 6 years. But two of them just pulled one of the beds apart. They...they just demolished the apartment. And then they put a lock on the door, after we left. And uh...we were all piled into the big truck, like an Army truck; and we sit on the wooden benches in the Army trucks, and they made different stops. They picked up different families until the truck was full. And then when the truck was full, we were driven to the concentration camp. Gurs was the first concentration camp that we were there.[1] There we were all uh together. Uh, men and women, children in the barracks. They kept the families together. Uh, Gurs was a very dirty place--uh, muddy, rainy. I remember walking in mud all the time. Uh, very cold. We...we slept in barracks on the floor, on...on uh straw. We slept on straw. And I remember getting very ill. I became very sick. And I had a terrible, terrible ear ache and a high fever. And my mother tried everything. She couldn't break my fever. And they took me to the infirmary on the concentration camp. And uh...I remember only because they put me in a bed. I wasn't lying on the floor anymore. I was actually in the bed. And I was then later told that I had mastoid, which is a very bad ear infection that goes with the ear drums and that caused a lot of my hearing loss that I have now caused by that. And I don't remember, but I was told... My father told me later on that they told him I would not live through the night. And they told him to go out and build a casket for me. And he refused to do it. And he stayed there, and my mother was there; and I remember being wrapped in cold towels and cold...white sheets, cold white sheets. And the fever broke through that night. And I survived. Obviously, it was not meant to be. And I did

[1] Located in Southern France.

get better. But my hearing was impaired from then on. And uh...the men worked. And I remember my father had to go out to work, but...uh we were surrounded by barbed wire and by soldiers with...with pistols and guns. And uh...very little to eat. I remember that. And then one day, they came and put us back in the trucks; and were told we were going to another concentration camp called Rivesaltes near [**NB:** in] France by the border, French border. That was completely opposite of Gurs. It was hilly and stones and dry. I remember falling many times, hurting my knee. And uh...I was a child. Six, seven years old, and running around and everything. And what comes to mind now in Rivesaltes, there was a lot of Gypsies. And Gypsies were also put in concentration camp. They were prosecuted just like the Jews were. And I was very interested and I was always told never to go to the Gypsy camp. Of course, the more I was told not to go... And one day I went. And what the Gypsies did, they kept the children and they would sell them--literally, sell children. Well, I was missing. And my parents were going absolutely crazy looking for me; but my father knew exactly where I was. And he went to the Gypsy camp, and I was there and he took me back. I remember that very well. And there, the men and women were separated. I was with my grandparents and my mother. The young men were in a different...uh barracks. They had to work. And the toilets were outside and everything; and we had to stand in line for a bowl of soup and a piece of bread. I don't remember too much more about that. Uh, I do remember people talking always about what lay ahead and what was going to happen. And uh...then one day...uh my father approached me. And my parents...and they told me that...I remember my father saying to me that he doesn't know what lays ahead and what will become of us, but he would like me to go with some nice people. And it turned out to be the French Red Cross. And uh...I also think that a lot of people were against my parents. It was like giving their child away. But they didn't know. They thought that was best for me. Uh, they thought that if they could save me or do whatever, they would do anything. So uh they took us away. The last...I don't remember saying good bye to my father; but I do have a picture of my mother. I...the last time I saw my mother was behind barbed wires. I was on one side, she was on the other side. And we said goodbye. And that['s] the last I heard or seen of her. That was my last picture of my mother. And many years later, I found out that a few days after I left with by ten other children to get to France that all that transport went to Auschwitz. The reason that my father did not get to Auschwitz is that he was young. And halfway to Auschwitz... He told me that later, since he survived, too--that half way to Auschwitz, they stopped the train and they asked...all the young men had to leave the train. And women and children and old men had to stay in the train. So my father had to leave my parents... leave my mother and grandparents, and leave the train. And he said...then he saw a big sign to Auschwitz, and he saw the train leave. And that's the last he seen or heard of his family. And uh...then uh...he was in several concentration camps, which he told me after, which I don't remember the names. Uh, I was taken with the other children to a children's home in France. And we were there for a short time. Not very long. I remember bombs falling, and the sirens always, and running into shelter. And I can remember we would be running to the shelter on one side, and buildings falling on the other side with bombs. And the children's home was hit and was bombed. And so we had to be separated. And the best thing was to take us to a convent in southern... It was in the southern part of France. And everyone knows that the...the French, the Southern French were wonderful. They were always helping Jewish

people, displaced people. They were always helping them. And the nuns were just...just wonderful to us children. And uh...we were so young, it was almost fun for us. Here was a convent full of nuns, no men. Uh, one nun was a shoemaker. One was a cook. One... I mean, they each had their own profession. They all did. And...and we learned, and slowly we all learned French. I started to forget my German. And uh...we were there for awhile. And they had beautiful grounds and trees. They had fig trees. I remember that very well (laughter). And I do say that, being so young, I think you forget. You...you forget the bad things so quickly. And we were there long enough to be placed. Everyone was placed...uh to a different uh foster home. And I was placed to a foster home in Noyers, France--southern part of France. It was a Christian family, Catholic family. There was a husband, wife; and they had a grown daughter, and they had a very small farm. They had one cow, few chickens, a little garden. And they took me in as their foster child. And uh...then they told me that my name, Freya, was too German and I could not have a German name, a Jewish name, anymore. I had to become uh...a Catholic, if I wanted to survive. They talked to me, and they made me Frieda. So I went from Freya to...to Frieda, and they sent me to Catechism school. We went Sunday school. We went to church. And uh...they also sent me to school. I really did not lose schooling. I learned French so good, in fact, that I forget my German. I couldn't speak German anymore. I was a French little girl. I was a French little girl. My name was Frieda, and I used to help with the chores. We all, you know, we all had to help. And I used to herd one cow, and uh...feed the chickens and go to school and come home and do my chores. And after a few months of...I was there, she informed me that the money--she was getting money from the Red Cross, in fact. I think the Red Cross was paying foster homes to take care of us children. And uh...she said that even with the money she just couldn't take care of me anymore. She just didn't have enough food, you know, to feed me and them, too. And they were getting older and... Uh, their name was Godin, Mr....Madame and Mr. Godin. And they said I would have to leave. So someone came from the French Red Cross, and they were going to take me to another town. But it just so happened that in the same town, a larger farmer in the same town, Noyers, said that she would take me. That she could use an extra hand to help. There was a big farm, big orchards; and so she took me in. So I never had to leave the city. I just moved to another family. And she didn't have just me. She had other children that she took care of. And she was hiding a Jewish family, actually. And I will never forget that red brick house. Two red brick houses next to each other. And in the other house, lived a Jewish family that she was hiding. But, unfortunately, someone found out. And they came...the Gestapo came and got the family, and never was heard from them again. And I lived there, and uh...I went to school. I was very, very religious--very Catholic. I had little Jesus over my bed at night. And we prayed; and, in fact, uh when my classmates had their communion, I wanted to have communion, too. After all, you wore a pretty white dress and you walked down the church. And uh...Madame Didier was the lady that...uh was the farmer lady. She said uh...that I couldn't have my communion, because she didn't want to deprive my parents of seeing me become communion. She didn't tell me why--that I was Jewish and that I couldn't have communion, that I was only acting that out. So she told me that I couldn't. I had to wait for my parents to come home, so they could be there. Of course, I cried. I was very hurt. I was upset, because I didn't know anymore that I was Jewish. I didn't know any different. And uh...but we worked. We worked in the fields. We made our own

bread, our own flour. They had big machines. Uh...wheat, they had wheat fields; and when harvest time came, we walked...the children with baskets behind the machines and we picked up the wheat that the machines dropped. And we put in our basket; and uh...and that's how we helped. And she had big orchards with apple trees and cherry trees--everything. And we worked. And she taught me how to knit. She taught me how to sew. She taught me how to darn socks. We had to darn our own socks. We only had one dress; so when that dress was being washed, we missed a day of school. Because we each had just one... one dress, and we had to miss school when we had our clothes washed. Uh, learned how to make fire in the wood stoves and everything; and uh...when we came home from school... The highlight of coming home from school was to a glass of milk and jam sandwich. We made our own jam. And we had enough to eat, and never needed... I never went hungry, the children. But a lot was expect of us. We had our chores to do. We had our homework. We had to go school. We had to get good grades. And by that time, I was uh very uh... French girl that...French Catholic girl; and I didn't know any...anything else. That...that was my way of life. Well, what I didn't know is someone found out that Madame Didier was harboring a Jewish child, and went to the Gestapo and told them. Well, what happened... One day, she sent me away to get something. I don't even remember what it was. I was out of the house, and the Gestapo came. She said 4, 5 Gestapo with the guns. One was guarding the outside of the house. And they went through the house from cellar to attic. And in France, they have the cellars outside--you know, the stone cellars. They...I mean, they checked. They even slashed the mattresses. I mean, they went through that house with a fine tooth comb. And she kept saying, "I don't have a Jewish child here, and I don't." And they left. They didn't find me. I came home to the disaster of the house. And uh never...she never told me what happened; and it was because of...of me. And uh...but time went by the same, you know, the everyday routine. Again, for some reason, I wasn't home. She sent me to get something. Gestapo came a second time. The same thing happened. They didn't find me, and they never came again. It was the last time that they came. And time went by. It was already wintertime--must have been in...near '40...1944, I guess. And one day after school, Madame Didier was sitting in the kitchen with a lady. And I walked in. And she said that this lady came to pick me up and take me away to a children's home. I could not stay there anymore. Well, I cried. I was very upset. This was my life. I didn't know any...anything. And the lady sat down, and she told me that I was not a Catholic child. I was a Jewish child, and I had to go back with...with my people. And in Saint-Étienne was a children's home that was run by a Polish rabbi and his staff. And he was gathering Jewish children from all over France, wherever they could find us; and bring us together again under...under one roof. So I had no warning or anything. And I just packed my little suitcase. I really didn't have anything. And I had to say goodbye. And I...I...I'll never forget. It was on a Friday, on a Friday afternoon. And I left with the lady. I think what actually saved my life through all this was I was a very passive child. I never asked any questions. I might have cried or been unhappy, but never [said], "Why is this happening?," or "Why that?" I think now, in later years, maybe that saved me. Because I just did whatever told to do. I was told to be Catholic. I was told to learn French. And I did whatever I was told to do. So being that it was a Friday afternoon, we arrived at the children's home... Went by train, I remember; and we arrived there, and it was Friday night and we had to say our prayers. And she told me on the way there that I must forget about my

life to that point, that I was now...I was a Jewish child. I had to become Jewish. I had to forget what I was taught in my foster home. And I would have to learn the Jewish way of life. My...my name was still Frieda. You know, they never changed my name. And when we arrived there, very few children were there. I was one of the first few youngsters that arrived there. And, you know, months later children kept coming in from...from all over. Whoever they could find. And it was a very Orthodox home. Uh, the boys on one side. The girls on the other side. Uh, the girls slept on one floor, the boys on the other floor. Uh, we went to school. We had Hebrew school in the morning, and our regular schooling in the afternoon. So we went to school all day. I learned how to read and write Hebrew. I could translate French into Hebrew, Hebrew into French. I could read. And uh...again, I did what I was told. And being that the day I arrived there on a Friday, so she said, "Well, now you have to learn our way. So you have to wash your hands before we eat." Showed me how to wash my hands. "You cannot talk 'til you say a prayer, 'til you eat a piece of bread." So...she said, "Whatever I say, you repeat after me." So she said the prayer over the bread, and I repeated. No questions asked. I repeated it. And then we ate. And uh...we had to pray after dinner, and we prayed before we went to bed. Uh, wasn't much different as praying when I was Catholic; and it was Hebrew, and I settled in just like I did everywhere else. And I became, in fact, very religious. Now, that was my whole life. I knew every prayer by heart. I...when we went Saturday to synagogue, before long I didn't need the book anymore. I am ashamed to say I forget everything now. But then, I became very, very religious. And uh...we talked...I talked to the rabbi, and I wanted to go to Israel. And he said that...he told me that when the war is ever over and everything is alright, and if no one [in] my family claims me and comes back, I could go to Israel. And uh...so uh...you know, time passed and went on like that. Uh, war was over. I remember, because everybody was singing and...and dancing on the streets. In 1945, I remember. I was about 10 years old. And uh...we knew that the war was over. And uh...so I thought, "Oh, I'm going to get ready to go to Israel." I had already talked with the rabbi. And uh ...he said that he would put things in motion, and when people could travel to Israel I would be one of the first to go. And then one day, I was called into the office. And I was told that they had a letter from my father; that he had survived, and that he lives now in Heidelberg, Germany. And that when he was liberated by the Russians in his concentration camp, he was looking for me. And he contacted the French Red Cross, because that's the last he remembered. He remembered me...giving me up to the French Red Cross. So he thought he'd get in touch with them. He didn't know whether I was alive or dead, or what happened to me. Nothing! So they traced me, obviously; and they found me in Saint-Étienne, in the children's home. And there was a big letter in German written from my father, and they translated it to me. And he just said that he was looking for me. Nothing was ever mentioned in the letters about my mother and my grandparents not surviving. Uh, I became...I asked ... When I wrote to him, I would ask about my mother and everything; and he would never answer...never uh... Obviously, I found out, you know, after. And uh...one thing what surprised me was the rabbi tried a little bit to sway me not to go back to Germany. He wanted me to go to Israel. I mean, I was a good candidate for the kibbutz. I would have made a good (ph). But I said, "No." I said, "I want to see my father." And uh...what child doesn't want a parent? And uh...so things were put in motion. It took one year, uh until...I needed a passport. I needed permission to leave France to go to Germany. We were lucky that we

were in an American occupied zone in Heidelberg. If it had been East Germany, I would have never been able to go back. I would probably [have] ended up in Israel. But being [the] American [zone], it was...was alright. So uh...they got...I got passport, and I got permission. And all this time, my father would always write to me in German. Someone would translate it to me; and I would write a French letter. And my father had a very good friend. They helped each other in the concentration camp. They saved each other's lives. And he was very fluent in...in French. So he would translate my letters to him, and uh...he would, you know, answer. And that went on for a year. And then, finally, I was told that I could pack up and uh go to...go back to my father, go back to Germany. And I remember a young soldier that came to pick me up, and I was very scared. A uniform scared me terribly. Even though I didn't know the difference between the American uniform and the Gestapo uniform. It was a uniform, and I was scared. And I had to [be] told that there was nothing to be scared of. And in fact, when I got back to Germany, uh the towns were full of American soldiers, you know. And uh...it took a long time for me not to be afraid or to shy away. Because uh...I thought they were coming. You know, that is all I could...could remember. Can I stop? Can I stop a little bit? (Pause) Do You want to ask me something?

Q: What was Saint-Étienne like?

A: Well, uh I don't remember too much. Uh, because we were mostly in the children's home. It was a beautiful home, with big grounds. And uh...everyone that uh...that worked there was Jewish. And uh...in fact, uh it comes to mind now we did everything ourselves. Uh, for Passover, we made our own matzah. So we made our matzah. We bake our challah for Friday night. And uh...we pretty much stayed within the confines of the...the children's home. We did go sometimes into Paris. It wasn't far from Paris. And I know I've been to Paris; but I really don't recall much about it, you know. I...I think I would get much more if I could go now. (Laughter) But uh...we would go there, and also I remember uh...being uh...we were so religious. Uh, we would do everything before the Sabbath would start. We would uh...cut toilet paper, uh that Friday morning. Uh, we would uh put the lights on, and uh...we would... If you went out...out uh...out of the home on Sabbath, you could not carry, you know, no money. In fact, you were not able to carry anything. You uh couldn't ring a doorbell or answer a telephone, or anything like that. So uh...but that became second nature to me. And uh...so it was just uh daily living, going to school and learning. And I think I learned a lot. I am sorry to say I['ve] forgotten so much in past years already. It was a great experience. And I think always a little bit afraid. Always a little bit afraid of the unknown at that time. I still...was still afraid with strangers. They're still not family, uh and everything; 'til I heard, you know, from my father. But I think there was always...like, "Where will they take me next? When will someone come and take me away again?" I was always being taken away. And I always gotten a foothold on the place when someone would come and take...take me away, and take me somewhere else--another home, another children's home, and everything. So I think a little fright was...was there. But uh I...I remember that. Yet, I was...wanted very much to see my father, and wanted very much to go back to him. And uh...in April of 1946, I was able to do that, uh by train...uh...we went to Heidelberg from Saint-Étienne. And uh they took me... My father and his friend had an apartment together.

And what happened was, since my father was a businessman before the war and so was his friend, when they came back from the war uh... What the American soldiers did, they put all the Jewish men, the businessmen, in business. And all the people who ran the big factories, and--they were Nazis, or they were German--and they were all let go from their jobs. And my father had a wonderful job. Uh, I mean, he was like the owner of a factory that manufactured men's clothing. And uh...his friend had a...was running a factory, a leather goods--suitcases, you know. So they...they were very well-to-do after the war. I...I know that. Uh...uh, the Americans made up for what they went...what they went through, and all that. The stories and all that come back to me. Uh, anyway, I came back; and they played a trick on me. They took me to my father's friend's office. And they told me that my father would come shortly. He would come. What they wanted to see is if I recognized my father. They were really playing a joke on me, but I didn't know. And I sat there in the office. Beautiful office--leather chairs. And men kept walking in and out. You know, men with all different wear. And I was ll and a half years; and I am sitting there in the chair, waiting. And men are walking in and out, and I am sitting. And amongst...all of a sudden, amongst the men walking in and out was my father. Well, it took [a] second. I recognized him right away. I mean, there was just no... Here I am. Spoke only French. He spoke only German. And we were hugging and crying, and his friend was trying to interrupt and everything. And uh...it was just [a] wonderful, wonderful reunion. And uh...then he took me to the aparmtent where...where they...where they lived. And what happened was, uh my... They dealt a lot in those days to...uh you weren't able to buy food, things like that, right after the war. Uh, a lot of black market going on. "I'll give you a raincoat, if you give me a dozen eggs." You know, that type of thing. And my father was well in the position to do that, having a big manufacturing factory. He was dressed very well, and he drove a car--[a] black Mercedes. And, oh, I remember [for] years after, [if] you saw a black car coming down the street that was my father. Because nobody else had a car, you know. And they had a housekeeper for them. And it turned out--which I didn't remember--she helped my parents. She was housekeeper for my parents in Lambsheim when I was a baby. Her husband was a soldier in the war. He got killed. She was a widow. And when my father went back to Lambsheim after the war and...to see how the...the home is and everything, he ran into her. And she came back with him to Heidelberg, and she kept house for him and...which...and my father's friend--which I then called "uncle," you know. And, of course, she knew me; but I didn't... She knew me as a baby; and uh...she was very, you know, very good me to me. And she tried to understand me. I'm talking French to you, and she's trying to understand. So she would go into the telephone and call my father's friend and...and give...hand me the phone. I would tell him what I want, and he would tell her, you know. And uh...she didn't even understand I wanted to go use the bathroom. And, see, in France, it's different. They have the bidets and the wash basins. And there was completely different. I didn't know what I could use. We couldn't even understand each...each other, you know. So uh...what they did, I got a tutor. My father got a tutor, uh...to learn German again. I...you know, because I was uh...uh only 11 and a half years old, and uh...still had to go to school. And uh...I went. I went back and went to school. But in the meantime, what had happened even before I came back, he had met a woman who had lost her husband in the concentration camp. And my father and

his friend were at one of the Red Cross gatherings where the American soldiers would go; and this woman's two daughters were there. That's what I was...that's all I was told, because I wasn't there. And they started to talk to my father and his friend. And they found out that my...they told them their name. The last name was Hollander (ph). "And do you know... Did you know my father?" His name was also Fritz, their father's name. My father's name was Fritz. And uh...he did not know the father; but they...my father knew their uncle, their... their father's brother. And so the girls said, "You have to come home with us and meet our mother, and tell her that you were with our uncle." And that uncle, I think, survived and went to Israel, as far as I know. And uh...so that's how they...how they met. And he told her about me and everything. So they already knew each other, uh I think, for at least a year or more. Uh, and I am pretty sure that they knew...uh once they knew that my mother wasn't coming back and that her husband wasn't coming back, that they wanted to marry. But I also think they wanted to wait for me to return. They didn't want to marry without me, you know, being there. And uh...so I was told about my father's lady friend. Uh, they put a great big bouquet of flowers in my arms; and I was to give her that when met her. Her name was Paula. And uh...she had her own home. My father and I, he drove there. And we went in the door, and she came down the stairs. She had on red slacks, beautiful blonde hair, red fingernails--beautiful woman. And here comes that beautiful woman walking down the stairs; and I am standing there with flowers bigger than myself, and hand them to her. And I was introduced and everything. My German was coming back, little by little, with the help of...of the tutor. And I think I was...uh...probably knew more. I was just afraid I would make a mistake. That's why I wouldn't talk; because the same thing happened when I learned English. I knew more English sooner than I realized, and I was afraid to express myself. And uh...from then on, this lady was always in our lives. And I met her two daughters, Ruth and Margot. And...I mean, we took to each other like fish to water.

Q: How did you feel, uh...about your mother?

A: How I felt? I always waited for her. I never wanted to believe that my mother was dead, for a long, long time. I always thought one day there'll be a knock at the door and she'll be standing there. That was my fantasy. I don't think anybody even knew. I might have told my husband or my children, but I don't think anybody knew that. Uh, yes, I was always waiting for her. My mother will come back. Because the last picture of her between barbed wire, I will never erase that thought from my mind. And uh...by then uh ...I was given pictures of her which I...you know, I have the pictures and everything. But I was always waiting for her. And uh...and uh...and then again, on the other hand, when I was told that my father was going to remarry I was happy; because I wanted a mother. That was very important to me. And uh...what they...what Paula did, uh--and also my father--they uh took in uh...people, they came...young girls that uh...uh that lived through...through Auschwitz, and through the concentration camps. And they had numbers on their arms, which we never did. We don't have a number. Uh, so the two girls--Paula's two girls--had lots of girlfriends that had survived the concentration camp. And they were always in their home, and they were always there and they were always happy. And they called Paula "Mommy," like her daughters did.

And I wanted...I was told "Aunt Paula," you know; but I wanted to say "Mommy" also. I wanted to be...even though they were 5 and 6 years older than me--they were young ladies, and I was still a young child--I wanted a mother, too. I wanted...wanted that, you know, very much. Uh, so I think I compensated one with the...with the...with the other. And uh...the girls are ...were absolutely, I mean, wonderful. Uh, I'd be... Then they wanted to marry; and my father took ill, very ill. Uh, kidney problems. Kidney infections. And in those days, the penicillin. I think he had to get it from Americans, because there was no such thing. And they weren't married then, but uh...my mother stayed with him day and night in the hospital. And she was told that they didn't think he would live. And he knew that, and he asked her... When they told her that he may not live through the night, he asked her that "When you go to America, would you take Freya with you?" And she said she would. She promised that she would. Even though they weren't married, that she would take me. But he lived. And they got married. Beautiful, beautiful wedding. And my father also was very active in the synagogue. How many Jews? Handful of Jews in Heidelberg, you know, after the war. And uh...he was a wealthy man at the time, you know. And uh...they married. Uh, she give up... Paula gave up her home and they moved into a bigger home--beautiful, beautiful home. And they had help. They had maids, 'cause they had...they did very well. And they really gave everything up to come to America. Nothing. They started to come to America with nothing.

Q: How did you all come to America?.

A: How we came to America? Uh, my father had a brother in New York. They came here in 1938, with his wife and two children and my grandmother Lang--my father's mother. And he sponsored us. We needed to be spons...sponsored, affidavit. He sent the affidavit, and that's how we came to America. But we didn't come 'til 1949. So uh...but uh...my sister Ruth came a year ahead of us. She didn't...she didn't want anything to do with...with Germany anymore. She just wanted to leave. And we just... My parents were not quick enough for her. She just wanted to get out of there. And so she came to New York a year before we did. And uh...then, by the time, we came to America, she had already had a job and she...she had some family here, too, on her. I think, on her father's side, they had cousins that lived in New York. I don't remember it very uh....too well, you know. And uh...I was always kept a child. That's one thing I think my parents made a mistake. They were very, very strict, uh more so with me than with the older girls. And uh...they felt that I had no parents from the time I was 6; and they looked at me like I was 6, not 12. And those 6 years never gapped together. I think they never recaptured those 6 years. They always kept their child. I was only to be seen and not heard. My opinion didn't count. I was never asked anything; just, you know, told. And, in fact, that brings to mind... I want to go back on something. When I first came back to Germany, my parents were not Orthodox. They were Jewish. They went synagogue on holidays, but they were not religious. They did not keep a kosher home. I was lost. I didn't want to eat; and then if I did eat something, it had to be out of glass dish or glass bowl. Because that's considered neutral. And I was just told blankly, "You do as we do, or you don't." I mean, that's how it was. "This is how we live. This is how life is now, and you conform to our way of living." And what did Alice do? Freya do? You conform to their way

of living. And again, very shy child--very shy, passive, quiet. I went to school, uh...and I learned how to speak German again. It came back. I think it was back here. It was never really forgotten. It was just never used. And it came back very well and everything. And I'd like to say that I sat next to a young girl. I was the only Jewish girl in school, by the way, (laughter) again. And I sat next to a very nice girl--Martha Mayer (ph)--and we became friends. And I was then in the sixth grade. And I went to school for 3 years. And we stayed friends all that time. I have been in America going on 41 years. We still correspond. Gentile girl. We grew up. We wrote to each other. We're still in contact. In fact, twice she called me from Germany to talk to me. We're still friends. I keep up my German by writing German to her with my German/English-English/German dictionary next to me. We still correspond. We send pictures of our children, grandchildren. And there was wonderful. I made new...new friends. Everything was...you know, in that respect was very good. But uh...things were hard at home, because I was not allowed... I had to come home, and I wasn't allowed to hang around with my...with my with friends. And it followed through. And I tell you, if not for Margot and Ruth, I don't know what would happen to me. Because they were always on my side. Always stood up for me, always uh interferred, tried to help me. It was hard, because they were 5 and 6 years older. When I was 12, they were 17 and 18, you know. And uh...they were already working or going to school; and Ruth came to America. So it was...I found it to be very hard to...to live with my father and new-found, you know, mother. And uh...the word "stepmother" and "stepdaughter" or "stepsister," "stepchildren" was not allowed. It was a word that was not allowed in our family. My mother always said, "We have three girls, three daughters; and they are all ours." People would stop my parents on the street, and they would say, "Now, whose girls are yours? And who are Paula's, and who are Fritz's children?" And my mother would say, "We have three daughters." And I don't doubt that she loved me. I am sure she did. And she always said everything she did for me was for my own good. And I always thought so, and I still think--not always--that way. But that's how they felt. You know, they...they felt very stongly. And once, I misbehaved very badly. And I talked back to my mother; and I said, "If my mother were alive, I would not have said that." I don't even remember what I said or did. And my father was in the room when I said that. That was the only time, first and only time, he ever slapped me. He slapped me across the face so hard that I fell across the room. Literally, fell across the room. And then I never ever brought up my mother again from that time on. And uh...I never said anything, you know, anymore; but I did do that. But I was a child, you know, and I was...by then... When they married, I was 13 years old. And uh...a young 13, very young 13. And uh... So then we... Oh, and then in the meantime, my youngest sister, Margot, was seeing a young man--a soldier, American soldier--who uh... In fact, he originally was born in the city of Auschwitz [**Pol:** Oswi_cim] in Poland when he was a young child, and came to America way before the war when he was 8 years old. And he was at the tail end of the Second World War, and Margot... They met each other, and they fell in love. And when when his term of duty was up, he went back to Chicago. And they wrote to each other later, of course. And he was like my big brother. He was wonderful. Uh, he took us for ice cream to the American P.X., you know; and that's where I got first candy bar, first movie, ice cream. He used to bring jars of ice cream. My father loved [the] ice cream he would bring. And the house was always full of

young men--soldiers that my sister knew. Young people. And there was a lot of people, young people, there. But I always felt...I was always singled out to where I didn't quite belong, because I was so much younger. And everything was always kept from me. I don't have to know this, and I don't have to know that. And they just tried to keep me little. They didn't let me grow up. And, unfortunately, that continued through my...through my life, you know.

Q: Thank you very much. Is there anything else you would like to add?

A: No. I want to say that uh...I think I am very fortunate to be able to be here today, and to make this tape. And for the young people now growing up that don't know what World War II meant, what they do not learn in books and high school. My own children did not learn what I said today in high school. It is only what I taught them. Uh, people cannot believe. There are still people out there today that..that don't believe what happened yet. And uh...this should be shown. And it should be shown in school. It should be shown in high school, where they're old enough to understand that World War II should never happen again and that something like that should never, ever happen again. And I thank you for inviting me today, and...and letting me tell my story.

Q: Okay. That's it. Thank you.