

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Dr. Helene Reeves
July 24, 2001
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PREFACE

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DR. HELENE REEVES
July 24, 2001

Tape 1

Question: Good morning.

Answer: Good morning to you.

Q: It's lovely to be here with you in Maine.

A: Thank you. I'd like to thank you for inviting me to tell you a story.

Q: Well, we're very happy to have you to be here with you. So, first let me ask you – what was your name when you were born?

A: My name was Helene or Leney, they called me, Mencil, M-e-n-c-e-l. You would pronounce it sometimes Men-chel.

Q: M-e-n

A: c-e-l, yes.

Q: And you were born where?

A: I was born in Austria.

Q: In Vienna?

A: It was in Vienna, outside.

Q: And what year and what day?

A: It was 1912, May 10th.

Q: May 10th?

A: Yeah.

Q: So, you're a Gemini?

A: Beg your pardon?

A Are you a Gemini?

A: I don't know. I don't go by that there.

Q: I wanted to get some sense of what life was like for you when you were growing up. So, first let's talk about your family.

A: All right, I will tell you about my family first, but before I start, I wanted to say something why I am here and why I was hesitating for a long time to tell my story. The reason was because it's not the typical story of the Holocaust. I was not in a concentration camp. It is my life during the Nazis outside. It is actually a story of faith, all about faith, hope, courage, think about all miracles. I want to bring it out in this story, that if you believe in it or not, miracles still exist. Now, you want to hear about my family, correct? I, we have been six. Originally, we had a brother died before I was born, and other sister. I am the youngest in my family. I have a sister Berthe. She's the oldest. Then I have sister Fanny (ph) she is – she comes after. I adored Fanny. She was – had charisma. She was outgoing. She was beautiful. Sometimes I wonder how I admired her so that I didn't resent it in that I wasn't jealous. For instance, coming back, all my family was very good in mathematics. My father was almost a genius in that field. She was excellent, but I wasn't very good mathematics. I was the best in physics. But I never reached Fanny, you understand, and the teacher would always say when I was a little kid, "You are good, but not like your sister Fanny." I didn't resent her. I loved her, and it is actually strange. Then, I had brother. He was known – he was an excellent chess player, and what he did – Fanny had a doctorate in chemistry, the other sister just told you – he was in business with stamps. He was a stamp collector, but it was really, it was his business, and then he was excellent chess player, they called him from all Europe (ph). And then there were myself. That it is about the story. We grew up in Vienna. Vienna is one of the

most beautiful cities. I love Vienna. I'd go back to Vienna, and people sometimes resent it, coming from the Nazis. Vienna was occupied – why do you go back? I did not know at first. I was thinking, “Why do I go back?” I found out I go – if I would not go back, if I would be afraid, it would be a victory of Hitler. This city didn't belong to him. It was part of me. I grew up there with my father and my mother my sisters. I went to school. I was so happy there and I want to keep it. So, I go back whenever I have some money left. I go back, enjoy the street, enjoy the schools. That is about. Do you want me to talk about other things like schools?

Q: Let me first ask you about-

A: Sure.

Q: About what it was like in your home. What's your earliest memory as a child?

A: What is my earliest memory as a child? You will laugh, but I sort of remember when we celebrated a Jewish holiday. I must have been very little, and my father was sitting was sitting there and this was a Seder, and that he had a pillow sitting it. I had a feeling he is not really there, he was so involved, but not my mother. He was so involved and at times, I asked my mother, “Is father God himself?” I was so little, maybe three or four years old, but it made that kind of impression. My life was very lively. We were four children. As you can imagine, I was the youngest, really the youngest. My oldest sister Berthe was like a mother to me, and I always thought, well, she tried to boss me around, but it was not easy, and I thought very often, “One day I will be older than all of you, and then I will be the boss!” And they adored me, but suddenly, nobody expected that there was a little girl here. And I was actually spoiled, but not spoiled, because if you hear my story and what developed and how I developed, you have to tell yourself, maybe it doesn't hurt if you spoil somebody. Vienna

was beautiful. Vienna was a city everybody would like to go. There was art. They describe it in the books; later it came out. There is no other city in Europe that you have at the same time, the most famous writer, the most famous artists, the most famous composers. There was like music in the air. Now, when I go back, I hear it. I walk on the Chancellor *Strasse* – people are playing the violin, people are singing. It's a different world. When people sometimes visit Vienna now, and they come back and they say something like, "I was a little bit disappointed, the way you describe it." I cannot understand it. They did not feel what I feel. They do not see the city like I see it.

Q: Were you close with your – did your father become a less god-like figure to you?

A: Oh, yes, yes. That was three or – I would say definitely. I tell you, father and mother were very different. My father, everything meant to him – study, learn, work. He says he can take very interest because he can do – they can take everything away from you, but your learning, it will always stay with you. And I remember when I studied, all the schools, they were very strict, especially when I had the medical exams. I took the street car. He would be – he did not know when I would be coming home. He would wait hours to find out, "Did you pass it? Did you pass it?" Yes, I was close, but it was everything was learning. To a certain extent, I was closer to my mother even. She was more practical. She wanted me to have nice clothes to have – to have – father just wanted to have it all, too, but all in that picture of learning. Both were very different, my father and my mother. It was a good marriage.

Q: It was a good marriage?

A: Yes, it was a very good marriage.

Q: So, did you talk with your father about different things than you talked with your mother?

A: I'll tell you one thing. I talked with him about studies and work, but he was interested, but not as much like my mother. You see, it was different.

Q: So, you talk with your mother about more personal things?

A: Yeah, I talked with my mother about myself, about my friends, about Eddie, or whatever.

That was the – my father was always – here about to stress it (ph) – he was unusual. He was unusual, then I would say he was almost like a genius when it came to mathematics. He didn't have a formal training, and he could serve, he could help us with any kind, the hardest problems there was. He would know how to solve it. He, himself sometimes, he couldn't explain it to me how he did it. He hadn't learned it, but he came to it. Fanny, that sister, was to a certain extent like that. Then, I do not know. I had a brother, Benjamin – he died when he was 10. I was not born yet. And, they would tell stories – none of us children were like him. They would tell stories about him, how brilliant like as an infant he was. He would read something. He read the Torah. He knew the whole thing by heart. How kind and good, gentle people would talk to him. Years after he passed by, there was still, I was told, on his grave from some gentle people a note "Here lies Benjamin" and a few words that would describe it.

Q: That's very special.

A: Yeah.

Q: What did your father do for a living?

A: He was in business. He was in business in men's; it had to do with men's clothing. You see, people made their clothes at the time, more than you went to the stores. He sold the material, the linings, the buttons, the whole thing.

Q: And would you consider yourself fairly well-off?

A: I would say middle class.

Q: Middle class?

A: Yes. But not for the American way, you understand, but the Viennese, Austria at the time, nobody had a lot and were rich like here.

Q: Did your mother work, as well, or not?

A: No, no, she had four children, and no, she did not work.

Q: Did you have lots of friends growing up?

A: Yes, I did. I was at first, I was a little shy – overwhelmed by this, but I had friends and I need friends, until today, you know? You grow older, you lose sometimes somebody, but I would still say Mahkta (ph), she was my best friend. Funny, I would not say my sister, she was my best friend. I had friends. I was very popular, and I belong to youth groups that the called Maccabi, Blau Weiss. It was very oriented, but you had wanted to belong to something, and like I was a wonderful gymnast, and I belonged to the – you know, we were divided in row – I belonged to the first row, and we would travel through the blau weiss, through the maccabi, and here I was always little and short, and I was there. Here I have to tell you a true story. When you went to the maccabi and to exercise and to jump and to – the people watching – young kids watching, see who is good, who is not good, in a large gallery. I had a girlfriend and she was there, too. I was told years later when I started to - I must have 10, 11 years old – and I started to go out with Eddie, and hoping he will marry me one day – my friend Danie (ph) said, “Well, you achieved your goal.” I said, “What do you mean?” She said, “Don’t you remember? When we were little girls, you looked at him, and you said, ‘This is the boy I’m going to marry. This is a boy I want to marry.’” And, so, I married him, but it wasn’t hard. He went to medical school, and Eddie was so, he was known as one of the best looking guy

of that. Sometimes I was wondering, maybe it would have been easier, if he wouldn't have been so good-looking, because he was quite arrogant. Forgive me, Eddie, but lovable.

Q: So, you met – before you were ten years old, you were really children.

A: We were children, but don't you see, I didn't meet him. I pointed out to her. I tell you why she remembers. Eddie was the best friend of the boy she married, and that's the way she remembered it.

Q: That's very sweet. Was your home a religious home?

A: I tell you, yes, it was. My father wouldn't like it that I hesitated because he was not fanatic. He was very religious, a very believing person. He knew that we were not so strict. And he just let it go. You know how some parents are? You better do this, or you better – but, it was a religious family.

Q: So, you celebrated holidays?

A: Oh, yes, we celebrated all the Jewish holidays, yes.

Q: Did you go to Synagogue on a regular basis?

A: I tell you, at that time – my father at big holidays, we went there on the holidays. Don't forget one thing, in Vienna – you have – it's a subject, religion, you can flunk if you don't do well.

Q: In the schools?

A: In the school. You see there is the Catholic religion and the Protestant, but Vienna, Austria, was about 95 percent Catholic. The schools were very different from here. My children would get upset when I said it. It's a shame. I pay so much money, you go only half the time you go to school, because in Vienna, Austria, you go six days to school. You go to mornings and afternoon. It's not five days. Vacation all that you have is two months. You have here

four months, and all the holidays. That was actually helpful because then you studied, you were much younger when you went to the university because we crammed it in a shorter period.

Q: Did you have both Jewish and gentile friends?

A: Yes, don't forget, I sure did. Where we lived, there were not many Jews around in the district. Yes, we did, and under Hitler, here I will mention a story. There was one little girl of my age, but I remember the little girl. I'm sure her parents became Nazis, and maybe she, too, but she knew in the end I was alone. She came to me – Genny (ph) was her name. She gave me 10 dollars. It was for me, a lot of money, when you have nothing. I said, "I don't want it." "Please, Leney, please take it." And it meant the world to me. You see that I'm still remembering that.

Q: So, when you were growing up in both being identified as Jewish, but your being in a context that wasn't being Jewish. Did you feel anti-Semitism or was there-

A: Yes, you felt it. You felt it, but it got worse because of the politics, it got worse. Don't forget, in the friends I had at that time, there became many Nazis. They were not Nazis, we were children. I have very good friends, very good friends. Certain people who helped us afterward, it's unreal – you have to see that picture. He was a janitor (ph) if I mention a name, I want it to be for Prischle (ph). She practically gave the life for us, you know, and the son, he still came to visit us here in the United States. She was just a janitor; you made more as a janitor here than over there. Poor, they are. She just swept the floor on her knees, but she was very bright. She helped us wherever she could.

Q: Did you, as you were growing up and becoming an adult, feel that the Jewish community, in spite of anti-Semitism, was well-integrated with in Viennese culture and society and Austrian culture and society?

A: Yes, they were. You know why? Because well, you couldn't join the fanciest country club, but that wasn't the point, because we were about two million people in Vienna, and we were about 10 percent, 200,000, but I hate to say it, but they were about the brightest. They would say when the Jewish people left, the spices – it's still a beautiful, still a cultural city, but the spices had gone from that city. You see have the famous writers, and composers. Yes, we were.

Q: So it was.

A: The anti-Semitism was developed by that. A certain amount is over there. You hear wherever you go, but pronounced they loved you, they liked you, but you were to a certain extent separated, because it was you, not them so much, belonged to the maccabi. I belonged to the blau weiss.

Q: Explain the blau weiss.

A: Blau weiss, it was a youth movement, and it was especially motivated politically. It was a Zionist movement, and the people were very much interested in Israel. There was nothing here from Israel at that time, but still, the desire, you wanted to go there. You wanted to build up. There should be a state. There should be a country, like almost subconsciously you felt you should have something. My sister, for instance, Berthe, my parents were very unhappy. She was very young, 17 or 18 years old. She gave everything up. She did not go to the university. She wasn't to build a state in Israel, a country for herself. If you know what it

means, she was a *halutz* (ph); she _____ the story. There was nothing. She developed malaria, all of this. So, I did not grow up, I was not a person like here.

Q: She was a Zionist?

A: She wasn't a Zionist actually very strongly, but in blau weiss, when you became 14 or 15 years old, you already planned to go to Israel, what to do to be strong, not to study, there was no time. There were no, not that kind of schools. Like all my friends, my Jewish friends, not all, but maybe 60 or 70 percent, they left school and they went to Israel. They lived in a kibbutz. I didn't. I wanted to study. I wanted to become somebody. I wanted to be a physician.

Q: And Berthe, did she leave in her early 20s?

A: She left probably. She was very young, 17 or 18 years old.

Q: And, was your father – were your father and mother both Zionists?

A: Yes, they were, yeah, but still they were against her leaving, especially my father. My mother, too, she wanted her here. Once you go, you are gone at that time, for days and weeks and there was no money to travel, yet they were, but mother was more practical, like I told you. She was the oldest daughter, you want her home.

Q: And, you didn't see Berthe until – for a long time?

A: Not for a long time. She came back because she took sick, she had malaria, then she went back again. She helped actually. She rescued the parents. When Hitler moved in, you see, Israel was not – the Jews did not have Israel yet as a country.

Q: It was Palestine?

A: Palestine, you see, but the English had to give permission if you want to immigrate, and since there was a deadline, that only the parents can go to Israel, and only in this certain period. If

you did not go within these two or three months, that was the end. You would not be able to go.

Q: Let me go back a little bit and ask you a question about, by the time you are ten years old, it's a few years after World War I. The situation in Austria must be somewhat difficult.

A: Yes, I'll tell you, they were (ph), like I said, we didn't have time for that. Austria once was a big empire and suddenly it became very small. Yes, we had very hard times, but the hard times were for all or most of the people, 90 percent of them, but you – it's wrong to say you survived. Yes, we managed. That city in the life had to give you so much in a way, the kind of friendships you rarely see. The way you, when came a weekend, you would hike, you would ski together. Even in the little money of what- You did things together. You were _____ cultural, like I said before, it offered you so much, and you would – it was next come a weekend or whenever you had time, you would – even when you were very little, you would stay in the theater hours to be able to, not to get a seat, to get – to stand and to see that famous actors. You see, it was part of life, the same thing with a concert, it was a must, and you wanted to go to the concert, to the theater, to learn an instrument. You see, that helps even if you did not have financially all the goods, but to a certain extent, it also offered you a tremendous amount of richness.

Q: Would you say this was fairly typical? That most of the young people that you knew were participating in the cultural life in this way?

A: I hate to say it, but more Jewish people, more Jewish people. Whether it maybe brings out my history, I mean, I did not say not gentile, but that was very typical-

Q: Of Jewish?

A: Yes, yeah.

Q: Were you – other than being Zionist, was there a lot of political sensitivity in the family, so that you talked politics, what was happening?

A: Yes, we talked politics. We talked politics because there were the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats. The Social Democrats were more liberal, you know. Muriel belonged to the Social Democrats, and there were, then there were the Communists. They put quite often the Democrats and the Communist in one party, what was wrong. Their ideas and ideals was not the same. And there was time we were not allowed to see the Social Democrats. And to enter fascists, and Muriel, when it comes out, belonged to...

Q: To the Social Democrats?

A: Yes, the anti-fascist movement. She worked in the underground for many years.

Q: How'd it happen that you got interested to become a doctor?

A: It's a nice story. Yeah, I'll tell you what it is. You remember I told you Fanny, who was extreme – I was the best in the class, but she was even better. It was Benjamin, when it comes to _____ everything. My father, who knew all this at the time, wanted to have a doctor in the family, not because of the title. He always said, "You know, it is the most wonderful thing you can do. Imagine you have a sick child. You make it well. Imagine your mother will be sick. You can help. There are no brothers who will go on." And hoped – she was much older – that Fanny, you see, Berthe, the oldest, had left for Israel, that Fanny would take over. Yes, she went. She started and dissected the first cadaver in medicine, in anatomy. She came home and she said, "Dad, thank you. You can have it." I never will become a physician.

Q: I don't want to interrupt you, but we have to change the tape.

A: Good.

End of Tape 1

Tape 2

Q: Helene, when the last tape stopped, you were talking about how you became a doctor, and explaining that Fanny came back.

A: That's right, Fanny, who was my favorite sister, I hate to say it, but Berthe was a different function; she was like a mother to me. That Fanny, that my father wanted her to be a physician, she came back from anatomy. She was supposed to dissect. She saw the cadaver, comes home, and says to my father, "You can have it, not me." And that was the end. She really started afterwards. She got a doctorate in chemistry and pharmacy, but not medicine. Then, by and by, when I heard it, that that was a dream of my father, I didn't tell anybody yet, but by time developed for me, I wanted to be that physician, and so I started to – I really was very much, but it goes with medicine – very much interested in physics. I was the best _____ than anybody else, and I had a dream maybe I will be an engineer. I could build bridges and this, but that was unheard in Vienna. I would have never, never had chance. You can't even dream, as a woman, to choose that field. I said to my father when I was much older, "I think I'm going to try about to be a physician." Well, it didn't bother me whatsoever. I dissected. I worked as hard. I loved it, actually. And that is the story. I always tell one story about one thing only that bothered me once. You know, in Europe, exams were very strict especially pre-medical subjects, anatomy and physiology and all of them. The people would get, I hope it won't make you sick, cadavers who will pay for it, and you would dissect it. It would give you experience that what find this artery and it will give you experience. And here I was so young, and I'll never forget, I had paid in and I couldn't go down there to the anatomy in the daytime. I went down, and it was the evening. Until today, I haven't forgotten! That's why I'm bringing it up. They were all laying around dead, and

covered, and all that you could see were just the feet. I know it's probably foolish that I mention it, but it wasn't foolish at that time for me. So, I started medicine and got finished.

Here, too, is a very – I will bring that other story later because _____ I wasn't a doctor yet.

Q: Let me ask you something. How come it was okay and for a woman to become a doctor, but not an engineer?

A: Not an engineer –it was the world of men. You could not get into the school. You could not enter. That's it.

Q: But medicine was more open at that time? Because that wasn't true here.

A: Yeah, medicine was open because I would say that it was a strange to them that women then _____ in the States. I would say 40 percent were women. They didn't finish, many didn't. They got married and that was the end.

Q: But you think 40 percent of your class were women.

A: Were women, yeah, 35-40 percent.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: And were there restrictions on how many Jews could come in, do you think?

A: I tell you, yes and no. There are two divisions, actually. It was not spelled out, but it was for anatomy. You go to one lecture hall, and there are students in the class – there are hundreds. This is not yet, like, and the other, the gentiles – At that time, the anti-Semitism was tremendous. Not only this different social peer class. They hated us. They would invade our quarters. There was a law in Austria, a law, police wasn't allowed to go in, but you have to settle it by yourself. You saw people jumping out that had nothing on, who tried to throw them out the window, and I had seen it. That was before Hitler already.

Q: So, what year would that have been 1930 or '31?

A: No, that was later in the earliest before the Nazi movement came, everything Hitler. Maybe '33-'34. It developed around that time, but I couldn't tell you exactly.

Q: So, being in school was dangerous?

A: Yes, that wasn't every day, you understand. They were lecture halls were still in the same building.

Q: But you were separated in terms of -

A: Yeah, I could go over at one point to study, to see friends over there.

Q: But, your lectures were all together?

A: Well, no, no, no. We had very famous professors. The professors who taught us didn't teach them.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: Was that true as far as you know in the '20s or only when the Nazi movement began in-

A: That was before.

Q: All the time?

A: It was all the time, yeah. It was not so in the open. You went out of your way. It not only was ____ you go to school, you accept – you don't accept and you do accept anti-Semitism, but you get use – you can't be afraid all the time. And not only this, you had other movements. You felt so strongly to be Jewish. Actually, despite all of this, but you were proud of being Jewish. You can walk in the street as a maccabi. We would sing our songs. We were in the day it was a large group of ____.

Q: And, when you went to medical school, was it not only that the classes were segregated, but the friendships were segregated?

A: To a certain extent, maybe I couldn't tell you because I didn't have any friends over there, but I almost more think the classes. Because in public school, the *gymnasium*, if you want me to talk then after this about the schools, but in *gymnasium* you were mixed – Jews and Christians.

Q: But not-

A: Not in the university.

Q: So, did you keep your childhood friends?

A: Yeah, but I tell you, yes and no. Here, I have to come back to our schools. Our school system was very different than here. When you first grade schools, you're about nine or ten years old. Your parents make the decision if you want to go to the *gymnasium*. Others ones went to *boergerschule* (ph) – that is public school – and *gymnasium*. *Gymnasium* – the difference is tremendous, like day and night. You really, I would say sometimes, to go to the *gymnasium* and graduate might have been just as hard like becoming a doctor. You have to study. You have to work so hard. In order to get there, you have to pass when you're nine years old an exam, a state exam. You're just a little girl, it's like an IQ, and they test your knowledge. If you pass, you can go to the *gymnasium*. You see, it was decided already very young. My friends over here, most of them didn't, they went to *boergerschule* and that was it. They were bright, and I had pals afterward _____ very much who went to the *gymnasium*.

Q: So, you're lives separated?

A: Separated, yes, Genny with her ten dollars. I said, "Let them ____", that name, she went to *boergerschule*. The life – friendships you make maybe when you were little, a little older,

they stay with you unless you became anti-Semites. Maybe she was a Nazi, I do not know.

Even more so, I respect it that she still liked me.

Q: How would you describe yourself as a young person? Who were you then?

A: Well, who was I? First of all shy, ____ shy, because I was overshadowed by, I was the youngest. I always wanted to be older than them, and I would show them. I was bright. I was outgoing. I had a tremendous desire to have friends, and if I remember, from there as a child to now, a friend means – you don't have much or many, just one friend or two – that you can talk with a person who will understand you, you know? And, that meant to me, the world it meant to me, and it was a trait that showed in me as a little girl, and I wanted to achieve. Maybe very ambitious, maybe because I had that one sister, Fanny. It was not only – I was pretty, but she was not so pretty, but she had much more. She had charisma. Every boy, everybody who knew her later on, everybody wanted to marry her. You see, that was Fanny.

Q: What was the difference in age between you and Fanny?

A: Seven years.

Q: Seven years?

A: Yes.

Q: So-

A: So, if you are thirty (ph), but she's a tremendous... Later on, there was no difference. You see, because it's only six or seven... But later on there was no difference because when you get older, what difference does it make if you are a few years older or younger?

Q: Was she with you a lot even when you were a kid? Did she take you places?

A: Oh, well, I'll tell you that Berthe and Fanny, they took me places; I loved it. You see, Vienna, like I said, was full of music and balls and dancing. I was too young, in a way. But I

cried about – they took me – sometimes if I went out to different function, they would loan me a dress from them. They took me. And, I remember these were balls; these were world-famous. You know the artists set it up. It took the whole opera, the whole building. They were working for it the whole year, to decorate it and you would dance, and the music, and with masks on. They took me, don't you see?

Q: It seems to me that you had a wonderful childhood.

A: Yes, I had a wonderful childhood. There's something else. When I came here, until today, people will say, whether they are older, or older already, "What do you miss the most?" You know what I would tell them? I mean, my friends, I miss the coffee shops and they would say, "What's a matter with you? Go buy yourself a cup of coffee." It's not the same. You see, over there, the different coffee shops – everybody's allowed to go in – the artists are interested to meet other artist, young or old, and talk. The medical student loves to go to meet other medical students. We worked so, so hard. I would be there in the coffee shop five or six in the morning. But that man and that child and the other one – everybody was there and studying. We had something in common – composer, all the different, then, but it's not that there was a line. You could go in, but it was wonderful. You never were alone. There were always these people. Until today, I would say that I like a big city. I don't have to talk to them, but if I walk in the street, there are so many different lives that go on, that you can see.

Q: Do you remember the name of your favorite coffee shop that you went to?

A: No.

Q: Did you go to one particular – would the medical students show up at one particular one?

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: So, you all knew? This was a real hang-out?

A: Hang-out you call it. That's right, a hang-out.

Q: So, tell me something – you were so close to your sister Fanny.

A: Yeah.

Q: And she ends up going to Palestine.

A: It was hard. A year before Hitler came, and the reason was – I told you she had a doctorate in chemistry, and she was a pharmacist. The times were very hard. Her husband, she had just met, lost his job because he had to – the Christian socialites were very – it was a bank business. You couldn't get in. There was nothing. Despite her education, so a year before Hitler came in, she went to Israel.

Q: And, that must have been really hard for you.

A: Oh, for me. So, many years have passed, and I see still the train. She was gone.

Q: And so, even though you were older, you see that point -

A: Oh, yes, yes, I keep singing the same song all the time. There's a German song, "The Clouds in the Skies", and a little bird is flying, is flying away, and you sing to the bird.

Q: Can you sing it in German?

A: [Coughs] Oh, I don't have really a voice. [Sings several verses in German.] What it really meant – and Fanny loved that song – it's a bird, and the bird – somebody said to the bird "Sing for me. I will take gold and silver, and I will put it around you, and you can have all the goodness in the world." And the bird sings to him, "Keep your silver, keep your gold, keep your food, keep everything. I am a little wild bird, and nobody can ____" and I somehow I associate it with Fanny.

Q: With Fanny?

A: With Fanny, with the song. And you said what were your friends. I was maybe also eight or nine years old. We graduated from one class or _____ everybody – what do you call an album – maybe you do it here, too. You write the school, you right something, “Oh, you were elegant.” “I like you.” “You’re so smart.” The teacher wrote something, and somehow it really stays to me, and it says in German [Speaks phrases in German] “Don’t blame life and life ever sinking under the Nazis, that life is too hard that you cannot take it anymore, because if you have, if you live in the life of fairy tales, if you have the eyes of fairy tales, the world is still of beauty and miracles.”

Q: And that’s something you carried with you?

A: I carry that with me, yeah. I had a lot of, how should I say? You can see, I was alone _____. I had a little faith. I had faith, hope. I was desperate at times, but hopeful, yes. All these little things, you ask me how I was.

Q: And you must have been an optimistic person in some way all the way?

A: Yes, even as dark as it was, I was.

Q: Things changed in Vienna in 1933.

A: Yeah.

Q: Years before Hitler becomes...

A: Yes.

Q: ...when Adolphus becomes Chancellor.

A: Yes, that’s right.

Q: How does that change for you? How do you remember the changes?

A: That to a certain extent, actually, in the university, I felt that you were afraid to say – you were afraid to say certain things, and it changed for me. I became a Zionist. Do you understand? Not like my sister, Berthe.

Q: But more so?

A: Yeah, more so.

Q: More so than you were before.

A: Before, yeah.

Q: And, that's in reaction...

A: To that, that's right.

Q: Did you feel endangered?

A: I tell you, yes and no. Yes and no, really. When you are very young and you still strongly believed in something. I believed I wanted to reach; I wanted to be a doctor. I had a warm family, and I belonged to the blau weiss. They were all – I was a part of them. So, you do not feel it. My mother always said, "Hitler is over in Germany." She kept talking about it and scaring us. It didn't bother us so much. Somehow, when you're young, you don't dwell on it so much, and you still didn't think they won't be here.

Q: Now, are you going out with Eddie at this point?

A: Where should I go out?

Q: No, were you dating Eddie?

A: Oh, I see.

Q: Where you boyfriend and girlfriend?

A: No, no, no. I started – he was already in medical school; he'd just started. And I started two years under him.

Q: So, you were at – you came into the school afterwards?

A: It's a true story. I started off medicine, and the kids – my sister's friend was a little one (ph) – they said, "Do you have a boyfriend, somebody interested in you?" She just made fun out of me, and one day I came home and I said, "I think he's the best looking of the students. I think he likes me." And like, "Who is it, Leney? Who is it?" Let me tell you this, it wasn't anatomy, I was dissecting the cadaver. Here comes Eddie. I did not know who he was, but I knew he was stunning looking at that time. He opens up a book, and starts reading it. He couldn't read it exactly. It was Christian _____. It doesn't have words, only symbols. ____ they called it, but it was fascinating at that time. He reads this maybe ten, fifteen minutes. He looks at me, looks again to me, and says, "You're not smart enough to hear this." And walks away. So, my sister said, "Did he tell you that he likes you?" I said, "No, I just described it to you." She said, "That's the reason you think?" I said, "Yes." And that's the way it started.

Q: So, after this, how did you meet?

A: When we started, he was a friend of – a friend of his I was going out with. It was very superficial. I didn't really care for too much, but he was studying medicine, and so he introduced me to him.

Q: And Eddie is this fantasy from your childhood, yes?

A: That is true, but I forgot it.

Q: You forgot?

A: I didn't remember this person. If you are only eight or nine and suddenly you're seventeen. I forgot that I ever met him there. I didn't. He said to the one girl, I'm going to- that I said he was so good-looking. I wanted him. I will to marry him. Then years later passed, my friend said, "You got him."

Q: So, you didn't make the connection at all?

A: No, no, no.

Q: How interesting. So, you were not in the same classes together.

A: No, no, but in medicine, you see, they are interwoven. Sometimes you didn't pass Histology.

You have free choices: I want to take exam this, or take this exam, so, you meet again in certain lectures.

Q: And, did you study together?

A: No, I had friends with whom I studied. I like to study a lot together with people. No, I didn't.

Q: So, what else is happening between '33 – your parents are – your mother is clearly very worried.

A: But, yes, I'll tell you what happened. The Nazis marched in.

Q: But, that's '38.

A: Yes, '38.

Q: But between '33 and '38?

A: No, not too much. No, no, not too much. Absolutely not.

Q: Now, I understand that –

A: Life went on, and you knew that politics were about changing and the family – people coming to prison...

Q: The constitution remained everyone is equal, but Adolphus was saying that this was a Christian state.

A: Yeah, that's right.

Q: And outlawed the left and right...

A: That's right.

Q: ...except for his party. And that didn't worry you?

A: No, because I didn't belong to this. It worried me when afterward when we talk about Muriel because actually you were in danger if you were a friend of hers at that time. They were outlawed.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about Muriel, because Muriel shows up early in your career...

A: Very, yes.

Q: ...and then she becomes a very dramatic part.

A: Let me tell you about. Muriel, it was like I said, I was very ambitious. It was during medical school. There was one professor at that time. He was famous. He taught pathology. He taught outside of Vienna, in Krems. And he started early. In order to get to him, you had to get up at five o'clock in the morning to take the streetcar an hour and then you were there. Because he was so alive, the things that he talked. I was afraid of pathology, but he made you not afraid. He showed you a lung – the way he described it that it has to be, or a heart, where the valves are going. He could do it in such a beautiful way, it stayed with you. You were not as scared of what you were seeing. The person is dead. That's why he was so popular. He taught you in a way that it was wonderful. So, well, I'm going there for the day, I got up early because it was time to take the streetcar. In the streetcar – like I said, crowded very – in the streetcar there's a young woman and she asked me where Krems is. I said, "Oh, I'm going there. Are you a medical student?" She said, "Yes" She said, "Yes, I want to hear Dr. Heurthiem (ph)." I said, "Follow me." We get to Doctor Heurthiem. We sit there, like I have no idea. I knew she was an American. I recognized the accent, and after the lecture was over for the whole morning, several hours. She said, "It was wonderful, but I will not be able to come. I have a little girl that is ____." She didn't give me the name. "And I cannot leave so early. I cannot get

help so early. You will have to-” You didn’t have to go to Heurtheim. So, I didn’t see her anymore, just once.

Q: Just once?

A: Just once, and – no, that is not correct. I saw her. I didn’t travel with her. I stayed at her place. She always comes, came a little later, because I was waiting there an hour, and she came to the lecture. We had no time actually to talk. I was not ____ older, I didn’t have time. She was – very simply, there was no time, because she started right up when she came, then she left. She had a little child so she left. She must have passed. And now, a long time passed. I did not know who she was. I did not know her politically. I wasn’t sure was she Jewish or not Jewish. I knew nothing. Very little.

Q: Did you know her name?

A: Yes, her name, I knew some I think, and I knew Muriel. Later I found out, all of a sudden, that she was one of the richest people in the United States. Her father was Armor – what’s the other meat packing company? The other large one? She grew up, she describes in the book, with 14 or 15 servants with which she grew up with as a child. But she hated it.

Q: Excuse me?

A: She hated to be so rich. She was a socialist. She felt it was not just. One child has everything and the other one would be hungry.

Q: Did you know her name was Muriel Gardner?

A: I didn’t know anything like that, just Muriel.

Q: Just Muriel.

A: Like I said, we had nothing, we didn't go out. I did not know it was coming. I did not think I would ever meet her again. She was somebody so much older. She had a group, she was in the anti-fascist. You see?

Q: We're going to stop the tape.

End of Tape 2

Tape 3

Q: The *Anschluss* is in 1938, but Fanny has left the year before.

A: A year before, yes. *Anschluss* was March 21st, '38.

Q: March 21st.

A: I'm going to look it up. I'm almost for sure. Yes, Hitler marched into Austria March 21st.

Q: It's about time. So, tell what it was like for you when the Nazis and Hitler marched in.

A: Well, like I told you before about Vienna, the city Vienna, that you did not worry, not too much. You – all that I had wanted to become a doctor, to help people, to raise a family. In front of me, there was, I say, a rainbow, and I wanted to reach that rainbow. I was almost – I almost had that rainbow. Just a few more months and I would be a physician, I would be a doctor. It is a feeling the world is yours, but I learned through experience, the world never is yours. Anyway, it was March 21st, '38, Hitler marched in. It was like the clouds, like the whole world was falling on top of you. Within hours, you heard screaming in the street, marching and marching, swastika and swastika, *Hiel Hitler, Hiel Hitler*, even when the windows were closed, even when they had stopped marching or singing – you still had the feeling you hear it. Suddenly, you were afraid to go out into the street. You were afraid to stay home. You were afraid to go into your house, and not only this. I was alone. So, alone – my parents remember, I had told you, they had left. They were forced to leave in a way from my sisters, because the English and not only – I think I mentioned it – for only a short period, parents would be allowed to leave and go to Israel. There was a deadline. If they had missed the deadline, that would be the end. You could not go.

Q: Was this before Hitler, before the *Anschluss*?

A: No, the *Anschluss*, Hitler was already here.

Q: So, this is after the *Anschluss* that your parents-

A: That my parents had – everybody wanted to get out. If they did to America, Israel, be it wherever, the end of the world. Save your life, get out.

Q: So, it was so immediately violent and vicious.

A: Vicious, yes. This is unreal. In Germany, it took years until it developed. Even at that time still, you were allowed to take certain things with you when you immigrated. Overnight it practically came to Vienna.

Q: Was this very shocking to you? Or did it seem-

A: No, no, it was more than shocking. That is why I described to you before. You are happy. You have an almost – yes, it was – for the Nazis. And they came there slower in Germany. You didn't expect in such a way. You didn't expect – I described you nice people. There were people who were your friends. In a night, you lost them; they were not your friends anymore. I did not know. I did not know. I think maybe some would have still been your friends. They'd be afraid. People are afraid of Hitler.

Q: So, do you think people were moving away from the Jews primarily, not for ideology, but because they were afraid-

A: No, no, they were Nazis. Don't forget, because there's Nazi movement was going in Austria and Vienna for years. It was suppressed. ____ didn't allow it to come out. Suddenly, the *Anschluss*, they all give in. There was no fighting. Suddenly, imagine you're a little bird and suddenly the doors open, you can fly, and that's why. Nobody was a nobody, and practically you didn't go to school anything because _____ or could say, "Do this and this?" And, then it came suddenly. That was a tremendous – it was worse at the time in Austria than it was in Germany because they didn't develop. I knew some people I met in Switzerland, they

still got things out of there. I couldn't get anything out. We were poor overnight, practically overnight.

Q: Did you lose your apartment?

A: No, the apartment we didn't lose.

Q: You didn't?

A: No, I didn't, but there were periods I probably would have lose, but you had to give up. You had to give up everything you owned – your silver, your gold, your jewelry, even if it wasn't much, you had to give it up. You had to go down there to give it up. Something else why you didn't – your orders – your shops had to close. You couldn't work. You did not know what to do. And, I had just a few months to finish my, to become a doctor. Within days, I got the letter, "Stop studying. Don't come. It's the end." Do you realize what it means? No money, no job, no work, no work, afraid every day, afraid in your bed, afraid in your house, you wanted to go out, you were afraid, you still went out. When you went out, you were afraid to come back. I was fortunate, I never looked Jewish, the reddish hair and bluish eyes, but they could recognized because the Nazis all had a band around here. You see? And it said, "Heil Hitler" or something.

Q: Did Jews have to wear a star?

A: Yes, it was a star, and I had it on my passport. I'll show it to you. I have my passport. A big "J", and they gave you the name and the numbers. "Sara" were the women. The men were "Israel".

Q: And this was very soon?

A: Very soon you understand, very quick, very quickly. All the Jews get out of here.

Q: That's what they wanted?

A: Yes.

Q: And about how many months do you think were you still with your parents? How many after the *Anschluss*?

A: No, really, because I told you there was a deadline. They had to leave. I was – maybe several months.

Q: Several months?

A: Yes, they left. My father didn't want to leave.

Q: He didn't?

A: He was the type – he loved everybody. He said, "What do you mean? They won't do anything to me? All my life, I was honest and good. I helped them. They're my friends. Nobody would dare to touch me." And you were even more afraid of him, he would go in the street, nothing. He had such a face. God will help him.

Q: And, how did he, if he did, how did he evaluate all this looting and this beating in the street and making Jews-

A: Yes, he left relative – he saw it, but left relatively early.

Q: And was it your mother whom made the final decision to go?

A: Both, it was the whole family. There was no choice. There was no choice. It would be the end. They didn't have anybody in America, where should they go? They would drag him to the concentration camp. He was an older man. He was not too well.

Q: And where is your brother at this time?

A: I was suddenly alone because the moment Hitler came in, at that moment, he tried to get away. People were running away to ____ illegally, no passport. They would hide in houses. You wouldn't hear from him. Suddenly, you heard from him from Switzerland, and then

once he went there he had no papers. The Swiss were not too friendly; the French were not too friendly. They wanted us out again. So, he ran from one place to another and hide.

Q: Did you, I don't know whether your brother thought about this, but there was illegal immigration at a certain point to Palestine. Did you ever think about that?

A: No, when the parents – you couldn't – my sister – it was almost impossible. No, it was illegal. At that time, you hadn't heard of it. And the way he went to Swiss over mountains and hiding in the woods and this and that, no.

Q: And you had no idea what was happening to him?

A: No, I did not. You were so much concerned about yourself, I didn't no. I didn't even see them coming. From time to time, when there was a telephone, he would get in touch with me, and try to help wherever he could.

Q: So, within a few months, you're alone.

A: I am at home, but you do not realize, practically no money, what my parents gave me but it was not much. No money, no work, the friends I thought I had are not friends anymore. I was alone, alone, nobody, no profession. You see, no profession. I did not know that I had somebody in the United States, you understand? I was alone. And here I met – here comes a miracle, one of them that – in the start, you remember, I said there was faith and there was courage, hope and miracles. Suddenly I get a letter that will get – my husband, too – a very small amount of Jewish medical students who had stopped studying – just a form letter. “We give you two months' time, and you can finish up your doctorate.” Why? Because the blue sky? We studied day and night. I passed it. And never, never since then was ever a Jew allowed to do that. I had cousins who were not included in this few in the States. Suddenly,

the world opened up to a certain extent. I was somebody and hoped I'd go to the United States, maybe I'll be able to work, maybe without a piece of paper, nothing.

Q: Were all the Jewish students in the class – in your class – given this letter?

A: Just a certain amount who fell time-wise in that group. There were not too many, maybe you have to – maybe 30 or 40 students or so. You ask yourself why.

Q: Excuse me?

A: Maybe 30 or 40 students, maybe why?

Q: But you don't know why?

A: I did not know. Maybe_____.

Q: It's interesting as to why they would do this.

A: I have a cousin she's brilliant. She's still alive. She left medicine. She couldn't finish.

Q: She couldn't – they wouldn't let her?

A: She wasn't in the group.

Q: I see. So, you are now taking two months of to study like crazy to pass this exam.

A: To do this, and I passed it.

Q: You passed it.

A: I passed several exams.

Q: Now, by this time you are involved with Eddie. Are you engaged?

A: No, I was – yes, we can put engaged, but not married.

Q: So, when did you actually start going out with him in a serious way?

A: Oh, I was never serious.

Q: As soon as you saw him as an adult man.

A: Not so soon, but yeah.

Q: So, when you say – it's interesting because if you were dating Eddie, you say you're alone.

So, tell me that means.

A: I'll tell you what that means. I wasn't married. He lived far away. He didn't have any money.

I was here. I wasn't sure that he would marry me. I was alone. He couldn't give money because he didn't have anything. He didn't have any soap! He just – I'm alone.

Q: So, how did you get food?

A: I'll tell you one thing. First of all, some people were nice. They would invite me. I was hungry a lot. Between several months. I started – these people I didn't know – giving lessons to students, secretly. For instance, I mentioned Else Heise Hoidushke, she knew I had nothing. So, she said she knew something who wants to learn – she needed Latin. I didn't know Latin. She said, "You will. Prepare yourself for the Latin. You're smart." I did every time I didn't have so many, but once a week, I studied the night before for that week to get that to Latin. I was good in mathematics. You did it secretly. I give some lessons, physics.

Q: And she was a Jewish woman.

A: Yes, she was a Jewish woman.

Q: She was an older woman?

A: She was an older woman, yeah. She had a Christian friend who helped her.

Q: So, there were-

A: Yeah, look, it was like, scratch it. But I was still _____. People would even – would invite me to a meal. I had a little money that my parents gave me, but it was very little, coming to an end. You were afraid. I gave some lessons. I survived somehow.

Q: Did you feel sick, physically sick?

A: You feel physically sick. You feel exhausted. You were tired. You're desperate. I was not depressed in any way.

Q: You were not depressed?

A: No, I was scared, terribly scared, but I don't think I was. I wouldn't have been able to function.

Q: So, tell me what was in your head – what were you afraid of at that moment?

A: I was afraid every day that they would drag me to a concentration camp, they'd throw me in there. I feared death. They will hit me. They will scrub the floors, do this – afraid. He was afraid himself. You said, "Was there Eddie there?"

Q: Eddie was afraid?

A: Yes.

Q: Everybody was afraid?

A: Everybody was afraid – we had only one desire, get out, find a rescue, somehow get out. For instance, we decided before get out we should get married. So, he was late to come to the wedding. It wasn't in a synagogue anymore. We didn't send out invitations. I had no family anymore. I was alone. Forget flowers or a nice dress, we couldn't send out – you were alone. You and the rabbi and Eddie. He was late. I was afraid they got him. You see? Finally, he appears, and I remember so vividly the rabbi said, "Take the glass and put the glass," and steps on it." And, he said, "I pronounce you man and wife." And it was the most beautiful moment, I did not hear them shouting "Heil Hitler". I did not hear the marching. It was mine and I was his, and that was – and you will see later on in the stories that are coming that we were terribly hitched, that we did not want to leave each other.

Q: And when you got married, you then went back to his mother's apartment and had a little dinner?

A: Yes, she made a little dinner. She had nothing for us, that's all.

Q: When, you would walk, would you choose a particular time to go out on the street – or you didn't know? There was no way of knowing?.

A: No, you did not know. You did not, no.

Q: Did you wear the Jewish star?

A: What did you say?

Q: Did you wear the Jewish star or did you try to pass?

A: I tried to pass, yeah, but I didn't wear the swastika.

Q: Did most people who were not Jewish wear some insignia?

A: Yes, so they were safe, you see, yeah.

Q: Did you ever see people being beaten?

A: Oh, yes, yes. That's right They'll grab you if you're washing floors – oh, yes. Screaming, and they'd put us all in buses be carried away. You never knew what was going to happen to all the different people. He lost his family.

Q: He lost his family.

A: Yeah.

Q: How do you account for the fact that that didn't depress you?

A: Let me tell you something, I am a physician, and when I talk depression, you know, it's different. You can be depressed with all these things. I was desperate, but depressed – If I would have been really depressed, I would have opened the window and jumped out. Do you get it?

Q: Yes.

A: But how do you account? I told you how I accounted. It was faith – faith, hope – look at the notes and what did I tell you – faith, hope, and tremendous courage. And then, how about circumstances? You will hear stories of Muriel, the story of the consul, I told you, circumstances.

Q: Okay, then let me ask you another way because now I understand why the word depression is not the right word. How did you not become cynical? You're seeing things that are so inhuman to your experience.

A: There's no time to become cynical. You're always only "I want to get out. I'm afraid. I'm afraid. I'm afraid." That's all, you keep going.

Q: Did you know people who committed suicide?

A: Not many, no.

Q: Not many. But you heard about it? because there were a lot of suicides.

A: I was – you didn't hear much, but I'm sure...especially I didn't go so far. Probably people who are almost in concentration camps, haven't been there yet, I would say.

Q: Do you – silly, I was going to say, "Do you think if you thought you were going to be sent to a concentration camp, that you might have committed suicide?" Or is your spirit-

A: No, you don't think so far. I was just thinking of surviving every day. Every day you think all the time in your mind, "Where can I find the person who can" a piece of paper, I needed an affidavit for the United States in order to get out. People, not only United, but to go any place.

Q: You and Eddie get married in December of 1938.

A: Yes.

Q: Now, we're going from March until December. That's a lot of months. So, all this time, you are trying to get out, with or without Eddie.

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q: But, once you're married, you won't leave without him.

A: Yeah, it is not the same. You will see this story. You felt different, like, you can see it in ____, different. Yes, I have to bring in some stories. Muriel, you understand?

Q: Yes, please.

A: Muriel, same as my cousin, and then you will understand.

Q: All right let's talk – your cousin.

A: The main thing is to find someone to get out, and I didn't know, I had a cousin. It was a second cousin. Somebody mentioned him to me there was a second cousin. I never heard of me. He hasn't heard of me. It was very hard when I tried to get in touch with him, very hard to get through to the United States. I found his address. I found his name. People said, "Don't be foolish. He won't send you anything." I wrote him a letter. I described to him the situation. I described Eddie, who my fiancé, who is, a long letter, as a medical student and so on. I was walking very close to the university where I wasn't allowed to work, but I was walking. And I was walking from the *Rathaus*, the city hall, a gorgeous building in this, all insults. Suddenly, somebody put their arm around me, which is strange. Christians are afraid to touch you, you understand? It's a Jew. I turn around. Who was it? Muriel. And she said, "Leney, I'm glad I saw you." I hadn't seen her in maybe a year or longer. I do not know. And, like again, I had no idea who she was, that she was rich or people she _____ nothing. "How are you?" And I said to her, "Don't you know the situation? I'm desperate." And started to cry. And she said, "Yes, I understand it. I'm going to leave here. I'm going to

France because I cannot stand it here either myself.” Even though she was not Jewish, and then she said to me, “Leney, I have sent out so many affidavits.” You know what an affidavit is. “To so many people. I don’t think they would accept anything from me anymore, but if I can help you anyway, tell me.” Here, again, I had no idea that she was one of the richest people in the country, and I think for a moment and I said, “You know, Muriel, maybe you can help me.” She said, “What is it Leney?” I said, “I wrote a letter to my cousin, Sam Menczel, in German. My English is no good. Could you translate it?” “Oh, sure. Come up to my apartment.” Next day I come up to Muriel. I realize suddenly that she must be very wealthy – not that arrogant or anything, just the neighborhood, where it was. Went up to her apartment, and met here that little girl, that Connie, and she sits down and took the long – it was a very long letter writing to Sam Menczel. She was – after she was done, she leads to her door and she looks at me. She had tears in her eyes, and she says – mind you, she practically did not know me only from that lecture to that time – tears in her eyes, and she says, “Leney, if there’s anything I can help you, please get – I’m leaving for a few days. I give you my address. It’s American Express in Paris. Wherever I go, they will send the mail to me.” And, she – I remember that. “And I will travel back again. I can’t send affidavit, nothing.” I sent the letter on – her letter that she translated on to my cousin in New York. Weeks passed, I didn’t hear. Suddenly, I got a letter. I have that letter after so many years. I get a letter from him. “Dear Leney”, he said, “I read your story. I was so touched, what you made from your life. I’m going to – I want to help you. I’m going to send you an affidavit, and I will – I will be good to you. My wife, Rosie, and the children will love you, and forget your boyfriend or fiancé. I cannot. I’m not rich enough. I can’t send him some papers, but looking at your picture and that you are a doctor or become a doctor, you won’t have a hard time, you will

find somebody else who will love you.” I was so happy with the letter, yes and no because Eddie – at the moment – I mean, from Heaven, such a letter. I carry that letter wherever I go, but one thing was clear to me. I will not leave without him, without Eddie. I’d rather die. I don’t care at all. So, I got this letter and a few weeks again pass, trying to make some connection for him. Impossible, I didn’t find anybody. Suddenly, I get a call, who was it? Muriel. Who was it? Muriel. And again, I knew really nothing except for that one lecture that I saved her a seat. Muriel, she said to me, “Leney, did you hear from your cousin?” “Yes. But he’s not going to send anything to Eddie, and I’m not leaving without him.” She thinks a minute, and she says, “Leney, don’t despair.” I was a stranger to her. “Don’t despair Even if I sent so many affidavits – wait, wait, help will come.” A few days passed, Muriel called again. “Leney, Eddie has affidavit. I didn’t have to send anything. I called up. I talked with the ambassador, and an affidavit is there.” So, you can imagine. The world was ours. The world was ours. I mean, was it really true that just a few weeks there was nothing? And I now had to wait for a certain number. Even with the affidavit, you cannot go to the United States. Your number has to come up. It was a quota. There was a quote – from the number way back. They were not ready for us yet. We had to wait.

Q: We’re going to have to wait to because we’re going to have to change the tape. So, we will start with this story.

End of Tape 3

Tape 4

Q: You know, we forgot to talk about something. So, let me go back in time just a little bit. You were in Vienna during the *Kristallnacht*.

A: Yes, I was in Vienna.

Q: And we didn't say it at all.

A: I didn't stay in at home at all. I was by coincidence with friends, all the _____, and now I walk and we heard it. I did not realize that _____ grabbing and grabbing whatever they can. All they synagogues were burning. It was a sight in the scared where you couldn't... I did not know I was alone. Should I go back? I stayed with them overnight, then I went back, I do not know. Do I still have a place to go or...? But it was unbelievable. It became the very fast the *Kristallnacht*, like a flash, and then it was gone. Well, it was never gone.

Q: So, did that make you even more frightened than you were before or was this a continuation?

A: No, no, no. Even more.

Q: Even more?

A: You saw the concentration, in the form, you see, it was concentrated.

Q: All right, when we ended the last tape, you were talking about the fact that your numbers were coming up, but I want you to explain because many people don't know what an affidavit is.

A: An affidavit is this. You must have somebody in the United States who is willing to send you papers for you to come to the United States. They are believed to be write out, but you have to show proof of support, that you have the means, that I will not be a burden to the States until I'm a citizen.

Q: No, no, it's fine. Let me ask you again. Explain what an affidavit is.

A: An affidavit is you have to find someone – it does not have to be a relative – who’s willing to send you papers to go to the United States, and the papers has to show what he owns, income tax and so on – that he’s really, if it comes to it, that he’s able to support me, and that I will never be a burden to the United States as long as I’m not a citizen anymore, because if I’m a citizen, it is expected that I support myself if I’m able. So, Muriel sent me that affidavit, but – not Muriel, Sam Menczel; Muriel sent it for Eddie – but you had to wait for a quota number. There’s only – somebody might send somebody a hundred affidavits and only a certain number are allowed to enter every year to the United States, and there it was important from which country you came from. For instance, if you came from Scandinavia, it was very easy to enter. They will give you numbers because Scandinavian people had no interest to go to the United States. So, we had to wait for our numbers. And so, it was very hard until you get to it. I got right off. I got the numbers, but the Germans had to give me all the permission to get that number that I’m clear. I have all the – did I tell you the story how I worked as a maid?

Q: No.

A: I did not tell you. Okay.

Q: Is that before?

A: Before that, yeah. It was the largest library in Vienna. It was like a beautiful home and beautiful furniture. They did not want to give me that number yet, so one man who had looked over the income tax, “I have a mother. She’s old. She’s sick. If you find me, if you arrive, you will work for me as a maid, when she’s all done, maybe I will let you go and your family.” So, I took the job and it was a nightmare. She was so mean to me. I worked day and night. She was very sick and didn’t give me practically anything to eat, but God help me she

died after three months. So, that was fine. He went into Eddie's apartment, took out the nicest furniture he wanted to, and said, "Now you have the numbers, too." And, he also – Eddie, not me.

Q: Who was this man? Was it a German?

A: A German man.

Q: A Nazi?

A: A Nazi, sure. They were all Nazis. They were all Nazis.

Q: So, Eddie had a number, his family had no affidavit, however.

A: No, his family – his mother perished, and Eddie had an affidavit for Muriel. I told you already the story how she called and she said, am I right?

Q: So, how is it when you got the affidavit from my cousin?

A: My cousin Sam Menczel.

Q: And that's the only affidavit that you had?

A: Yeah, I didn't need anymore

Q: Right, you just needed the one.

A: You just need one affidavit.

Q: And, was your number a lower number than Eddie's number.

A: I'll tell you – here, I want to tell you. I was about the same, two three or four or five, close, but his number came up and he was in Vienna still. I was at that time already in Switzerland. I'd got a temporary – you wanted to get out. You had to get out. I got a temporary visa from the Swiss, and Muriel helped me do it. Do you understand? He didn't have it, but then his number came up. He got a letter from the American consul. He went right up and he got his visa. Do you understand?

Q: Yes.

A: Here I was in Switzerland, my number came up. The American Consul in Switzerland, which was the American, was very mean. He would say, "If you want your number, go back to Vienna, go back to Austria – which was Germany – and get your number there." I could not go back. I had signed that I would never go back. That means if I go back they'll send me to a concentration camp. He didn't even want to listen. In the end, people did not even try to ask me, "Please help us. Give us it." Because everything was here. But he just didn't want to do it.

Q: Can I just ask you a question?

A: Because it had to be clear before the things are interwoven.

Q: Why did you go to Switzerland?

A: I'll tell you why I went to Switzerland. You did not know from one day to another that if you will be alive, do you understand? Whoever would help you? It was – why did my brother? He did not even have a temporary visa. It was like sent from Heaven. I was safe for several months. She must have – she gave me money, Muriel.

Q: And did you see Muriel when you were in Switzerland?

A: No, I didn't. She - from time to time, she would send me the tickets to go to the United States indirectly, but she wired "The tickets are coming", but it makes it also very hard. Do you know what the Joint was? The Joint helps people refugees that were there with money to get settled. I did not know it in the beginning. The Joint didn't help me because Muriel said, "I didn't want it. I will help them as much as I could." And she did. I gave her everything, every penny back in the years to come, but Muriel was always in the background, and when it was needed that people would support you, she would help me.

Q: And did she not want you to be in touch with the Joint?

A: No, she didn't want – she wanted to help to support us.

Q: So, when you-

A: She helped us to go to Switzerland, me. Eddie could not go out here. It did not have the papers from the Germans until I was married him, remember what I told you?

Q: So, you go the papers first?

A: Yeah, that's right. I got the papers first.

Q: And you were willing at that point to separate from Eddie because you thought he was coming.

A: Oh, yes, and it was not only I, everybody. Because every day you would said, "How did you feel to go out in the street?" Everyday you were scared. I wanted to get out. I was alone. I had nothing.

Q: Did you assume that Eddie would come to Switzerland?

A: I hoped so.

Q: So, when you got to Switzerland, you were even more alone because you don't know Switzerland.

A: That's right.

Q: Where did you go, Zurich or no?

A: What did you say?

Q: Where were you in Switzerland?

A: I tell you, I was in different places. I was because wherever they would let you in. I was in Davos, Switzerland. I stayed two days in Zurich. I started to hide. Then I was in Geneva, I'll tell you why. The visa came to an end soon, my Swiss visa. I promised I would be out of

Switzerland. Here I was caught. I couldn't go back to Vienna. The Swiss didn't let me there because they prolonged it once, and that was the end. I didn't know what to do. I tried – I started to hide. My brother was either in Reins or someplace called me and said, "You have to get out. They won't let you." But I did not know what, so he said, "Look, I will tell you all this on the phone, let me tell you what to do." He said, "Take your belongings." I didn't have much, "Go to Geneva. There is a League of Nations in Geneva. There is a very prominent lawyer. You go down there. He might not want to do a thing for you, but he has it in his power. If he wants to, he will help you." I took like my last money. I went to Geneva. Don't ask me, I don't know why I'm there. I do not know. I come to Geneva. I find the telephone number where the prominent lawyer is, had a hard time to get in. He didn't want to talk to me. How I did it, I do not know. I reached him. I talked to him. He was very touched. I don't know – people were somehow taken by me. It's just – So, he said, "I will help you." Yeah, my brother said to me, "Look if nobody helps you there, the League of Nations, you have to go illegally. You have to go over the border. It could take you days until you get there. There mountains, mountain passes. There are woods. You will have to hike. If the Swiss find you, there's no end to it. They will send you right back." The idea that I should be as thin as I was and there was nothing but me, all by myself, scared stiff. Well, I talked to that lawyer. He called up a very prominent, very high official at the League of Nations. I understood French some. I did not understand quite enough to understand while he was talking, and he said, "You have to help her. You have to see her. Do what you want, but you have to talk to her." She didn't want to talk to me. He was pleading with her. She agreed. I think they were probably very close with each other. I go over to the League of Nations. I have no idea anymore did I walk, I had no money for that. I got there. I meet her, fantastic building, very

elegant woman. She was awfully nice to me. She took a look at me, and she said to me, "Don't talk at all. Did you eat yet?" I said, "No." She rings a little bell. They bring in a fabulous breakfast with orange juice and all this. I thought it was not here, it was heaven. She said, "Yes, I will help you. I will give you a temporary visa you will get to go to France." And she said she will give me to a _____ so I was relatively safe for a short period. In the meantime, the war broke out. Poland and Germany, the borders were closed, and I did not need to go out right now, but Eddie called me. He said, "Leney, I received my – I have my visa. I have the number." I told you that before. "I have everything. What will you do now? Your number is up. If you don't come to Vienna in two, three days, your number will be given to somebody else." So, you realize the tremendous problem, not going back to Vienna meant I would never be with Eddie again, because he's going to the United States and I wouldn't. I didn't have it. Going to Vienna was a tremendous danger, almost 100 percent. They would send me right off into concentration camp. "You have signed it. You have signed it." I talk my friends, she wouldn't want to hide me in order to force me not to go back. I said, "I have nothing to lose. I will try to go back." And here comes the story about going back. As far as I knew, I will not be able to make it because the Germans will send me right off into the concentration camp. Now, I needed in order to go back, I needed a visa, a German visa, to enter Vienna from Switzerland. Well, I think, "Let me try." I get my stuff together, go to Zurich, and I go to the consulate – a tremendous, big building, a lot of people are waiting there in front to get in, maybe a hundred or more, but this – none of them were Jewish. These were all gentile people who had business, who wanted to go back, everybody needed a visa. They were standing. It was not open yet. They were standing in line for quite a while. Suddenly a Gestapo man, an SS man, comes out, but he says first, "Heil Hitler, heil

Hitler.” Everybody in the group, “Heil Hitler, heil Hitler” and he says, “I have to give you a message.” He says, “You all can go home. Yesterday they tried to assassinate Hitler.” And he called him the Furor. If you said the Furor, this is the highest word instead of Hitler. “The Furor has given orders nobody’s allowed to enter the border anymore. To go out, not ‘til you hear from me at a later date, I do not know when. The people all went home. Within seconds that tremendous place was empty. The only person who was standing there was myself, and two of the Nazis, the higher officials, Gestapos. “What do you want?” You get like so rigid. You do not know what to do, what is happening. You act, or you don’t act. So, what should I do? No gentile, no Christian, nobody can get in. I’m frightened to death, but I had only one desire. I want to be with Eddie. If I can’t be with Eddie, I might as well die. And I thought and I thought. I had to get in. I started march to the door. Nobody’s marching with me anymore. Everybody left. And I see the big door and SS men, Gestapo, all these women screaming “Heil Hitler, heil Hitler.” Standing straight. I went up to the door that I did almost consciously, I shouldn’t be scared. I should walk straight like I would look like I know where I was going to. I had no idea where the consul was. I had no idea how he looked, nothing. And, I was sure that they’d send me back at the door, nobody can get in. I mean, I’m on German territory. I walk straight to the door, grab the door, and open it. I did it so fast that it didn’t occur. It probably looked like I am one from them. I was just “In I am. In I am.” Tremendous building, no idea should I go right? Should I go left? Should I go straight? Let’s see, which one could it be? I do not know. I go straight and I start walking – walk, walk, walk – suddenly I come to a big door, and I thought to myself, “It looks very impressive to enter. If I get inside, “Gestapo,” I said in my mind, “might be in.” I don’t ask anybody. I didn’t talk to anybody. I go to the door and open it, and I’m inside. In front of me a big

beautiful desk and a man sitting there, I am God Almighty. I assume right off this is the consul. Next to him, Gestapo, and guns, and you name it. And he looked at me, didn't address me, either. Who was I? You needed permission. You need an invitation. You just didn't walk in that way. And he said to me, "Well, what would you like? Who are you?" And I start talking quickly, I said, "I have to have – I have to go back. I have to get an American visa in order to go", and I stop talking. He starts screaming, "You're Jewish! You're Jewish!" "Yes, I am Jewish." "You dare. You dare to come here. How did you get in?" I started to say something. "Get out of here right away." And I tell him what I want. He said, "No Christian, no Jew, nobody is allowed to get in." And he said, "Go!" And I looked at him, and he's furious at all the people who work there. I said, "I'm not going." He said, "You're not? We are in Germany," he said, "You will go to the concentration camp. You will – looking at you, how you look, you won't survive it. You won't survive it." He said to me, "Go!" Then, something in his voice got soft, and he said to me, "Go, go, please go. Nothing will happen to you here. I will see that you get out, get you again on Swiss territory, but please go." He looked at me. "I'm not going." He repeated this two or three times. Then, so far, he says, "I wouldn't want anything should happen to you. Go!" And I said, "I won't go because if I go, I will never see my fiancé, and that's the end." And he said, "I cannot give it to you." And, he started again, "Go," and then he shows to the men, he said, "Take her and lead her out." I said, "I'm not going to walk." He looked at me with a pierced look. His eyes were lethal, but he said, "Lift her up." There was not much to lift. "Lift her up and carrying her out, and out the door." Two men, one on the right, the other on the left hand – they carried me to the door. He carried me to the door, and a little out already. Suddenly, you hear a voice, "Stop! Put her down. Come here!" he calls me. I go in. He tells all the Gestapo, "Everybody go out!" He

was only with me alone. And he said, "You know, I really would like you to go." Nicely, in nice way. "I would not want anything should happen." And I said, "I can't go." And he said, "You seem like _____ nothing anymore." And he said, "Talk to me." I talked. He said – he takes a pen, and he says, "Give me your passport." And he said, "I do not know why I'm doing this." He said, "Do you realize I can lose my position? And, I can lose more than that." He means that if he did it, something could happen to him. "This is against the wish of the Furor, of Hitler." He takes the passport – I had the passport there – he takes it, writes in his name, and here's a number. I have a visa. I walk out. I couldn't believe it because I'm sure never, ever before, and it probably never will happen. Why did you do it? Why did he...? And I said miracles. Why did he it to me? Why did he endanger his whole life and his family? Why? And if this happened going to Germany, my life was practically safe. It was – here it was the consul himself that he gave it to me. Now, I had to go back, you see, I was in Switzerland now with a visa. I didn't dare to tell to anybody. When the war with Poland was over, I get a ticket and I get on the train. I get on the train going back to Vienna, and the war was over with Poland. It didn't take long, you know. It took over – the war was over, and I traveled only with soldiers, German soldiers. They were _____ that I was Jewish. I had on me my passport, but I didn't open it, nobody said – but you can imagine for hours, I was scared silly, but they were nice to me. They did not know who I was. I come to the border Switzerland and Germany – Austria, and there you had to go through an examination above it because I was not German. She saw the passport. They examined me. I had to undress. It was a woman. And I had – I still have it, I have to show you. When you got married you had nothing yet. My husband gave me a little golden chain with a little heart. It was worth nothing, but I had it hidden anyway in a little pocket on the side. I'm afraid it falls to pieces,

and she looks at me. She says, "Why didn't you leave it in Switzerland?" I said, "I couldn't leave it. My husband said it would bring me luck." And she looked at it, and she started discussing it with two or three other men, and then I was already dressed. A man comes to me and says, "Look, you will hope be able to take the little heart and neck- (ph) out when you come here. I'm going to write it in your passport." You see my passport with a little heart and necklace taken in. He wrote it in, and there it was. So, I keep on going. I arrived in Vienna in the evening. Eddie picks me up. We were not allowed to take a taxi or anything, and he said to me your number might have been gone by now. It took me just two days, three days. They might have given me to somebody else. And, did I talk too fast? No. And, he said – the next day we rushed to the American Consulate. Yes, my number was still there. They hadn't given it away yet. They gave me they number. They gave me my visa. I was the last one after the people had to wait for a long. I was the last one. You do not know such circumstances at the moment what they'll be. Eddie rushes me to the train again, off go back to Switzerland. He still stays. He didn't have his numbers yet that he could also cross. Rush me all off to Switzerland, and I – no, I take a train to Switzerland, and we come – it's, of course, a German train – we come to the border. The train stops. The conductor says, "This train is not going any further, and there is no other train today or tomorrow that goes to Switzerland." You can imagine. What now? What now? I'm in German grounds. My time has elapsed. I have to be out. The one German asked me, she recognized me, "You have a necklace, yah?" I didn't know what they were talking, "Don't you remember us? Don't you remember?" I was so excited, I didn't, "And now I have no train to go to Switzerland." The one comes to me and says, "Don't get desperate. I will show you how you will go." He said, "Do you see this street?" I saw the street, yes. It was also evening because it was dark. He

said, "There is no train, but you have good feet and legs." He said, "It's two miles from here if you walk. Walk, run," he said, "So nobody can stop you. Run. After these two miles you will see on the left hand side a little house. When you reach that little house, you are on the Swiss border."

Q: We have to stop the tape right here.

A: Okay.

End of Tape 4

Tape 5

Q: You were describing that the border guard was telling where you could run, and he was suggesting that you should run.

A: Yes, where to run. It was dark. I finally found the house he described. I cross over, here I am. I look at the skies. It's dark. I look at the ground. I fall on my knees. I kiss the ground. I start to cry. Here I am. I have been saved. A new life is starting for me. Two days later, I was headed for the United States.

Q: And Eddie comes a few days later?

A: I met him, a few weeks, but I met him on the border. To get in Genoa.

Q: In Genoa?

A: Yeah, in Genoa, again.

Q: So, he didn't go to Switzerland; he went directly to...?

A: Correct. In the meantime, he got his – it wasn't the next day. It was probably a few weeks or so to get the papers and all together. We went together to the United States.

Q: Let me ask you a couple of small details.

A: Sure, yeah.

Q: How come you were allowed to go back into Switzerland? You didn't have a visa anymore.

Was the American visa enough?

A: That's a good question. I do not know because, you remember, I arrived on the brother and I had permission – I actually didn't immigrate, leave Switzerland, completely. I had only permission to go for 48 hours to Vienna. That's an excursion, and so I was back. Not only this. In the meantime, the war broke out. The Swiss could not throw anybody out anymore.

Q: They couldn't?

A: No, not now. The Swiss borders, all of them, were closed. It was the war between Germany and Poland. Even the Swiss were _____, but they themselves did not allow anybody in or out.

Q: So, even for these few days when you came back, do you recall where you stayed, who you went to?

A: What did you say?

Q: When you came back?

A: Yes.

Q: Once you had the number and you ran across the border...

A: Yes, yes.

Q: So, you kissed the ground. Now, where did you go?

A: I'll tell you one thing: at the time, I didn't know it exactly. I stayed a time with a friend or somebody else. I was hiding; I was used to that kind of life. I knew some people.

Q: So, were you hiding, in a way? Or did you feel safe?

A: I didn't even give it a thought. With an affidavit in my hand, "Here I come! A new life, here I come!" _____. I had already my passport, my visa, everything, I was waiting for my boat to go.

Q: Now, one other question.

A: Sure.

Q: It's not clear to me how your brother finds you on the telephone, how Muriel finds you, and Edward.

A: Muriel found me because I was in contact with the American Express, and from time to time, the bank would call me. She knew how to get to me.

Q: How did your brother know to get to you?

A: I think when I came to Switzerland that I called him and told him. Then, when I tried several times to catch him somewhere where he was – maybe yes, maybe no. Sometimes I was lucky; I would get him. I would try different ways until I found him. Any your friends with whom I might have stayed.

Q: So, when your brother left Vienna, he would call you at home in Vienna, when you were still there...

A: When I was still there.

Q: So, you had some idea, vague ideas, about where he was.

A: No, no, it maybe – he didn't talk. He was afraid. No, that was from week to week, but that's it.

Q: So-

A: I did not know when I would ever hear from him. He himself was in tremendous danger.

Q: And so his finding you in Switzerland was a matter of his trying people you knew in common?

A: Yes, that's right. Maybe he tried Muriel or something, I don't recall the details. I do not know.

Q: And how come you were going to take a boat from Genoa?

A: I bought, I got a ticket. I paid for it. Muriel helped me, for me and for Eddie.

Q: For both?

A: For both, sure. Like I said, we have given back – Don't you see, we lived for a long time in the middle-west. I would have liked to New York and Albany. The Joint would help the people, but they didn't want to help me. I did not know. The social worker told me why they

didn't want. Muriel said, "I'm going to pay her anything she needs. I will pay for her." When we found out, I said, "I don't want to keep taking money from her. I will take a job wherever I can." So, we landed in the middle-west. It was easier that time.

Q: But, you were – was Eddie a practicing physician at this time?

A: I tell you, look, he just came from _____. You need an internship, you need a residency, but to find it – you don't find it right off either.

Q: But going to the Midwest is going to something foreign in comparison with Vienna.

A: It was so foreign. Lincoln, Nebraska, Peoria, Illinois, you just don't realize I could have stayed in Vienna. They didn't allow us for a few years to take state board, and they didn't grasp the whole story, but I did not want to keep on taking from Muriel.

Q: She was willing to keep-

A: I think didn't even tell me that it would come this way, but it was sent through the bank or whatever. I didn't see her.

Q: I see.

A: Maybe the tickets came. She helped me.

Q: And she was living in the United States now?

A: Well, she was traveling all over. Like I said, she grew up in a home with fourteen servants in her home. One of the richest people here. She skied. She knew the whole world. She was married. She ___ the book. She was in the underground. She was in danger all her life. She was an American and English passports she had, because she was first married to an Englishman.

Q: But she was very politically active, obviously; she was anti-fascist.

A: Very politically. Her husband was a leader of the whole thing.

Q: Okay. So, in spite of the fact that where you arrived in the United States was very foreign, you are now a free person.

A: Free person.

Q: And you do not have to be afraid anymore.

A: That's right. It was like going to the moon. And it was tough times here, too, at that time to get jobs. _____ and worked in Lincoln, Nebraska. People would say, "I didn't get any money. Nothing. I just worked."

Q: As a physician?

A: As a physician, yes.

Q: But no money?

A: No money. You didn't have a room, nothing. Eddie made probably \$25, and lived on the... And you were too proud. They didn't let me eat dinner with the other doctors.

Q: Because you're a woman?

A: No, it was just, you don't ask, you see, at that time. It was tough. I didn't ask give myself out of this. I didn't say that I needed that at that time. I didn't I tell them. I said, "I would like." They said, "___."

Q: Were people suspicious of you because you were Austrian, even though you were Jewish?

A: No, no, no. No, no. Not in the United States, no. ___ with the ___ no, absolutely not.

Q: How long did it take you before you got certified in the United States?

A: Because I had to become – I had to become a citizen. They would expect both of us to take the exams. It took me about – first the primary and then the - it took me four years.

Q: And Eddie was a bit sooner?

A: Eddie was a little sooner, yeah.

Q: And, you stayed in the Midwest for two years?

A: I stayed there in Lincoln, Nebraska and Peoria, Illinois. I had got first got first an internship.

First, I was just in orthopedics. Then I had an internship in Peoria, Illinois, in the Methodist Hospital here, and then I got mixed residency again in Peoria, Illinois, but then I felt so rich like the richest person in the world. The second year as residence, I made a hundred dollars a month; the world was mine. Then in the same city, I got – in Peoria, Illinois, I got the residence in medicine. Here it was in Internal Medicine and Pediatrics. And after they promised us, in order to open up a practice, you had to take an exam. They said, “Yes, next year, next year, next year.” I never _____ so long, but then they still didn’t let us take it. Finally they let me, and I passed it. Then we came to Maine. I opened up here first and owned my own practice. And then I got a position, a high position here.

Q: So, you have had a long career?

A: Yes, that’s right a long career. I was here for 20 years as a district health office. I had three counties: Oxford, Franklin and Muskogee County. And I traveled all over.

Q: And, you were working for the state.

A: For the state, yeah.

Q: When you first came, the war’s going on in Europe. Eddie still has family there. You were able to closely follow?

A: I had – if I was able to, what did you say?

Q: Follow the war-

A: Yeah, I was in contract with them. _____.

Q: Where was Eddie?

A: In Vienna. He was still in Vienna. He couldn't get the numbers. So, remember, they didn't let him out. He had the visa and everything. The Germans wouldn't let – wouldn't allow him to get out.

Q: So, wait a minute, how long did it take Eddie – I thought you got on the boat- I thought you go on the boat together.

A: Yes, but since I was still sometimes in Switzerland. Then, we met on the border. I cannot tell you the time difference.

Q: But I mean, when both of you are in the United States. So, you were following the war because Eddie's family is still in Vienna, or not?

A: No, no. They were not. Oh, you mean Eddie's family.

Q: His mother and his

A: He did not even know where his father – his mother got killed in concentration camp. He did not... The youngest was too small. She went to – because she was child. She was supposed to go to Israel. Pepi (ph) was one of the pictures you have. No, she was killed.

Q: So-

A: Just Eddie.

Q: It wasn't so easy.

A: No, no, no.

Q: Even though you were safe, it was very difficult time.

A: Very, oh, very difficult. But we were safe, but we had everything for the United States.

Q: Did people want you hear? Did Americans want you hear what your experience was?

A: I'll tell you one thing, I can't even answer you there because I was not willing. They knew it was very bad and so on. But, you know, even now, people don't like to hear it. But at that time you ___ your life. You were afraid to talk about anything and everything.

Q: Even with Jews?

A: Yes, I didn't. Not only this, I wanted to be out of this. Like I had one friend, she kept talking all the time about that period. I don't. I want to be out of this.

Q: And you had two children?

A: Yes, I had two children.

Q: Is there anything else that we've missed that you would like to talk about?

A: No, I don't think so.

Q: I want to thank you so much, spending a wonderful day, giving us a wonderful lunch.

A: Well, I want to thank you. It's a pleasure meeting you. What should we do with the release form? I haven't signed anything yet.

Q: Let's do that later.

A: We'll do that later.

[Break in tape.]

Q: Helen, can you describe who is this?

A: This is my mother, it is in Vienna, and she is wearing a pin. I do not know who gave it to her. I have that pin.

Q: [New photo shown] All right, now we'll switch pictures, and who is this?

A: This is my father. In Vienna.

Q: Can you repeat that?

A: This is my father in Vienna.

Q: Do you know approximately how old he might have been at this time, and your mother?

A: I would think-

Q: Or what year?

A: I would think maybe, that my mother might have been 55 or 60. They are close in age. He looks much older.

Q: And this was typical for the way the man were wearing their beards?

A: Yeah, this was typical, yeah, and you had a beard but it was low and white.

Q: [New photo shown] All right, now, who's this?

A: These are my brother and sisters. This is the earliest picture that I remember in our house.

The person who is standing is my oldest sister. This is Berthe. Then comes the little girl, I think I might have been three or four years old. It is me, Leney. Then comes my sister next to me. That is Fanny. She was very pretty, charming, but it doesn't come out here. And next to Berthe is my brother Josef (ph).

Q: Is that Berthe?

A: That is Josef and Berthe. She was the one who went with the Halutz (ph) to Israel. She was very young maybe 17 or 18. This is Josef. He was a fantastic chess player and dealing with stamps, and the little one is me, Leney.

Q: [New photo shown.] And who is this?

A: This is me. This is Leney. I would think I was there maybe 15 or 16 years old. I'm not sure.

Q: Do you know where you are?

A: It is in Vienna, but I do not know where.

Q: Okay. [New photo shown.]

A: This is Leney. This is myself, and this is Eddie. I'm not sure if we were married yet. I don't think so.

Q: This is actually 1926.

A: We weren't married, no. We were just going out together.

Q: [New photo shown.] Who is that?

A: That's Leney again, me.

Q: So, when you think about yourself, you think about yourself as Leney, not Helene?

A: Well, I lived here so many years, I would say almost Helen or Helene. When I talk about looking back, then I become Leney.

Q: [New photo shown.] Is this?

A: Yes, this is Eddie, my husband. Handsome, not just because he was my husband. It was known. He used look, not so much in this picture, like a Gregory Peck.

Q: Very intense looking.

A: Very intense, yes.

Q: [New picture shown.] Who's this?

A: This is my mother, my brother, Josef, my oldest sister Berthe, and next to Josef standing is Fanny.

Q: And where was this taken?

A: This must have been Vienna.

Q: In Vienna?

A: Yes. In Vienna, definitely Vienna. [New photo shown.] This is Fanny, my sister.

Q: Wait one second.

A: This is Fanny, my sister. She was not only my sister. She was my best friend. She was – she had so much charisma. She was – it doesn't come out here. She was very beautiful. She had the red hair and greenish eyes like an ocean. She was very, very much loved, extremely bright.

Q: [New photo shown.] And who's this?

A: That is again Fanny. [New photo shown.] That is her. That is Fanny there. She was amazing. Not only was she very bright, nice, but somebody everybody who met her just loved her wanted to get married to her. She was extremely gifted.

Q: _____.

A: [New photo shown.] This is my oldest sister. It is Berthe. She was the one that became Zionist and she went to Israel practically as a teenager, when she was 17, at the most 18 years old.

Q: [New photo shown.] And who is this?

A: This is my mother and my father outside of Vienna in Baden. It was a type of a spa, you know, if you went there your blood pressure would go down. You took certain – bathed in certain waters. They're just coming out. You see she carries a glass of water.

Q: Hold on one second.

A: [New photo shown.] This is Leney, it's me, Helen, and Ed. We are standing in front of the car very proudly, probably was our first car.

Q: Do you remember what kind?

A: Huh?

Q: Do you remember what kind it was?

A: Eddie, what was our first...?

Eddie: I think that was our second one, a Nash.

A: Maybe a Nash, a green car.

Q: That's a Buick?

A: No, not at that time. We didn't have a Buick. I think Nash or another car. We didn't have the Buick yet.

Q: [New photo shown.] And that?

A: Here, that is my dear husband, Eddie, with his doctor's bag. He made house calls day and night. He is going.

Q: Where do you think this is in the United States?

A: That might have been either West Paris or South Paris. West Paris, I rather think. [New photo shown.] That's us both, Leney, Lene, how he calls me, and that is Eddie, my sweetheart.

Q: Is that here at this house?

A: No, no, no.

Q: So, where do you think it was taken?

A: That was taken in Maine, but maybe, maybe, in West Paris or South Paris.

Eddie: South Paris?

A: South Paris, yeah.

Q: [New photo shown.] Okay, who is that?

A: This is Muriel Buttinger, or Muriel Gardiner was her name before. We owe her everything. We owe her our lives. Without her, I would not be married, I would not have children, I would not have had the grandchildren. She worked in the anti-Nazi movement. She endangered her life for years, only to help people. I love her. She helped hundreds of people, and she went as a book called *Code Name Mary*. That is her. [New photo shown.] This is

Muriel again. She was one of the richest people in the United States. She grew up in a home with fourteen servants. All her life she tried to help people. She endangered herself and probably also her child. This is Muriel. She was first Gardiner. She was also a psychoanalyst.

Q: [New item shown.] And what is this?

A: This is my passport, and this is in red. A 'J' a big 'J', it tells you I'm Jewish. You see first my maiden name, Helena Menczel, then it became Rochberger (ph), and then in the end it became Menczel or Reeves.

Q: Now, you name's spelled differently here than the way you spelled it.

A: Menczel, that's spelled in different places. It's M-e-n like Norman, c like Carl, z-e-l. Then my cousin spells it different, who sent me the papers, M-e-n-c-h-e-l. [Zoom on passport photo.] I look desperate there, don't I?

Q: Well, you don't look happy.

A: No.

Q: And this is the passport picture?

A: Passport picture, yeah.

[Tape cut off.]

End of Tape 5

Tape 6

Q: [New item shown.] What are we looking at, Helene?

A: This is my passport. This is a visa that I was allowed to enter again Vienna. Nobody was allowed, not even gentile people. The consul gave me this, the story who gives me the visa, and the number, and he says, "I don't know why I'm doing it." That is his name. That is his stamp. And I went back in it was November 26th he gave it to me. No, November 8th it does tell you it.

Q: November 7th.

A: November 7th, November 27th, I got my American visa. Here he endangered his life only to give me that visa. I was the only one who could enter again Vienna. It tells you how long time I have. I have to be out on the 29th of November. I entered 26th, out on 29th. [New item shown.] This is actually – the Nazis wrote down on the border – if they really were Nazis or not, I could not tell you, but they belonged that group – that I'm bringing in a necklace, a tiny little necklace with a little heart. They wanted me – they were very anxious, that never they should take away this necklace, because I told them this necklace, my husband gave it to me when we got married, and he said, "as long as you will have it, it will always bring you luck and save you." And this is what they wrote in. And when I went back, they were excited and happy that I still had my necklace, and I still saved this 'til today.

Q: And what is this?

A: Yes, that locket.

Q: You've had that locket for sixty-some-odd years.

A: Yes, you're right. I don't wear it anymore, I'm so afraid it will rip or – I hide it away.

Q: Is this one of your most valuable possessions?

A: Yes, yes, it is. Can you understand?

Q: Yes. Is it maybe your most precious?

A: Probably, yes.

Q: Can you say that in a sentence?

A: Yes, it is the most precious what I have. And that I have Eddie. But that passport is – very hard. There's Muriel, who gave us life, that we are here. There's that consul.

Q: So, you have little miracles.

A: Yeah, what I just wanted to tell you is, like I said, is just these miracles. It's not only that you think of a miracle – well, I got such a miracle. It's just a point, to suddenly find Muriel, and she said, "Can I help you?" and when I see her, I don't know who she was. Do you understand?

Q: You didn't even have an idea who she was.

A: And there was something out, that miracle. From the blue sky, that I get a letter, "You are allowed to finish or get your doctorate." You see that I got it. This passport from the consul, it's holy to me.

Eddie: You know, I wouldn't be alive if Muriel hadn't given me my affidavit.

Q: Right.

A: Here, it was not just a Nazi – here it is the highest Nazi, the consul. Why? Why is it me? Why am I safe?

Q: And what do you come up with as an answer?

A: I sort of think there are no answers. Maybe we do not know it yet. Maybe it might be because I have a daughter, Karen. Maybe it might be – who knows – Laura, my grandchild.

End of Tape 6

Conclusion of interview