

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Renee Scheuer
May 28, 1996
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PREFACE

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RENEE SCHEUER
May 28, 1996

Question: Well if we could start, if you could say your name and when you were born and where we are right now and then we'll start, we'll go from there.

Answer: The truth, when?

Q: I think that would be best, yes.

A: Yeah, okay. My name is Renee Scheuer. Is it slow enough?

Q: That's fine.

A: I was born in Vienna, Austria, on December the fifth, 1909, and I had a good life and I worked in Vienna and when Hitler came on March the tenth, '38, I couldn't go back to work _____ and I said okay, give me letter of recommendation so they said no, you're Jewish, no. I said okay, that's fine with me, just write down how long I worked for you, so they said 10 years, they said okay, so I have it now and I have a pension now because of that. And well we saw Hitler come and it was terrible _____ Vienna right away, where the troops.

Q: Mrs. Scheuer, may I interrupt?

A: Yeah.

Q: Just before we get into that, I wanted to ask you a little bit about what it was like for you as a little girl growing up in Vienna?

A: It was beautiful. This is me.

Q: Tell me a little bit about -- what's that picture?

A: That's me.

Q: Oh, how beautiful.

A: It's _____ .

Q: Now the people who are going to be listening to this won't be able to see this picture, can you describe it?

A: Well it's from a famous painter in Vienna, his name was _____ that signature and my grandparents were very well off, but then before, after the first World War you know, _____ couldn't exist so we went broke and I had to _____.

Q: Now this picture is of a very pretty little girl, very red, rosy cheeks and a red bow in her hair and a dress and what's that around your neck there?

A: That's pink corals.

Q: Pink corals?

A: Uh-huh. White.

Q: From where?

A: I don't know, from Vienna.

Q: From Vienna?

A: Yeah.

Q: And how old were you then do you think?

A: I think I was four or five and the painter had to tell me stories so I would stand for him.

Q: You're looking pretty serious there.

A: Yeah, I was mad, probably, because I . . .

Q: Having to stand still so much?

A: He told me fairy tales and things so I would stand there.

Q: Do you remember that at all?

A: No, but they told me so much about it.

Q: Uh-huh, that's beautiful.

A: And that's my mother. My sister painted it, and she went to art school in Vienna.

Q: So now what was, when you were a little girl, when you were this age, what do you remember about growing up in Vienna, what was it like?

A: It was a beautiful, I don't want to brag, you know.

Q: Oh no, that's okay, you can just talk.

A: And my grandfather had the big factory, corsets, and he went around with a life model _____ . But they have these things, _____ and it was very nice.

Q: And where did you live, what part of Vienna and what do you remember . . .

A: We lived near the Royal Palace, it's in _____ .

Q: And what do you remember about your childhood, what kind of games would you play and what was . . .

A: Oh, we had horses, I was in the stable all day long, from the factory , we like horses, you know. That's it.

Q: And then you said that you got, what happened then with the factory? Did your father work in the factory?

A: Yeah, my father was the president of the factory but it went broke and I had to go to work, my mother had to go to work.

Q: And what do you remember about that time when it went broke and how old were you, do you remember much about that time?

A: I was 16, and I had to go to work. My mother had to go to work because it was bad after the war.

Q: After World War I?

A: Yeah, right. And I had a brother and two sisters, and one of my sisters was in _____ book, no, on the table, the white book, and that's a book we got. _____ , Book of the Dead, deported from Austria and the name of my mother is in here and of my sister's here and they never came back, they were executed or gassed. And my brother was in Belgium and he was killed. He was married to a non-Jewish lady and he was safe, he could work, he worked for a film company, but they were hiding British parachuters during World War Two and they caught them and then they beat them and he died in Belgium, near Brussels. And don't you want to know what happened during Hitler?

Q: Oh I do, I definitely do.

A: It's the most impressive.

Q: I know and I don't want to take too much time before, but I just wanted to get a little background on your family before we go into that very important time.

A: And I was really not spoiled because when I was this age, my grandmother had the soup kitchen and there was a beauty contest, I was five years old and I won the big toy _____ and they said don't think because you're so pretty, you're not. They didn't want to spoil me. Give the dog back because for the next, you know, have somebody else can win it. So I wasn't spoiled, really.

Q: And now this factory, was the factory something that your grandfather had started?

A: Yeah, my grandfather did.

Q: Okay, and let me ask you one more thing about Vienna during those times, in doing some of the reading and preparation for meeting you and talking with you, I understand that there was a fair amount of anti-Semitism in Vienna after World War One, did you experience it?

A: Not really, no.

Q: No? You did not experience it.

A: And there wasn't like here, for instance in Providence there was a Jewish quarter in South Providence near the hospitals, no they were all scattered around, Jews _____. And they were into Protestant school and there was me and another Jewish girl in the class, but no, not really. But they were _____. They were much worse than the Germans, because it was political, it was supposed to be, but after Hitler came, the woman came to the grocery store, _____ Hitler, you know, terrible and on the benches they said, not for Jews.

Q: Who would say this?

A: The Viennese people. They were much worse than the Germans.

Q: So they suddenly started talking about this?

A: No, not suddenly, it was illegal to do, _____ Nazis years ago, but then they came out.

Q: What time, would this have been before the Anschluss?

A: No, after Hitler came in '38.

Q: When was the time, and maybe there's a particular moment or a day that you remember, where things really changed for you?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Can you talk to us about it?

A: There was a _____. November the ninth, '38, and they came to our apartment, we didn't live in a house any more, I told you. And we lived in an apartment with my mother together and they came and went to all the drawers and took my jewelry and put in their pocket, you know, that's the Viennese. The Germans would really make a list maybe, because they're very perfectionist and then they said, so now you have to sign over your apartment, everything in it for the Nazis. I said, do you have a _____, that means do you have a right to do so? So my husband got hit over the head and so they said okay now go out of the apartment. You gave it to us, so I pushed my, there was an elevator and pushed my mother down the stairs and I said, do you have a mother, he said yes, I said, don't push her. So we went out of our apartment and they took us to a big apartment and everybody was sitting there, all the Jewish people with bloody heads and they said to come and take the men to concentration camp, but they didn't, anyway.

Q: Now when they . . .

A: In the same street, just a few houses away from our apartment.

Q: These people who came into your apartment, were they soldiers?

A: No, they were Nazis, they were civilians.

Q: Civilian Nazis?

A: There was no war then.

Q: Austrian civilian Nazis.

A: They didn't need soldiers, they were _____ happy when they came, the Nazis.

Q: Can you recount some of the other conversations you had with them, what, did they knock, did they just barge in, what was the . . .

A: They knocked and they said it's _____ from Jews. And they came in, I told you, they went to all the drawers and took everything they could find. Put it in their pockets.

Q: Now this was the apartment that you shared with your husband or was there other family?

A: With my husband, no, with my mother. We lived with my mother.

Q: Then this was in the same place where you grew up?

A: No, no, I told you, I grew up with our own house and everything and when I was 16, we went broke and then we took an apartment and my mother and I went to work. And, but it was the _____. And then, about a week later, my husband was an engineer, he had a friend from college, but he was a Nazi official, and he had to me said, yeah he said, I want to meet you next to the police station, so my husband said, I'm not going to the police station. So he said you have to leave Vienna in three days, if not, they come and get you. And my sister went to England right away and she promised that she would send us a permit, an affidavit was in the mail, a permit and then one day she wrote I couldn't do it, so I said, what could we do, we have to go in three days.

Q: How did you feel then, I mean what . . .

A: Nothing, yeah, my husband was sitting there. I said, okay, we have to leave in three days, let's go to any, I don't know where. There was only one ticket available, so that's out, so what. So we decided to go illegally to Cologne and go from there to Belgium. What we did and we were gone in three days. We stayed there with other Jewish people and you know the German Jews they said, oh I was born in Germany, I want to die in Germany, nothing is going to happen. They had too little, I mean teenage girls they went to dance every Saturday, they came back to Cologne. _____ you know, on the Rhine. And so, but they knew how to escape and they send us some people we had to pay and they took us through there legally, you know, through that _____ and to Belgium and there were, underneath the raincoats they had the SS uniform, the black, but they weren't, they made money, no matter what. And we came, it was in January '39, and we went through the snow and sounds like _____ something, and went to follow the leaders you know, from the Belgium boys and it wasn't hard to see them, it was dark, but they had so much perfume that you could smell them. So we came to Liege(ph), what is the name of Liege(ph), _____, that's German.

Q: And how were you traveling?

A: We walked through the snow.

Q: You were walking the whole, now this . . .

A: And they carried us over the ice in the winter, through the river.

Q: Describe a little bit, can you describe some of the details, what were you wearing, was it freezing cold, were you warm enough?

A: Oh yes, sure.

Q: Difficult, or?

A: Oh my God, I had boots, but. Well I was young then. My husband was young.

Q: Did it feel like a terrible thing, like an adventure, like a . . .

A: No, it felt that we have to do it and that's what it was.

Q: Well you were just philosophical about it, did you feel uprooted, I mean I guess I wonder how you felt at the time.

A: You feel nothing at a moment like this, which was really the best part of everything. So we came to no man's land and so the leaders, the boys the Belgium boys said, so now you can say _____ Hitler, they won't catch you, you're in Belgium, now but it was the Belgium people would send people back and then you get _____ to the concentration camp. So they took us to Antwerp, it's a beautiful city.

Q: Who's they?

A: In Belgium.

Q: No, but they took, the Belgium authorities?

A: No, oh no, no, the guards didn't know we were there. They brought us in the Jewish _____, that was an organization, and we got food, bed and warm clothes and we were sitting there, there was a man going back and forth, back and forth, looked at my husband and then we were scared, we thought we saw a Gestapo man in everybody. So the man said to my husband, is your name Scheuer, oh my God yes, how'd you know? I went to school with your father. And we were very lucky and he went to the authorization and they made us that we could stay, but we

were not able, we couldn't work there because that would be wrong to take the work away from the natives.

Q: The Belgian people.

A: So we went in a family camp. In an old, it was once a prison, but very nice, beautiful and the director was the chief there and every family had a room of his own and everybody had to do something to work for your keep, you know. And I had to clean the garden, I had 20 little boys and girls, so another woman was ironing and the men had the, did the washing, my husband did the talking in the dining room because there was a, German and Austrian is very different, so my husband had no accent so they both would understand him. So then in May Hitler invaded Belgium in '39, yeah. So everybody, everybody, Christians and Jews, everybody wanted to walk to Paris, and on the streets you saw, like you see in the film on television, you see refugees and they took everything they could carry on their backs and they had cars, the Belgium people and the cars didn't have any gas, so they had to leave them right on the street and the Germans came with the Stuttgarts(ph), the planes you know, down to shoot at the crowd and make believe there were soldiers, but they knew quite well, they were close enough to see they were civilians and it was a good opportunity to lose their husbands or their wife if they couldn't get along anyway, that was the moment and it was terrible, we saw dead bodies in bed, dogs and masters, it looked like from _____, don't look.

Q: How close did they come to you?

A: Not anywhere, up in the air, they were close enough to see they were civilians fleeing from Belgium to France. So we came to _____, it's not too far from Paris and we went to a shelter, they bombed, the Germans went, they wanted to go to Paris and they did, so when we woke up in the shelter we slept, oh look _____ sleep. They said we don't do anything to you, go back home. Now, we had no home, so we went back and there was a village, it was burning, went to the police station and said, can we stay there overnight, in France? No, no, no, you are free, go. So we had to go back and partly they took us, vans took us back and the authorities said it's not good to go back to Antwerp because it's a port city, so we decided to go to Brussels. We didn't

know anyone. We don't, oh in between, the French arrested us because my husband wore a trenchcoat like the real spies, _____, you know. And they said we are German spies, who, because for the French we had an accent, we were Germans and for the Germans we were Jews. So you had your choice. Anyway, and it's the truth, they put us against the wall, the French and some lilacs, oh it's a beautiful month, the month of May, now we have to die. They're ready to shoot us. So then they looked the documents and they said we were Jewish and that's it.

Q: Did they feel sorry?

A: We weren't dead, no.

Q: What was their reaction when they realized that you were not German spies?

A: Nothing, you're free, you're free, it was war, my God. You know the French, they stood at the main square, with a _____ terrible, they were not a _____ to avoid, the Germans _____ oh my God, just like nothing. Yeah, we stayed at the _____ line, you know, it's a big, big _____, it's beautiful. But there was a big hole between the land and the ocean, that's where the Germans went through, like nothing, and the tanks, terrible. So, went to Brussels and we had to, we had the star, it's in the envelope there. There's the Jewish star we had to wear openly and not hide it and you saw earlier some high officer, they make believe they were sorry, I don't know how sorry they were. Okay, this is the Jewish star, you had to wear on the left hand side, well you saw that before, I guess.

Q: I haven't seen one up this close.

A: Yeah but, I was very neat, I lined it, see. And I sewed it on all my garments.

Q: It's just a little piece of cloth, huh?

A: Yeah, I lined it.

Q: J.

A: It's Jew.

Q: Yeah.

A: _____, same in French. And you didn't, the jays, yeah. And so we stayed in Brussels until I got the invitation, written invitation to go to the concentration camp. In German and in French, and on this . . .

Q: Can you read that?

A: Hmm?

Q: Can you read that?

A: Yeah. Can I read it to you? Do you know German?

Q: I don't know German. If you could read it for the tape it would be.

A: Yeah. Mrs. Renee Fischler, that was my maiden name, Brussels. In the identity card in Brussels they always have, an identity card in your maiden name, you can get the, it's very good because you can get the rest of _____, your name is always here, your maiden name, and it said, you have to be at _____, that's a little village between Belgium and Holland, 10 o'clock in the morning and you have to bring food for 14 days, like not perishable things and so forth. One pair of boots for work, two pairs of socks, two shirts, or blouses, underwear and a work suit and two blankets and two bedding and some bowl you can eat from and some glasses.

Q: What do they say the purpose of this was?

A: It was a work camp, and I wrote the _____. Now, when we were in Brussels we both smoked and you know he said, your last wish is the cigarette, you know the French, so we just knew these people, we went in their store and they said, if ever you get this, come to us first, which we did, instead of going there, we went with the star and then so.

Q: What does this mean?

A: That's _____.

Q: _____.

A: _____. For work, arbett(ph) is work.

Q: Uh-huh. [reads German]

A: [Reads German] You are told to be there, for the . . .

Q: Yeah. Ordered to come to work sort of, it's an order to come . . .

A: It's for the ____, yeah. And the number, yeah.

Q: Uh-huh. So now you got, how long after you had, you, when you turned around in France and you came back to Brussels, how long did it take you to arrive in Brussels from France?

A: Oh well a few days, I don't know.

Q: A few days of walking?

A: Yeah. And this we were, everything was okay, but we had to put our names in a Jewish, they knew we were there, our name was there. Jewish community, which the Belgian didn't. We had, where we were hidden, there was a man, his name was Cohen, he said I'm not Jewish, who says so? Because his name wasn't registered, but ours was because we came from Germany or Austria. So we had friends and they said if ever you get this, because they knew what it was, you come here, so we got there, locked the door and said so take off the stars and we go somewhere, we going to hide you.

Q: This was not until later though, right?

A: No, that was in August, yeah in the date was said August the second I think.

Q: Of what year? 1940?

A: No, '39. Here, '39, August, August the second. So August the second, instead of going there, that train, we went to the people and locked the door, they gave us a steak dinner, she said, _____ by bus, if they catch you in the bus, okay, you have choices, either they catch you or you go there voluntarily. So we went in a, not to far from Brussels and we got there, it was a very nice lady and they said, oh hello Jack, hello Renee, you know and as if they would know us forever. Now she was the wife of a very well known pianist and he was on tour at the time he went to Paris, she said, you can stay here, when my husband comes, we'll see maybe he says yes or no and _____, he says yeah we could stay.

Q: What was that family's name?

A: Boeskay(ph), Emil Boeskay(ph).

Q: Boeskay(ph), now you had already stayed with some other people though, right.

A: No, that was the first, that was the first one.

Q: But what about the, I had read the interview you did before.

A: No, no, no, that's much later.

Q: But what about the Bellhay(ph) and the Homebecks(ph)?

A: No, no, no, no, no, no.

Q: That's later?

A: Much later.

Q: Okay, I'm sorry, go on.

A: So we stayed there and in her house there was a friend of hers, an old lady and she was sewing and she was born in Belgium so nobody could prove she's Jewish and there was another young girl, she was a pianist too, and she was hidden there. So one day we had to go out because the people around were supposed to know that we were there hidden and he played Chopin the whole day on the piano and they picked him up from the Kaiser, the chief of Belgium, he gave piano lessons to the prince of I don't know where _____, yeah. Okay, so we went to little town near Brussels, to Ubec(ph). On the main street, on the main place and we had, we were sitting, we could use the whole house, not like Anne Frank we saw, we sat behind the glass door with curtains and the Germans came and bought in his store and he said we are going to England, you know, now we're going to invade England, but then it so happened that man where we stayed, who was hiding us, he was a spy for Belgium against the Germans, they hated the Germans and he belonged to an organization, the name was _____. And we took messages over the radio, which was from England. Not supposed to because the Germans were living right there.

Q: The BBC?

A: Yeah, I think so. On purpose they did it you know. And one day the Gestapo came, but not for us, but for him because they thought he was a spy, he suspected he was a spy. So it was a beautiful home and they said, you live like the _____, it means, oh you _____, every luxury, his kitchen really American, and they invited him to the Gestapo and he played silly. Just like that he sat there. He went to the Gestapo, took his lunch along, and they interviewed him and they couldn't prove anything, so they send him home. But it was very dangerous for us too, you know, because

they could find us. So we went to the lady's sister, and nobody knew, nobody of her relatives knew that we were hidden there and I was knitting, yeah I didn't, I was not allowed to talk, because I have an accent.

Q: You start that last part again about you had, when you were saying you had an accent.

A: Well, I have an accent and I couldn't open my mouth to talk French. So they said I was some relative, distant relative and my husband was in the war, he died in the war and _____ not there. But I was knitting, the little girl said, well you knit different from my mommy, you know, really you wouldn't think so, a child knows. Anyway, so then we got the message for him. The Gestapo is after you, so we had to go somewhere else. And we had a lot of fun really, we had two daughters, and oh really, we had everything. We weren't hungry. And then we went to another house and the other house, the neighbor went in and out like you know, an open door, and so we had to leave. And then I had one dress, which I knitted myself and I wore it, I washed it, I wore it. And he was an attorney and he hated, hated the Germans, he was part of that group.

Q: What was his name?

A: Millot(ph).

Q: Millot(ph).

A: Yeah. And the father and no, that was much later. Anyway, we stayed there. It was a beautiful, beautiful home, but they had no heat, we're sitting in the kitchen.

Q: Where was this, this was also around Brussels?

A: Yeah, that was in _____, very, very nice. Beautiful home. One day there was a man knocking at the door and he really looked suspicious and I don't know, we always sat in the kitchen and that was a German spy and three weeks later, somebody else knew, they were going to take Mr. Millot(ph) and his son. There was no, and at that time there was one man who just stole a cow or something and the two Jews, my husband and I and one Frenchman from the organization, so I went back to Mrs. Millot(ph), Mrs., the first one, _____, and they took the father, and the son and the father died in a concentration camp and the son had a _____ before he came,

went to the concentration camp, he came back the _____ was gone because it just was half starved and he lost I don't know, 40 pounds, but he came back. So we went back to Madame _____ and in the kitchen they said, _____, Paris is free now, and English and American troops came to Brussels and my husband went out, oh he, you know for joy, shouted, shouted, so happy, he came home, he was hoarse. And so we were free. So then we stayed voluntarily, in the house there, we could. My husband went to _____ and I went to the British officers shop, I got a job, because of my good English. It wasn't so good.

Q: It's very good.

A: No, I always had an accent. Anyway in Belgium, everybody speaks perfect German, French and English, everybody, because it's a small country, beautiful country. No you haven't been in Europe?

Q: I have. Not that much, but I've been to France.

A: Oh, you have?

Q: I've been to Spain.

A: Oh, we too, Portugal we went.

Q: And also _____.

A: Not then, after the war, from America.

Q: Portugal I haven't been to.

A: Well it's near from Spain, that was one trip. We went to the Costa de la Sol(ph) in Spain and then we went to Portugal. And so we were free and oh we started to have a correspondence, to go to, have an affidavit to go to America, but it was wherever you were born that counted. Now I could go right away, but my husband was born in Poland, and I didn't want to go alone, so I stayed. So we came to America in 1950.

Q: Well now, let me ask you a little bit more about the whole, all of the places that you stayed and the time that you were really hiding. How many years was that that you were hiding? Was it from like 1940 to 1944, or was it that long?

A: Yeah, sure it was. 19, no, this invitation was for August '42, 1942, from 1942 . . .

Q: Yeah, I thought this would have been later, right. So where were you, now before, this invitation was 1942, right, okay. And before '42 were you in hiding also?

A: No, we were not, because . . .

Q: So you got back from . . .

A: We went to family camp and then.

Q: The family, and what was, talk a little bit about, could you, Mrs. Scheuer about what it was like in the family camp.

A: It was very nice.

Q: What was this living situation like, where was that?

A: I think I told you, it was in Marneff(ph).

Q: Marneff(ph), right.

A: That's in the south of Belgium. And everybody had to work, whatever you was able to do.

Q: And this is after you had gone towards Paris and turned around?

A: No, no, no, no, no. That was from 1939 until 1940 when the Germans came, because we were there without Germans luckily, for two years. The Germans only came in in 1940, and we went to Belgium in, no we came, '39 we went to Belgium in January and the war started in September that same year, so there were no Germans when we, otherwise, why should we go where there are Germans, anyway?

Q: So then when you turned around, going to France and then you turned around and came back to Belgium, when was that?

A: That was in 1940, when the Germans invaded Belgium and France.

Q: Okay, so then from 1940 to 1942, before you got this quote unquote invitation.

A: Yeah, we were free and then we went to that camp because we were not allowed to work, in Marneff(ph).

Q: Oh, but I thought you were in Marneff(ph) in '39?

A: No, 19, wait a minute, yes we were there in '39, and one day the war was declared between Germany and Belgium and the boss of that family camp said to my husband, he was an announcer

in the dining room, as I told you and he said, don't say that word war, and then we left, from the family camp, in a group, where all the other Belgium and Jewish, everybody fled, wanted to go to Paris, which was not yet occupied by the Germans then, but they got there before we got there.

Q: So who was the person who said to you, if you ever get an invitation like this?

A: He was a friend of not a friend.

Q: Was that Mrs. Bellhay(ph)?

A: Oh, yeah, Mr. and Mrs. Belay(ph).

Q: Belay(ph)?

A: Belay(ph), yeah, and he, it so happened he was director of a bank and he lived in Congo for a while, the Belgium Congo and they went back to Brussels and she has a liquor and cigarette store and he was a director of the bank. _____.

Q: So you stayed with them for?

A: We never stayed with them because . . .

Q: Oh, you didn't stay with them?

A: No, they lived, you see, _____, which was _____, but, and we were very happy when the British came and bombed and one day they bombed and they bombed the house and she died from the bombs. And he was in the yard with the binoculars, nothing happened to him.

Q: So the Belays(ph) took you to the Boeskays(ph), is that how it was?

A: Yeah.

Q: And the Belays(ph) bought you the steak dinner?

A: Yeah, and they took off the stars and said if they catch you on the bus, okay, bad luck, you would have to go anyway and I don't know you, you don't know me, okay?

Q: And then you ended up at the Boeskays(ph)?

A: Yeah.

Q: And this would have been in 1940 maybe?

A: No, still in 19, no, no. No, no, it was '42, because that . . .

Q: Let's look at this, I think there's a date on there.

A: Yeah, I told you it's was 1942.

Q: Where is it? I think maybe it's on the other side, the date.

A: No, it must be, oh yeah here, yeah, I told you, I thought that it was August the second, it was August the first, 1942.

Q: Uh-huh. Now, so this original synopsis that I have of this conversation, that's incorrect, because it says 1940.

A: No, because I didn't have this paper in Brussels with me, but now I saw, if you come and get everything together, yeah, yeah see.

Q: 1942, so between, you lived in Marneff(ph) before you went to France, walked to France, or after?

A: We walked from Marneff(ph) _____.

Q: You walked from Marneff(ph) towards Paris?

A: Everybody in that camp, we walked, yeah, yeah.

Q: Right, and then you turned around, and then, but then you would have come back in 1939 or 1940.

A: Yeah.

Q: So, it was two years that you were living in Brussels?

A: Yeah, we were quite free because the Germans invaded Brussels in May '40.

Q: So between May '40 and August '42, weren't you living in fear?

A: Yes, well you know.

Q: But you didn't have to hide?

A: No, we didn't have to hide, but we had to wear the star, you know.

Q: Because I, you know, just from all of these things that I've read, about the scrubbing squads, where the Jews had to scrub the streets.

A: Oh, that was in Vienna.

Q: That was in Vienna, okay, well I'm sorry, I was, now I'm _____.

A: And that, yeah, I forgot, no I forgot to tell you something.

Q: We need to go back and talk a little bit about that as well.

A: Yeah, okay, yeah.

Q: Let me . . .

A: Yeah, everybody had to scrub the streets and they took me and my husband at the time, he had the Polish citizenship and then we didn't have to scrub because we were Polish citizens, and my husband drove a car near the, it's an _____ and that's the Polish flag, so nothing happened to him. But then he had a customer and he went in that store and the Germans came and said we need some Jews for the camp, in the store. My husband was with the back to them, and he said, Jack, why don't you go in my office and they were protecting him, he was very lucky.

Q: So, I also wanted to ask you about, in Vienna, before the _____, there was the Anschluss.

A: Oh, the Anschluss was . . .

Q: What's your recollection of that?

A: There was, on March '38, and it was from '38, from March until, well it was terrible, I told you on the benches, no Jews allowed and the women _____ the stores and it was very, very bad. People had to wash the streets and they stood around laughing.

Q: Now you describe growing up as a child not being exposed to anti-Semitism. Were you aware that it existed in the world, that some people didn't like Jews?

A: There was a mayor once, long, long ago, I don't know, not in my time, he was with the government and he said, who's a Jew? I'm going to say who's a Jew. It was only in politics, not the people. But then Austria lost the war and there were a lot of unemployed people, so where ever there, the Socialists, saw that it's going to be better, so they were Socialists, and they set the Parliament on fire once, long before Hitler and then they said, okay when we have Hitler, we'll be happy, we'll live happy ever after because they were poor, they had no jobs and the women of course, the Viennese are terrible. Very, very bad.

Q: But do you think that suddenly, these feelings they had inside them of not liking Jews were suddenly let loose?

A: Yeah, because when Hitler came to Vienna, there was a shortage of onions, they said sure, the Jews like onions, the Jews ate the onions, that's why we didn't have onions. Women you know have nothing to do with politics.

Q: Now, but as, you were still, you were not a child any more when this happened.

A: No, I was 28. When we left I was married for four years.

Q: At the same time you were young enough to probably, if you had, if you had believed that people were fair minded, this whole arrival of Anschluss and then of course, the _____, it must have been a shock to you.

A: Of course it was a terrible shock, but we're, Hitler came the first night and I wanted to leave right away, but my mother still had a job and my husband had a job and my brother was in the first World War, he was a captain in the Austrian army and he got _____ medal. Nothing is going to happen to me, he said, I was in the war. You can't imagine, you don't believe it. Look, in Germany, it never happened like this, because why didn't Jewish people come from Germany in '32, when Hitler came in '32 and they were right next door and look. We _____, we just didn't believe that it could happen to us.

Q: When you left, did you think that you were leaving for good, or did you have a dream to come back?

A: You know, at this moment, I don't know, you don't think, you couldn't think, otherwise you would get crazy. I don't know. You can't. If you would think, you would just get crazy.

Q: So that the way to survive is to just put one foot in front of the other?

A: Yeah, we were just thinking where to go and how to go. So we had no other possibility, so we went illegally to Belgium and we were lucky they didn't send us back.

Q: And you didn't talk about, what's happening to us, why are they doing to us, or did you?

A: I don't know. It was terrible, of course. And after the _____, and yeah, and then we went to Belgium, and we could have let my mother come to Belgium because we had that man who really was nice to us, the person, man who went to school with my husband's father. And at the frontier, we could have gone in Belgium to the frontier and really, and my mother said nothing is

going to happen to me, I'm old, I have a pension. You don't believe it. You couldn't believe it, you wouldn't believe it. It was terrible. And on the way back you know, from France, we saw things spread all over, the people could take as much as they could carry, and cameras, you name it, everything in the world, terrible. Beautiful things, nobody picked it up because. I had a gold bracelet, was nothing to it, but we always had cigarettes to smoke on the _____. Which is the reason why I have had an operation on my veins because it didn't get in on the lungs, but in my veins.

Q: The idea of hiding . . .

A: Yeah?

Q: You know, on the one hand you have people who are risking their lives.

A: Yeah, I ask them . . .

Q: And on the other hand, there's just this terrible injustice that you have to hide, so that it must be like this . . .

A: Injustice.

Q: Well, I don't even know . . .

A: It's an injustice they came on the _____ too and took everything.

Q: Of course, I'm just, I wanted to just ask you a little bit, I guess two things, two things. Do you recall how you felt during those days when you were hiding?

A: We never knew when the bell rang whether it was the Gestapo or the milkman and you had not too much to eat, so. One man was very stingy, was _____, do you have that too? He was a mining engineer and they had the key to the freezer house where the meat was, the Germans, so one day they went in to _____ and they stole pigs, two pigs. Do you have that? Did I tell that that lady too? So everybody got ham and we ate pig for two weeks, the main _____ got and everybody, the whole street and we were hidden across from a German, you know where the Germans lived and one day the whole street was closed and I think some high officer came from Germany, and they said it was the best to be hidden across from where the Germans lived, because they didn't suspect that there were Jews there. It was at _____.

Q: You were right across from the Germans?

A: Yeah, yeah. It was very, very bad. And look, you _____, any day they come and get you, you live with the fact that that's what it is.

Q: And at the same time, if this went on for a couple of years, you must have developed into some kind of routine.

A: No, you never do, I don't think we did. No, we were just, you know, shit happens, it happens.

Q: Were you always scared all the time?

A: No. You don't . . .

Q: Did you get bored sometimes?

A: Bored, no.

Q: Not bored either.

A: No, no. They were really, really nice to us, the people who were hiding us and maybe it wasn't so much the love of the Jews, but the hate against the Germans because they had them in the first World War too, the Germans and I think they were much worse to the whole population then, terrible.

Q: Do you think that there may have also been some, was there something about, you know, just reaching out to another human being that was in their motivation?

A: No.

Q: What else do you think motivated them to help these different families, to help you?

A: Well, they were good people. When they said, we're going to hide you, I said, you hardly know us and we _____ because we just bought cigarettes there. So I said, what if they send you to jail? But they hated them so much, and it was an English spy, and we took the messages from the BBC, the _____ means, the route is, how do you call it?

Q: Long and winding?

A: Winding, yeah.

Q: The route is long and winding, what did that mean?

A: The next day they bombed in Germany. I don't know what it meant.

Q: But there was a message over the . . .

A: There was a message over the radio and the next day they were bombing a factory over there in Germany, so, important things. You just live from one day to the other and if it happens, it happens.

Q: Were you ever surprised by the courage or the commitment of the people who housed you?

A: Yeah, I just told you, I told them right away, why do you hide us, they're going to put you in jail or they kill you, oh no, no. Their hate was so big against the Germans that they would do anything, anything to, oh yeah, on the street, between '39 and '40, they're all sent in the wrong directions, the Germans, so one German said to the other in German, be careful, they send us the wrong way. We understood, you know, we understood German. And that George Millot(ph), he went with two bums on the public transportation, the tramway(ph). They, right next to a German. There was such hate for the Germans that they, terrible, they burned holes in their uniforms with cigarettes.

Q: So they were, in a sense, a part of the Belgian resistance. Was there much contact, or was it . . .

A: Not only Belgian, _____ in France and in Belgium.

Q: And how much did they have a connection with the committee for the defense of the Jews? Was that related at all, I mean, I've been reading a little bit about the CDJ, you know, the _____.

A: Yeah, well that's it, we had, they knew there were Jews and they knew all the names and that's, because this, delivered through the Jews community.

Q: So the CDJ was basically the connection between, that's how you got to be with these people, through the CDJ?

A: But see, yeah, in Vienna, I think in Germany too, it's a law that all the Jews have to register in the Jewish community and that they took over in Belgium too, because look, so this day, delivered through the Jewish Committee. I told you the native Jews in Brussels, nobody knew they were Jewish and then in our passport, they had a J, Jewish, if you had a passport.

Q: Now when you were staying, the place that you stayed, the last place you stayed was at the . . .

A: Madame Boeskay(ph) again, we went back.

Q: Boeskay(ph), okay.

A: We were sitting in the kitchen and Paris is free, oh my God, that was beautiful.

Q: And was Monsieur Boeskay(ph) killed for . . .

A: No, he wasn't killed, not Monsieur Boeskay(ph), no.

Q: Oh, then I was thinking of somebody else.

A: No, Millot(ph) was killed and his son came back from the concentration camp.

Q: Okay.

A: And yeah, Bernard Hubec(ph) for awhile, had to hide himself and he went in a little village near, yeah he put a gun near the river and made them _____, and that he killed himself, that he went in the river, okay.

Q: He pretended, he faked it?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: This is Bernard Hubec(ph)?

A: Yeah, Bernard Hubec(ph). But he was hidden himself because he belonged, he was a spy, so his wife went to visit him every week there and after the war he had a hard time to get a life again, because he was dead for the community, for the you know, do you have that too, maybe?

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: Yeah. So he had hard time to get to make himself a life again, which makes sense, because in the paper it says he killed himself and they found, they really believed it, even the Belgian people believed it. They found the gun and he was hiding.

Q: Do you remember the story, you would have been in hiding then, in 1943, of train number 20? The train from Mecklin(ph) to Auschwitz, that was derailed, I don't know if it was derailed but there was a story of the Belgian resistance, it was a train going to the death camps that was stopped.

A: No.

Q: I'm just . . .

A: I didn't tell it.

Q: No, no, you didn't tell it, I was just wondering if you, that was one of the stories of some of the . . .

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A: I know another story, I know, they all knew that, from Mecklin(ph), they all went to Auschwitz, they knew it, that they went to their deaths, they all knew it and there was a couple, a girl and a young man and they both jumped from the train and thought if we die, we die and they got married. That's how they met each other, on that train, sure.

Q: Both jumping off?

A: Yeah.

Q: Were you aware of, how aware were you, I guess, of what was going on outside while you were .

..

A: Oh no, there was a condition, one condition that they would hide us, nobody, but nobody knew we were hidden and I could write to my brother who lived in a, not too far away from Brussels, with his non-Jewish wife and he did not, he got the mail but he didn't know where we were, because he could, you know, _____, nobody knew we were hidden there. I told you how relatives didn't know that they had somebody.

End of Tape 1

Tape 2

A: . . . never went to anyone.

Q: But, were you aware of what was going on outside?

A: Yes of course, oh yes.

Q: Through the BBC?

A: No, through, they were, the whole family was _____, there was a woman, she was related and she went with the children's transport, going to France to save the Jewish transport, we knew that. And then she called and said, you better don't go out, they have a bad cold, but she meant _____ on the street they took the people, and I was working with a girl, she was Jewish, but she was blonde, blue-eyed, they came to her apartment, the Gestapo, they wanted to take her and she said, oh my God, what do you want of me, I'm not Jewish and they left. That's something to do, you know. You have to be, you had to be brave and you had, you know, just live, that's it.

Q: Because at the time, I mean people were like 10 or 12 people a day were being taken off the street at this time, right, it must have been incredibly terrifying.

A: I know, and there was an officer and they said he went, it was a man and he said, there's a Jew, there's a Jew and they took him in the Jeep or whatever it was, you never saw that man or woman again, and I think I saw them once. Looked at me, they looked back at _____. Or I was really like dressed long and no make-up and they didn't think I was Jewish. Just that had to have luck and you just lived in the day and what's tomorrow and it's just, I guess if somebody has cancer, that's how it must feel.

Q: And while you were in hiding, you obviously couldn't have any contact with your family.

A: No, I just told you, there was one condition.

Q: I know. And I'm just wondering, because of that, were you wondering about your family in Vienna all the time?

A: Of course. My mother didn't want to go, I told you she had a pension and I'm old, nothing is going to happen. You couldn't believe it, just couldn't believe it, that's it. And then, yeah, she's in

that book and my mother-in-law is in that book and my sister. And one sister survived, she was in _____ during the war I think. She came to America, but she died in 1974 I think.

Q: Are you able to talk about your mother and your sister.

A: Yeah, well, maybe sad to talk.

Q: What happened?

A: Yeah, after the war we wrote to the Red Cross to inquire about my mother and my sister, when _____ and the Red Cross told us they went to _____ for two years and then they took them further away and sorry, we have no, we have a list of the survivors and my mother and my sister's not on it. It says in this book.

Q: _____ is?

A: _____ was one of the same, beautiful camp, because the Germans they knew from, in America, that the Germans were very bad and they gassed the people, so they showed, they took the Germans to _____ to show them what a beautiful camp it was, and it seemed everything was nice there, but they didn't stay forever, they took them, it says in that book, to Auschwitz.

Q: They took them from _____ to Auschwitz?

A: Yeah, and there was some poets in _____ and music and you know, always if the Red Cross made an inspection, everything was just fine, but I'm sure the Germans knew what was going on, because they lived around there. They must have known. And then so many people denied that it ever happened, you know that.

Q: Still they are today.

A: Now, sure, of course. _____, I'm afraid.

Q: You think so?

A: Yeah.

Q: Why do you say that?

A: They have the skinheads and the yeah. Look, we never dreamed in Austria that it would happen to us and we were, I don't know, 40 miles from Germany. Were we stupid or what? I don't know.

And it happened. No, really, I wanted to leave right away when I saw them, I loved Vienna, I was born there, my mother was born there, but I, I just knew.

Q: How do you think of Vienna now?

A: It's a beautiful city, we went back. No, there was a time, I was dreaming I had to go back to Vienna and I woke up crying, and never, I could never be, no, I still wouldn't live in Vienna now. No but, I mean then, I wouldn't go back, not for a second. And one day we were in Zurich in Switzerland, from America, you know, just traveling, and I said, listen, let's just go there, out of our minds if we came for one week and just go there as a tourist, and that's the first time we went back to Vienna.

Q: This was in '86, did you say?

A: No, no, '86, no.

Q: Oh, that was the last time I guess you were back you said.

A: Yeah.

Q: I'm sorry, when was this?

A: Oh, that was much earlier, I don't know when. '72? I don't know.

Q: So it was quite a while, you were gone for 30 years.

A: Yeah. And then we went in a group, in fact it was a Jewish group, it was the B'Nai B'rith, maybe you heard about it, and the group was through the B'Nai B'rith, they were all Jewish of course, these people were, mostly Americans, and when I saw young people, young people from Vienna, it didn't bother me, because they weren't alive when Hitler was, they were born after the war, but when I saw some people my age, it was, and then, you know, they're always, Viennese are, were always famous for complaining. And then we went another time to Vienna, and we're standing waiting for bus, and they said, you're terrible now, there are no Jews to complain about, but there were some people from all over, from Czechoslovakia, like now in America from, they come from Mexico, illegal. Yeah, they're bad, and oh, you know, _____ my age, they are fat, they look terrible and they are mean. We were sitting in the street car, there was a young man, he was Viennese, he was Christian, I don't know what he was, there was a woman, I just sit there, like in a movie. Terrible, terrible,

terrible. Oh, we have some friends, they're not Jewish, he was a professor in Vienna, the University, he came to America to teach at Harvard and oh he left, he made fun of the Viennese, he said, if you want to be a full professor in Vienna, you have to wait until that one dies, so he went back to his friends, the University in 19- I don't know when, he made \$75,000, which was much a lot then. They wouldn't believe him, you know. No, I will never live, ever never live in Europe again, ever. It's beautiful, but.

Q: Too many bad memories?

A: No, bad memories of course, but there's only one, oh and my son is real, real, oh my God, they say there's only one country in the whole world, it's America, because you can be, and you do what you want in America, you can be what you want and you can move from state to state. If you went to Bosnia, had to have a passport in Europe, talk the different language. I went to Paris and don't go there if you don't speak the language, because you'll get gypped, really. Went to Paris and they wanted to buy music in box to take as souvenir to America, and ask, I was American, I talked English and she went in the, I said, how much is this, the woman said, went in the back room, how much is this for American in French, so she come back to _____ and no merci beaucoup _____ and _____ just said, thank you. Well in the big department store, you get so many percentage off and it's _____.

Q: I wanted to ask you one other question about just how you felt at the time, if I may. I know it's difficult.

A: I don't know how, honestly I don't know, I just lived from day to day, and what's tomorrow. They take, so they take me, so.

Q: I guess I wanted to ask that maybe this wasn't something you thought about at the time, and maybe you've thought about it since then, but the question I wanted to ask was, and this is a difficult question to ask, so please . . .

A: So, go ahead.

Q: But, did you ever think about why me, to have the fortune to survive?

A: No, I was very grateful and I always, of course we were glad to be here, just lucky. Very lucky, really. But you, there is not such a thing as being afraid. I guess all these people in the concentration camp, even they weren't afraid, because they said, what will be, will be and really, it's all I can say.

Q: Did you stay in contact with the Boeskays(ph), or?

A: Oh yeah, sure. Madame Boeskay(ph) died and he died of, he had a lot to do with his stomach, he died of cancer and then. Yeah, one granddaughter came to America and met my son in New York and she got the job in Texas. Well, they all speak English of course, very good, very fluently English, everybody in Europe does. If they say they don't it's not true, because, well I learned French in school, I was the best in the class and when I came to Belgium I wanted to buy a candle, so I didn't know French then, so I looked in the dictionary and there were two words for candle, _____ de _____, and I said the wrong thing, _____ is for the church, and the grocery store, they didn't know what a _____ was, so he didn't know, so I drew him some matches, I drew him the candle, so he said, what you want, matches, you know. Oh, you know then, oh, on the way back to Brussels from France, we stayed in the country and there was a stupid man, how do you say that, stupid man, he was, everybody was gone, only he was there, in the _____ house, so my husband took over, he milked the cow, and he was grinding things, corn to make bread and so there were two Englishmen coming back and so they took over, they had just on the coffee mill, they drowned. And then the German soldiers came and they said we want eggs, in German, we didn't understand, we said we didn't understand German, what? So they said to the other one, she knows what we're saying, she doesn't want to give us any, you know, you always had to enjoy whatever we had and the next day, it's the next day, that's it and somehow you get the strength, if not, you really get crazy. I guess you have to be strong a little bit, I don't know. And I was always together with my husband and whatever.

Q: Boy that must have made a tremendous difference for both of you.

A: Yeah.

Q: To be going through this together, huh?

A: Oh, they finally got the affidavit to come to America, we were supposed to go with the Il de France, and that was in strike, so we had to fly. Now we flew in January, in 1950, and there was only a propeller, no jet, and there was a snowstorm in New York and we couldn't land in New York, so we had to land in Washington, DC., so the ticket counter, there was a line of us standing in line to get a ticket back from Washington DC. to New York, where our relatives waited. Everybody looked at me, they were all black people then, in 1950 still. I was the only white, I didn't realize, why does the people look at me? And then on the train, we took the train back, that's when we made our first \$76, I remember. He said, how do you want to go, we pay your freight, do you want a sleeper, or do you want a regular seat _____ Washington DC. to New York, so I said, no regular, so we got \$76 back. So we got the airport, no, Grand Central Station, because there was a train, so my husband called his cousin who gave us the affidavit. He said, yeah, I'll be there in an hour, he lived in Brighton Beach, so my husband said to him, takes you so long? That's where I live, that's what it takes, an hour. Oh, my God.

Q: And after living in, did you stay in Belgium then, from '45 to '50?

A: Yeah, yeah, I told you I was in the officer's shop and my husband was at _____.

Q: For all of those five years?

A: Yeah.

Q: Uh-huh, and was it a shock to live in America then, after that, I mean Brighton Beach from Europe is quite a change there.

A: No, oh, no, oh no, my God, you know where we lived? On the lower east side in New York.

Q: Oh, whereabouts _____?

A: 30 Cannon Street, we went back one day and it doesn't exist any more, that street. Off Delancy Street, you know where that is?

Q: Right by Orchard Street and ____?

A: Yeah right, yeah.

Q: Sure, I know that area.

A: Oh, it was dirty, and Henry, Henry was never sick, I washed his hands with cologne, and I'm the one that touched him when he was little and I said oh it's _____, it's dirty and he got his first German measles, he was never sick. But, and I said, oh I get out of here someday, I won't stay here forever.

Q: How long were you there?

A: Three months.

Q: Oh, just, but so you didn't ever live at Brighton Beach, you just stayed there?

A: No, my husband's cousin, no Brighton Beach is very nice, it's on the ocean.

Q: So you stayed there for a little while, but then you immediately went to the lower east side?

A: Yeah, well that was, my husband's cousin, he gave us, he took us to that apartment on the lower east side and we lived there with an old aunt of his and then she went to Texas and, no I wasn't unhappy, really I said I'm not going to stay here all my life, I'm quite sure. And we lived at my cousin's on Riverside Drive, we had a beautiful apartment.

Q: I see.

A: So where did you live in New York?

Q: Well, I'll answer in just a second, but I want to ask you, before, I'll tell you, I live in East Village most of the time.

A: Oh, it's very nice.

Q: But, and I'll tell you more in a minute, but I wanted to ask you, is there anything, we've talked about so many different periods in your life and so many different times, some very traumatic, others, like moving to the United States, not so much, but is there anything that you think that you'd like to share for the museum and just for people to listen to, about your life and your thoughts?

A: I told you everything about my life. I got married in 1934, in Vienna and I was very happy and I was very happy.

Q: Okay.

A: Give me some questions.

Q: No, no, that's all, I just wanted to know if there was anything else.

A: No, I was.

Q: I want to thank you, but I'm going to turn off the recorder now, so I want to thank you Mrs. Scheuer, very much.

A: I hope it helped, I don't know, maybe.

Q: Yes it did, very much, thank you.

A: You know, I was [pause] I mean and you hear . . .

Q: Can you say that again?

A: . . . much worse, you hear so many worse stories and we were really lucky. Maybe took a little courage, I don't know. If you want to survive, you have to, I guess, they came and played bridge with us. I know, when we got the invitation, you know we had food stamps, so we got the invitation, we didn't really know that they would save us, so what we did, we rented the little house, spent all our stamps, made a big party, said it's over, so might as well spend all the food stamps and then we could have used them when we were hidden. The military, they came and played bridge with us and they brought us English cigarettes and the English cigarettes were parachuted in France. We got them in Belgium. We had everything. They were spies for England and for Belgium. And something else we did, we lived at Klansdorf(ph), do you have that name too? He was a mining engineer, the one who stole the pig. We went on the fourth floor, there was an alert, and the British came at night, and the _____ came during the day, and we were so happy, because they _____ us too. We were standing on the fourth floor _____, the bomb. We didn't go in the cellar. I don't know, you really change if you have to. One time, they bombed, and it was my friend's house. Mrs. Dellay(ph), she was dead. And he got married five months after she died. They came from the Congo and she wasn't used to do any work, you know they had servants there, the blacks and give them a pair of shoes and they hung it around their shoulders. She played tennis and she had servants, and just when they came back to Belgium, that's how she got the store, it's give her something to do, she had the cigarette and liquor store, that's how we met. Yeah, it was very bad. I think the story was too nice, you know, because you hear much, much worse. We were very lucky. So, tell me, can I ever hear what I said?

Conclusion of Interview.