

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Sibylle Sarah Niemoeller
December 1, 2004
RG-50.030*0490

PREFACE

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SIBYLLE SARAH NIEMOELLER

December 1, 2004

Beginning Tape One

Question: Good morning, Sibylle.

Answer: Good morning.

Q: It's so nice to see you. What was your name when you were born?

A: My name was Sybilla Augusta Sophia von Sell. Augusta after my mother, and Sophia after my aunt, it's -- it's a family name, and Sybilla after the princess of Coburg and Gotha who later became queen -- crown princess of Sweden, and is Gustav's mother -- was Gustav's mother.

Q: And your name now?

A: My name now, I dropped -- I -- I didn't quite drop Augusta, I still use it as an initial. My name now is Sibylle Sarah Niemoeller. It's my Jewish name, and I -- I picked it myself.

Q: And you keep von Sell as your --

A: Yes, as a --

Q: -- as a family -- as the family name.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: And it's Sybilla, it's not Sibyl --

A: Yes, but you know, it's Sibylle, really, I be -- in this country, I prefer to be called Sibylle.

Q: Sibylle.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. And when were you born?

A: On the 10th of April.

Q: And the year?

A: 1923.

Q: 1923, okay. Somehow I thought it was 1924.

A: No.

Q: But no, it's 1923.

A: No.

Q: And where were you born?

A: I was born Potsdam.

Q: And did you --

A: The cradle of Prussian military.

Q: Yes? And how long did you stay there?

A: Until I was two and a half years old, that's when my family moved to -- my father had a new position, and we moved to Berlin, but not to Berlin Dahlem yet, but we stayed in -- in another half suburb of Berlin, which was known for being nice, and quiet, and cheap.

Q: Uh-huh. So tell me -- I would like to get a sense of your family. Tell me about your mother first, and then we'll go to your father, and the --

A: Yes, of course.

Q: -- and what the home life was like.

A: Oh, by the way, since you asked my -- my names, I was not -- the authorities have to come to my parents after my birth to tell them what my name was going to be. They had not counted on a girl. I was to be -- I was to be a boy because my father had lost his three brothers --

Q: Right.

A: -- in the first World War, which was such a tragedy. And here comes a girl, so not everybody was terribly amused. My mother -- I was my mother's second child, because she had been married before, she wa -- married at age 19, a Baron von Hornstein, who not only had a Jewish grandmother, but was the rightful heir to the name -- I'm sorry, he was the child -- he was the great, great grandchild of Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton. That's the one thing I en -- I always envied my sister who -- my stepsister -- half sister, who is 10 years older than I am, always envied her for it.

Q: So your mother married into that family?

A: My mother married into that family, that was a zo -- the -- they are -- that was old nobility around Lake Constance, and very Catholic, so she had to agree that in case my half sister was born as a boy that he had to be brought up Catholic, which is, I think, a very brutal decision to split a family that way. Well but so he was bor -- he was baptized in the Protestant faith, and then my mother lost her husband during the first few weeks of the first World War, and became very ill with tuberculosis, which meant she -- thanks to the help of the friend of the family, the victor - - Queen Victoria's great grand-nephew, the count of Coburg and Gotha -- not count, I'm sorry, the duke of Coburg and Gotha saw to it that she was put in a -- in a -- a sanitorium, and she survived very well. She died at 93. My mother's family is by far -- is lo -- a lot older than my father's family. My father's family, of which I'll talk later, they were really newcomers to nobility, meaning they were mor -- they were nobilized in 1657, while my mother's family goes back to -- to Charlemagne, documented.

Q: Really?

A: Yes. And they were partially -- they we -- they came from the east, how much Slavic influence there was, we can only guess. A lot, I would say.

Q: Why?

A: Well, I -- sometimes, you know, the Vens, that Slavic tribe that ruled Germany between the river Rhine and the -- and the -- or not -- not the Rhine, the Elba, and the Oda, they ruled in Germany, a wild tribe, for three to 400 years. So everybody has Vendish, Solbic, Serbic blood in them. And my mother was born -- my mother's father was a Prussian general, and he had been one of -- his name was von Brauchitsch, Brokovitce, you know, God knows what it was originally. And my -- my grandfather was a Prussian general, as was my father's father. And he was one of 23 children.

Q: 23?

A: Yes, his father had married several times, and there were your children, my children, our children. And there are funny legends going around about that family like a -- a Brauchitsch officer stopped the little guy on -- in -- in a military school, asked for his name and then found out they were brothers. How many of them are true, I never -- I call them legends. So they were -- they didn't have much money of course, and my -- my --

Q: So being nobility didn't mean that you had money?

A: Oh, absolutely not --

Q: So you had privilege?

A: -- I mean, that's how the Crusades once started.

Q: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

A: Get the second and third son, get them out of the way, give them something to do. And no -- and the -- the -- my oldest uncle, my mother's oldest brother, he inherited this fabulous castle, the Rimburg, which is on the border from Germany to Holland, to the Netherlands, and the n -- Holland claimed it after this last war, and my uncle was very happy about it, but then the

Germans got it back. And my mother had -- there were six or seven children. Uncle Siegfried was the oldest, and my grandmother was 18 years old, and she had the baby, as was done in those days, at home, but thank goodness with the help of a -- of a doctor. And he wa -- wa -- held the baby and declared him dead, and put him on a chair, and after awhile that dead child began to howl and yell, and he -- he lived. And the -- the doctor told my -- my grandfather that that was to be the first and only child. Oh, the -- she had a Caesarian, which in those days, can you imagine? And after the Caesarian she had right away one more child after the other, seven altogether.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. And died completely exhausted and spent at age 49.

Q: So this was your mother's mother?

A: That's my mother's mother. I never met her, of course.

Q: Right. Now was your mother educated?

A: No. Girls in those --

Q: Girls were not educated.

A: -- days, girls in those days were pitifully off. Really, she went to a -- she went to a girl's school, I suppose, in wherever they lived. Oh my -- my grandfather had been the commander of Colmar, Alsatian Colmar, which then was German, which as a consequen -- which had a cra -- had a confer -- consequence. About 20 years after this past war, let's say in 1965 or so, the French government offered French citizenship to my mother.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, which was very nice, but my mother said, no, I'm 80 years old, you know, I might as well stay who I am and where I am.

Q: Right.

A: But she felt very much like li -- very Alsatian and spoke French with a strong Alsatian accent, which is funny. And from there he went to another military g-garrison in Silesia and finally to Potsdam and in Potsdam it was time for the girls. After school my mother had -- had finishing school, one year in a finishing school in Geneva.

Q: So this was a finishing school in order to be it -- to come out --

A: Presentable, right.

Q: -- and -- oh, uh-huh.

A: I mean, her knowledge of things, be it mathematics, or -- or history, forget about it. She was -- and that -- that led to her debut before -- before the emperor, and that was mandatory. Otherwise, you -- she would never catch a husband. And so, you know, th -- how they managed, with their meager income, it was at that time meager because my -- my grandfather had to retire at age 55 because during a hunt, a hunter has mistaken his head for a hare, and put a load of what do you -- what do you call the BB gun --

Q: Buckshot? Oh.

A: -- BB in there, which he was not mortally wounded, but to get all the little pieces out of his scalp was impossible, so he could never wear a steel helmet again. A general without a helmet? Unthinkable. So he had to retire and live off a meager pension. They had just barely enough to eat and so did the ba -- the servants, you know, the life without food was thinkable, but not without servants. And then the -- my mother was taken to that wonderful ba -- ball of the year, and was pres -- officially presented to the majesties, and then other balls -- dances, followed, during which she met her first husband. Erich Baron von Hornstein, and --

Q: And is that when she becomes a baroness?

A: No, no, no, she had been a baroness.

Q: Okay, she's a baroness anyway?

A: I -- only -- only -- only noble -- no -- people of nobility were invited there, others did not exist.

Q: Exist, right.

A: Of course the -- the -- there was the so-called briefadle, which was the -- many of those which the Kaiser bestowed upon a person with great merits. But those were people that were looked down upon, of course.

Q: Yeah, because they were not true nobility.

A: Right.

Q: Yeah.

A: And among my ancestors is not a single bourgeois, not a single one. I mean, as far as we can go back, you know?

Q: Right. It's all nobility [indecipherable]

A: All nobility because they didn't meet anybody else.

Q: Yeah. So how did your mother meet your father? Do you know?

A: Oh absolutely, my father and my mother -- of course, he was old nobility too [indecipherable]

Q: Yes.

A: And they --

Q: But not quite as old.

A: Not quite as old, but that was, you know --

Q: Didn't -- that didn't matter.

A: That didn't, no, no, you know. And they met socially in Potsdam. He was a very outstanding young officer. He had been put in military school with all his brothers at age eight, and that was

a brutal education for this very sensitive boy. And he knew one thing, never mind what his father wanted, or what his -- his -- the plans that he had made for him, he will not enter the military as a -- choose the military as a career. His aim was become a diplomat and at a very young age, he became the adjutant of the then Reichschancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg. And in that capacity he -- he -- for instance, he took -- he took the declaration of war to the Kaiser personally to be signed. And he had -- he was a very promising young man who had probably become a vi -- finance mis -- minister or something like that. And then the war ended.

Q: And we're talking World War I, of course.

A: World War I, of course. And my -- my brother and his -- my -- my father and his brothers went to war, and they all die -- they were all killed except my father, who had a terrible, terrible shrapnel wound right above the eye -- the ear, the left ear. And spent a year or so in military -- in military hospitals. Was operated on under brutal circumstances. And then he came home, and he found a mother who had, you know, who had been a proud woman with her beautiful four boys, and her -- her husband, a general for a husband. She was completely broken, of course, and ma -- and my grandfather, not as a consequence of that, but soon after the war, was hospitalized with what probably was Alzheimer, and he -- he lost his mind and he died be -- six months before I was born, to be his first grandchild. That was tragic. And my father's family, they were all military. And -- and his grandfather was not only a general too, of course, but he was the -- in the cabinet of the duke -- of the Duke of Meklinburg, which was one of the states in Germany before the unification in 1917. But th -- and he was highly regarded, but the -- the -- the duke forgot something very important which he did with other people, to give him an estate for -- you know, as a thank you. So he was -- he was receiving a pension and there was no money there. And --

Q: So if nobility are not necessarily wealthy, do nobility have privilege? Is there -- is there something that comes?

A: Well they -- first of all they think they are better than others, of course, yeah.

Q: Yes, that's a self privilege, yes.

A: And -- and it car -- came close to it -- close to serfdom in many provinces. Not as badly as in Russia, but -- and some of them were -- were very, very good to their people, and I guess I learned from my -- my father how to treat people below you, always with the greatest respect. Never let them feel you're in a bad mood, or that -- always say please and thank you and I still remember my father when our nanny, who was then a cook, when she approached a door with a full tray, he would jump up and open the door for her. And that was not --

Q: That was not typical?

A: No.

Q: Okay.

A: Well, probably not. Not in my mother's family, they weren't that nice.

Q: Uh-huh. Ho -- wh-what are your earliest memories as a kid?

A: Well, the birth of my brother, I was two and a half.

Q: You do remember?

A: I remember my br -- clearly my mo -- my brother, a yellow little something lying there, and I had not been prepared. You know, in those days you weren't, because I mean, dis -- pregnancy was something very indecent. And -- but I remember my disappointment tha -- when they told me the stork had already le -- had already left -- the stork who brought my brother had already left, but he left me, as a present, a huge bag of candy. And what came out first was a wolf-like red -- Little Red Riding Hood wolf made of chocolate.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, and that wa -- made it easier for me to accept my brother. And he is still alive.

Q: Yes.

A: And now I'm his younger sister, of course.

Q: Even though you were the older sister?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes. This is Everhard? Is -- what [indecipherable]

A: No, that's -- it's Freiderich Wilhelm.

Q: Freiderich, right.

A: Freiderich Everhard --

Q: Is the -- is --

A: -- was my mother's youngest brother.

Q: Y-Youngest brother, right.

A: Yes.

Q: And how do you remember your parents when you were so young? I mean di -- were you close --

A: Well, I remember my -- my mother as being almost aloof, very cool.

Q: Cruel?

A: Cool.

Q: Cool.

A: Very cool, and I never -- I cannot remember one single occasion where I sat on her lap. She couldn't -- she never received love at home, so she couldn't give love to her children, which was tragic. She had a horror of men because her father was -- had been after the daughters, which --

Q: Sexually.

A: Yes. And it must have come to a scene once where my mother overheard her mother behind a closed door yelling, "And if you do that once more, I'm going to divorce you." I mean, he never really touched them, you know, but it came pretty close.

Q: So how did you find out about this?

A: My mother told me.

Q: Later?

A: Yes, much later when I would understand.

Q: So she was afraid of her father?

A: She was afraid of her father and in consequence of -- of all men, including God. She was afraid of God. She could deal with Jesus Christ, but not with God himself.

Q: Did you ever see her be affectionate with your father?

A: I don't think once. Not even once. She was affectionate with my little brother.

Q: She was?

A: Yes, and of course that made it very hard for me --

Q: For you.

A: -- because I -- I was always told how homely I was. I had very little hair, the hair came late, and I was spindly little legs, you know, fresh. And I once overheard a terrible thing, which I -- at the time I couldn't really interpret. Behind a -- a paravol, I overheard, in somebody else's house, people talking and si -- once one lady said to, was it her husband, saying, "Unbelievable, that child and this beautiful mother? Those poor people." So that was me.

Q: So you grow up feeling unattractive?

A: Unattractive and that lasts for quite a long time, until I found out at age 18 that I had something that my mother didn't have. And that was called sex appeal.

Q: Right. Now how did your father make you feel since you were much closer to him, yes?

A: My f -- fa -- father, as soon as he was home I climbed on his lap and he kissed me and Sunday mornings, I'll -- I'll sit at the foot of his bed and for -- for -- for -- for hours he would tell me stories, and never wo -- I would have done -- have been in my mother's bed, unthinkable.

Q: Now, did they sleep in separate rooms?

A: Oh yes.

Q: This was -- this was what was done?

A: That was -- yeah, that was done in our circles. Most of them slept in different room, but with door open so my father can -- could come and help my father. My father suffered from the most terrible nightmares.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Not only as far as the past was concerned, but it always ended with a horribly -- with this hoarse voice he'd say, "They are coming for me, they are coming for me." "Sie holen mich, sie holen mich." Well, one day they came.

Q: And it was -- and do you think at that point he was thinking of the Nazis?

A: Oh yes.

Q: Yes.

A: Very definitely.

Q: So --

A: And I was very surprised when I -- to find out someday that other people's fathers didn't have these nightmares. They didn't yell out at night, he woke up the whole house. It happened at least once a week.

Q: It was that loud?

A: It was the past that --

Q: And would you run into his room?

A: No, no, I knew my mo --

Q: You wouldn't? So your mother --

A: But I would -- I would get up at times because I heard my mother trying to comfort him.

Q: I see.

A: And to wake him up and all that.

Q: Right.

A: But it was taken for granted.

Q: Do you -- a-as you look back, as a young person, not as a -- not when you were a teenager or older than that, did you think that they had a good marriage, or was this not what one thought about very much?

A: Yes, I thought it was. They never fought, they were very respectful to -- to one another, but there was no -- no tenderness --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- no -- no, it wasn't -- just somehow -- I -- I could compare because th -- I-I adopted a family in the neighborhood.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: I talked about --

Q: Ditte, your friend. Ditte -- or Ditte.

A: Ditte.

Q: Ditte.

A: She is still alive.

Q: Really?

A: And Ditte's mother was Jewish. Of course, in those days denying she was, she looked like -- you would s -- notice it right away. But they had a regular Jewish family life, wonderful. And they adopted me, and I really -- you know, from a certain age on, from age nine and 10 on, was never anything but politics discussed at the dinner table. The atmosphere was grave at home, if not black. And we grew up without supervision, too, you know my mother could -- we were sent out into the street, I was a regular little Berlin street girl, unusual for our circles, very unusual. And -- but home, my home was with the Nickel family, really. The Nickels.

Q: So when did you f -- when did that start?

A: That started -- we -- we entered -- we entered the lyceum, the high school together at age -- I was nine, Ditte was 10.

Q: So that's when that started?

A: That's when that started, yes.

Q: But now all through -- all through your childhood -- the Nazis don't take over until '33.

A: Yeah.

Q: But there's a lot of ferment in Germany --

A: But there was --

Q: -- and a lot of [indecipherable]

A: -- yeah, there wa -- the -- the -- he was co -- Hitler was coming.

Q: Right.

A: I remember a scene in a nearby street, the street on which Martin Niemoeller lived, and the -- and the -- the -- the St. Anne's church was on that. One Sunday the SR -- the SR was marching outside, singing, chanting, you know, howling one. And I looked -- I said to my father, "Who are they?" And my father s -- it must have been in '32. And my father said, "Well, that's a terrible gang, and -- and," -- and I said to him, "Why -- who allows them to do that?" "Well, th-that's their leader." And I said and what was going to happen, and he said, "Well he -- he wants to be the -- the head of the German government, and if he ever comes to power," -- I said, "What -- what will happen then?" And he said, "May God help us all." So I remember that, I've never forgotten. They did that in front of the church, to -- to disturb the services.

Q: In Dahlem?

A: In Dahlem. That already --

Q: Right. You moved there --

A: -- we had -- we had moved to Dahlem, yeah.

Q: -- a number of years before. So ag-again, a little bit pri -- prior to the '32 and '33, is it a very religious home that you grew up in?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No. There was prayer at lunch.

Q: And you all ate lunch together?

A: My mother --

Q: Father?

A: -- and my -- no, my father was -- worked an hour away.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: He was then in the same pos -- in the position with the Hohenzollerns, the keeper of the privy -- purse, you know, the -- under a ruling monarch that would have been finance minister. And he took care -- administered the -- one of the biggest fortunes not only in Germany, but in the world. After the Kaiser abdicated and f -- not went, but fled to Holland.

Q: Right.

A: The German government took everything from him. But somehow things went large -- long trains went to Holland, where he had sought and received asylum. He received all his -- his personal belongings and -- and also his many, many estates.

Q: Really?

A: They were all back to his name there.

Q: So your -- and your father is taking care of all this?

A: My father is -- not only administered the money, but made a lot of money for them. The Hohenzollern -- Hohenzollern family though, were imbeciles. Really. He did -- my father was not a monarchist. My father couldn't ta -- stand the Hohenzollerns, who took advantage of him whenever possible. But he loved this old, old, confused old man.

Q: Really?

A: Who had caused so much trouble in the world, but would never admit to it. Never one word. And who was easily influenced. When the Nazis came he had remarried. Remarried a princess, a widowed princess with four children, of -- two sons and two daughters, Princess of Schoenaich-Carolath, and who was 30 some years younger than he, and he fell in love, you know. His first wife, the Empress Auguste, who must have been an angel, she loved him. And she died literally of a broken heart after he went to Holland. And then he soon, within two years he was remarried

and lived in his golden cage, and my father had his own apartment there, of course, and went -- stayed with him, I would say, an average of a week a month.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And when him -- when my father left him, he had talked reason to him, you know, but he always knew, as soon as he turns his back, the old man would --

Q: Wish -- good -- would go back.

A: -- fall prey to any bad influence. Poor man.

Q: Yes.

A: He had a hard life, you know, growing up with wa -- only one arm, the other one crippled. For a Prussian, for a future emperor, he had hells on wheels.

Q: Hm. We have to stop the tape and change it.

End of Tape One

Beginning Tape Two

Q: When does Anna come into your life as a housekeeper? Or what is she, actually?

A: I -- I came into Anna's life, so to say. Anna -- when my -- my father and my mother got married, they got in touch with je -- with each other while my mother was in the sanitorium for her lung disease and my father was in a military hospital. Somehow a correspondence began.

Q: Really?

A: And one remembered the other, and they really fell in love over -- they must have -- over the letters, because they already got -- he got out of the military and they married in May of 1919. My sister was always -- half sister was six months -- six years old.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And then was the question what was he going to do with his life. He had -- he ra -- was a very good looking man, he had had his military -- military academy education, which I mean for those years were -- was a pretty good one. He was right away spotted as a very special -- very special man with a talent for finances. Well, they got married and even though they had hardly enough to eat, they had to have a servant who would cook. And --

Q: Your mother didn't go into the kitchen, of course.

A: Oh, would sh -- well, first of all they -- they asked around in Potsdam and Anna's name was given to them. She was -- Anna was born in -- in the 1980 -- 18 -- 1887, so she was already, you know, not very young for those days any more, and she was -- her -- her family, also noble, her family, von Massel -- I call them Shtraylo in my -- in my book, I believe. There were, due to the circumstances there was nothing to eat, it was dismal circumstances. They moved to one of their estates, they had an estate. So Anna could pick, you know, and she took one look at my mother and said this lady is not going to interfere with my housekeeping, you know. She was right. And

no children, thank goodness. So she accepted for -- for, I mean, peanuts for pay, the position. My mother -- my mother and father had been assigned an ap -- miserable apartment, which is still standing in Potsdam facing a coal supply firm, and it was all windows going to the north, and there were -- was a bit wet, and but you -- what could they do? And that's where I began my start in life. And when Anna heard that a baby was on the way, she seriously considered leaving. But then on the other hand, you know, maybe my mother had no interest -- as little interest in a child than she had for the household. She stayed, watched me being born and I was her baby. From the first day on, I grew up on Anna's arms, and all the tenderness that I didn't get from my mother, I got from Anna.

Q: So Anna became a kind of mother figure --

A: Absol --

Q: [indecipherable]

A: -- and still -- I still, when I think of motherhood and -- and of being on somebody's lap, there is Anna, holding me tight like a -- like a gorilla holding her young, Anna. She would not even share -- share her with my mother. This -- when my mother three years later, two and a half years later, gave birth to my brother, she decided she'd let her keep that baby.

Q: So in some ways, Anna kept you from your mother, at a certain point.

A: Well, though, she didn't have a hard time keeping --

Q: Keeping you, I see.

A: Yeah, yeah, of course.

Q: Explain to me what you mean by an apartment was assigned to your parents. Who assigned it?

A: It was assigned, there was a housing office --

Q: I see.

A: -- because of the terrible shortage, like there was during the war -- World War II, and after World War II --

Q: Right.

A: -- where you had a va -- you had a right to certain space and -- and that's what they had to take, whether they liked it -- it was either that apartment or none.

Q: Right. Now tell me something, Anna is nobility, but she's working as a housekeeper. Now, is this odd? Or is it --

A: Wait -- what -- what -- whose --

Q: Anna. Anna you said had an -- estates, her family. Or am I wrong?

A: Yeah, Anna came from the Vendish tribe.

Q: Right.

A: A Vendish tribe, and a very proud tribe, and the girls were all sent to work with -- to work in households.

Q: I see, I see.

A: They couldn't do anything else, th -- they had, according to German laws, which applied to them, learn German and -- and attend school until 14. But Anna would not have gone to a bourgeois family. First position she had at age 14 was with nobility and later my parents.

Q: And why is that, because the ven --

A: A beca --

Q: -- because of wu -- of the group that she comes from? The particul --

A: No, I don't -- she identified herself so much with our family that y -- or later too, very few non-nobility people came into our house, and they had to make up for their terrible lack by titles

like your Excellency, stuff like that. Or doctor, you know. But Anna knew th -- those were her circles, you know.

Q: Hm. When you start going to school --

A: Yeah.

Q: Well, let's --

A: Well --

Q: -- let's mo -- move up. When do you first go to school, when you're six?

A: When I was six, I went -- of course, we were much too sn-snoobish a -- to -- snob is not a ver -- g -- good word, by the way, a -- but mainly thanks to Anna, her child would not attend a public school. So we -- th -- my parents joined other parents and they founded a school in the neighborhood, it took place in one room, and there were -- for the first three years of my life there was one teacher who had been retired, he came out of retirement. He taught us all, we were about 12 children. That was neat, that was neat. And then we -- even though I was so small and - - and I was sick very often, my parents insisted on me entering the so-called high school, the higher school, not at age 10, but at age nine. Which of course, as a consequence, I -- I was left behind when I was 13.

Q: In order to join up with the other kids, or because you weren't --

A: Because I was not --

Q: You weren't ready.

A: -- not mature enough.

Q: Right.

A: And th -- that -- that school was just around the corner from us in Dahlem, we had moved to Dahlem, renting a beautiful house on the same street where we would later in 1932 and '33, would build our own townhouse.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Yeah.

Q: But you also said that that became a neighborhood where a lot of Nazis --

A: It was a n --

Q: -- lived, or least some.

A: -- a neighborhood where a lot of non-Nazis lived, but among the populati -- and film stars, movie stars lived there. But a lot of the highest Nazis -- Himmler had his house around the corner, the Minister of Economy, the Minister of Education, Woost, economy was Starrer. Goebbels was out in Wannsee. Oh yes, a lot of it was -- you know, all these beautiful villas where Jews had lived, that Jews had -- had built, had worked for, when they were expelled, before being dis -- deported and killed, those villas were taken by the Nazis and high military people. You know, I had one Brauchitsch, General Field Marshall -- Field Marshall Walter von Brauchitsch, a cousin of my mother's, who was Chief of Staff of the German armed forces, of the German army. And he lived in one of these big villas, and was -- he had been a member of the Nazi party, with the golden bird. And even though he lived, walking, maybe seven minutes away, I not ever in my life set eyes on him. My father would not allow anyone even faintly resembling -- faintly connected with the Nazis, he would not allow it, but my mother was -- was my mother's brother in a -- in -- a young o -- an older brother, of course, he joined the SR and the party. And you -- he didn't -- didn't come to the house after that.

Q: Did your mother keep connections with the people who had connections with the Nazis, or were -- did she join with her father --

A: No, no, no, she joined --

Q: -- or was it -- with her husband?

A: -- absolute -- absolutely, yes.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And on the other hand there was the other brother of my mother, who married a Jewish lady from --

Q: Right.

A: -- from Russia, originally.

Q: Now, when you first moved to Dahlem -- I don't mean when you were two and a half, when you [indecipherable] you wouldn't --

A: No, to -- to -- to Dahlem, I moved at age six.

Q: At age six?

A: Yes. To -- from Potsdam to Berlin --

Q: Ah, at age two and a half.

A: -- at age two and a half.

Q: Right, okay. So when you were six.

A: When I was six we moved. That makes it 1929. We moved t -- to Dahlem, had that rented house.

Q: Now, do you remember having Jewish friends as well as non-Jewish friends?

A: Oh yes.

Q: The neighborhood is quite mixed, then?

A: Th-The school was -- yeah, my class was -- was -- was full of Jewish girls, and one by one they disappeared. But except for my dear, dear, dear friend Anita Frank, who was -- they were -- she and her brother were already orphaned at the time, she died in Bergen-Belsen. Reinhardt made it out of -- of Auschwitz, they all reached safety.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. For a very simple fact. Not only were the parents well informed, but they had a lot of money.

Q: Money.

A: Yeah.

Q: And they could get out.

A: Right.

Q: So they got out early.

A: That's why I never, except for once in Berlin during the day I saw an open truck loading Jews from house -- from a Jew house. Otherwise these sights were not -- you know, I was not familiar with that sight, because even if they had come for them, you know, with the wide spaces in between the houses, nobody would have known.

Q: Did your father explain to you when people were leaving, why they were leaving, or were you reading the newspapers when you were nine or 10 years old? I mean, what did you know?

A: No, I wa -- I remember his growing interest when I said well, Ellen Ginsburg, or Alice Levy, or wa -- and he said, "They're Jewish?" And I said yes. And behind that question was always, what can we do for them? That ha -- that happened very, very early. I remember the first incident at school where I didn't even notice it, but my father immediately did, where we handed little forms indicating what religion we were, you know? Name, and -- and re -- what religion the

parents were. And -- and what -- what heritage and all that, I remember. Suza -- Suzi Levy, Susannah Levy, si -- Ellen Levy, sitting behind me and showed me hers, and that said, we hereby testify that so and so is of purely Jewish background. It was the wa -- death verdict for them, you know? And I didn't -- I didn't find anything wrong with it, I thought that goes with school, they want to know. Boy, did they ever want to know. And then, you know, by -- by -- of course, I was taken out of that school, and by the time I was taken out in 1937, there were still -- even though there were Jewish schools in Berlin, there were still some Jewish girls in my class. And by the time I came back in 1939, there were -- I don't know, all left, they were all gone.

Q: Right.

A: And I don't have the f -- I was not a go -- very good friend with the exception to Anita and she in '41 once rang our doorbell, you know. She'd been told that we were okay, and Anita I've never forgotten. She --

Q: She was alone with her brother, her mother had been able to --

A: She wa -- her f -- her -- her -- she lived in -- they lived in Dahlem. How much money they had, I never knew. Very, very much. The mother, widowed mother, can you imagine such a thing, left the children. Anita was then 16 or so, and the brother nine, alone to fend for themselves. She left for Switzerland to marry a man, in the hope that she would dr -- get the children, too. That mother must not have been terribly bright according to what Reinhardt says.

Q: No. Yeah.

A: And of course they moved one -- from one relative to the other, from one Jewish school to the other, until a fa -- she finally -- were both finally caught by the -- by the Nazis and she became a nurse, a nurse's aide -- she wanted to be a midwife.

Q: Right.

A: A nurse's aide in the Jewish hospital, and took her brother an -- who was then 12, and allegedly av -- an -- a electricians assistant, and they -- they -- they lived there in the hospital, and one day -- and that's when Anita came to visit. And Anita, I said, "What about going into hiding?" You know, and we ha -- gonna --

Q: Right.

A: -- and she said, "No, I can't do it because of my brother, he looks so Jewish." Well Anita had looked like a country girl, you know, coffa -- kinky hair and brown eyes, and like a -- like an apple. And the little -- little Reinhardt, no, and she of cour -- felt responsible for him, Switzerland. And he told her, after I found him again in New York a few years ago, he told me that he was beseeching her to try and go across the -- the border illegally to Switzerland. And he said, "Wa -- wa -- all they can do is shoot us." Because that little boy knew, obviously, and -- and she said no -- she was too Prussian, you know? No, no, things will -- wi -- wi -- will work out, and they were first sent to Theresienstadt. And Theresienstadt, oh there were -- they were reported to the Gestapo, you know, because they -- their position was somehow half legal. To the Gestapo, they are both deported to -- to Theresienstadt by a man by the name of Gottschalk, a Jewish spy of which Berlin was full. Remember what's her name, Stella?

Q: Stella, yeah.

A: Stella --

Q: I forget her last name, but Stella --

A: Gottschalk [indecipherable] Stella -- Stella Gottschalk.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: They both sent to Theresienstadt, and there they lived like everybody else, vegetated in the stadt -- in the city that the Führer had given the Jews, for -- meant for 3,000 people, and I think they had 45 in there. But you know, there were transports to -- to --

Q: To Auschwitz?

A: -- to Auschwitz all the time, and one day it was -- no, but I have to stop here, because a few weeks after they had appeared in Theresienstadt, who comes? Herr Gottschalk. His fate had caught up with him. And Reinhardt spotted him right away, and took -- was invited for a conference among the Jews, what shall we do with him? He deserves the death penalty, but he didn't go to the -- he were -- they executed him. They were working -- Reinhardt was working in a chemical cleaners -- at a chemical clean -- for the SS you know, and they threw him in a cleaning machine.

Q: Really?

A: And when he came out he was very clean, but quite dead.

Q: Yeah.

A: And then he was -- Reinhardt was selected and put on the train for Auschwitz, and the last thing Anita said to him -- and that tells you how naïve she was, he said when you arrive -- she said, "When you arrive there, tell them you are only 11 and very sickly." Had he followed her advice --

Q: Right, he would have been --

A: -- they would have sent him to the gas chamber. On the train he was told to say he was 17 and a learned -- and -- and a electrician.

Q: Right.

A: And that's how he eventually -- and that's a story by itself, survived.

Q: When the Nazis take over, and there is a boycott and then there is a book burning in 1933, are you conscious of this? You're --

A: And how.

Q: You are?

A: And oh, every detail of it. It was -- it was -- you know, by that time, Martin Niemoeller had already entered our family --

Q: Right.

A: -- who was very naïve, and thanks to -- thanks to my father mainly, I -- I like to think, he finally, when it hit home, he -- within a few months he was -- he was cured.

Q: Because he was not against national socialism at first, at all?

A: No, no, no. And he decided it would be good for the volken, whatever, and he -- he voted for Hitler in 1933 --

Q: Right, right.

A: -- something unthinkable for my parents.

Q: And you meet him because he's the pastor of the church, yes?

A: I was the first of the family to meet him, because we've had a very, very nice old Pastor Lange, and Pastor Lange was supposed to retire. And I think we went there for Christmas and for Easter, that was about the amount of time my -- my parents spent in a church. And then my father heard there was a new pastor and that was the time he decided that his daughter should start going to Sunday school. And I attended the very first service Martin Niemoeller ever held in Dahlem.

Q: Really? Yes.

A: And I -- I had been taken there against my will, because I had a hockey game that day. They were always held on Sundays, much to my father's chagrin. So he took me -- he dragged me, and -- and handed me over physically to one of the ushers, and I sat in the front -- front aisle.

Q: In the pew?

A: Pew, in the front, pew, and decided to behave as outrageously as possible, sticking my tum -- tongue out, and -- and I was full of freckles, you know, looking as unkempt as possible, even though I'd been forced to take a bath before. And there comes this good looking -- with our old, white haired Pastor Lange, comes that good looking, slender, very dark man, he had pitch black hair. Ver -- olive complexion, otherwise he reminded me of my father. And then he started to talk to us children, not about Jesus or v -- the Virgin Mary or anything, but about his time in World War I as a submarine commander.

Q: This was his first sermon?

A: That -- very wise, because everybody was listening. And I decided I would love that man. But I didn't let -- know of -- anybody of the family know. I came home and I dis -- my father I felt deserved punishment for -- for forcing me to go there, and my father asked, "Oh, how was it?" Oh, oh, was okay. "Who -- how was the new pastor?" Oh, he's okay, you know. "And what did he talk about, what's his name?" I said, "I don't know." I knew darn well, you know. But as time progressed, my parents went over to his house and I -- they came to our house, and I decided to try the Niemoeller children, but a minister's children are notorious for being pious, and ha! Did I meet a bunch? Six children with a -- three of them black, like the father, and three of them blonde with blue eyes like the mother, and gorgeous children. And I fit in like th-the runt of the litter, you know?

Q: The runt of the litter.

A: Absolutely, and I -- I lived in there and roamed around the vast parsonage, and there was -- that house was so noisy, you wouldn't believe this -- once in awhile the door would open, and the pastor, with a stentoric voice would ask for -- for -- would demand silence, otherwise he would come and clobber us all. And the children all say, "He always says, he never does it," you know. That was my first -- my first visit with Martin Niemoeller. Little did I know --

Q: Little did you know.

A: -- that I was to be --

Q: So you were how old when you first --

A: I-I was nine.

Q: Nine.

A: Or even eight. That was before --

Q: And he must have been in his --

A: He was -- he was 33 years older than I --

Q: Three -- right, right.

A: -- figure it out. Yeah. He was born in '92, I was born in --

Q: Born in '23.

A: -- '23, yeah.

Q: Right, right.

A: Thirt -- 32 years old. And then I soon asked my parents to spare me that experience of -- of -- of children's services, but let me go with them. Now they started going to church.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: As soon as the Confessing Church was founded by him, they -- and soon as I had been -- had been confirmed, I became a member -- we became member --

Q: Of the Confessing Church?

A: -- of the Confessing Church, yes. And now, in my eyes, I mean he was an endangered species of course, because I va -- Frau Niemoeller came all the time and told me the Gestapo had called, they had searched the house and all that. So I decided when the Gestapo comes, I will save his life. So I went to Woolworth -- and I got a very meager amount of money each week and bought a chain and a lock, with which I was going to -- what's the English word? The Gestapo i --

Q: You -- yo --

A: -- keeping him -- keeping them from -- from --

Q: Getting him?

A: Yeah.

Q: Oh, you were going to lock him up, or you were going -- no, you were going to lock --

A: No, I was going to lock the Gestapo up.

Q: I see.

A: Yeah, yeah, I was not modest in my exp -- but it never happened.

Q: Never happened, right. You didn't have that chance.

A: But I heard every one of his -- of his sermons.

Q: How old were you when you were confirmed? What is the age?

A: I was 15.

Q: 15.

A: He was in the con -- I had hoped, while in boarding school, 14 - 15, that by the time I came out, he would be able to confirm me, but no such thing.

Q: But he wasn't -- right.

A: So his -- his successor or hi -- rather his -- his -- yeah, [indecipherable] Helmut Gollwitzer, he confirmed me in his stead.

Q: Right.

A: By that time I had already witnessed Kristallnacht.

Q: Yes.

A: In Eberswalde.

Q: Right. Well let's -- let's go back just -- just a little bit here. When you're going to school, and there are Nazi kids, this is after '33 --

A: Well, yeah, well there was --

Q: Why did you hit Ribbentrop's daughter? What happened?

A: Because she'd been fresh to me, and I remember s -- I had to climb on a -- on the bench in order to reach her because she was so big.

Q: You slapped her across the face?

A: I slapped her across her stupid face. She was a nice girl, really.

Q: She was?

A: But we -- but that, it was personal, that really was personal.

Q: That wasn't political.

A: Bettina von Ribbentrop, and my father was so proud of me.

Q: Yes. What did the teacher do when you did that?

A: Teacher was not in the room. He was -- it was in dur -- during intermission, you know, something like that.

Q: Over recess. And what -- and Scholz-Klink's daughters were there too?

A: Both -- God, I completely forgot that. Both daughters of Madame Scholz-Klink, the Reichsfrauenfuehrerin, she attended -- was in my -- they were in my class, in the same classroom. Isolde, and I don't remember the name of the other. Well, with them you really had to be careful. And the children --

Q: Excuse me.

A: -- of -- of -- of Himmler, the daughter of Himmler, Gudrund -- Gudrund, of course, she was a few years younger. And the children of Woost, two daughters, they were also in another grade, but you w -- w -- I saw them every day. They were -- they managed to get a teacher fired, but fortunately he did not end up in a concentration camp, the best teacher the school had. They told daddy about a few remarks he had made, daddy took care of them. It was -- you know, what I learned at home was to keep my mouth shut outside. You know, I was a blabbermouth, but not in these things. And I was revolting against -- rebelling against my parents except in that one field. And so what I was taught -- I always say that, was the meaning of conspirative behavior, very early. I mean, Jewish families can talk about their children learning it at a -- at a very early age. And the -- the meaning of your own conscience, how very, very important that was, that intact conscience. Never do u -- or -- o-or say anything that you might not be able to sleep at night. And that was key in both life, for me it was normal, was nothing. And I had Ditte, of course.

Q: And she was at that school?

A: Ditte was next to me always. We were a feared duo. But she had to be much more careful because of her Jewish mother. What they left, that could only be done in -- in Dahlem, in Berlin. They left a very quiet life. The children, they didn't even have piano lessons, nothing, you know? They lived the Jewish family life, and that's how Ditte's mother survived. With her looks, to me still a mystery.

Q: We're going to have to change the tape, so --

A: Already?

Q: Yes.

End of Tape Two

Beginning Tape Three

Q: Okay. I will -- I -- I am going to ask you in a minute about something that you did with a ka -- with Kaiser Wilhelm, but I want to ask you, because you just ended talking about what you were taught at home about being at school. I imagine there is -- there are Nazi flags up, or there is a lot of -- you have to -- did you have to s -- s -- do the heil Hitler in the morning when the teacher comes in?

A: Not yet. That came as time went on. The first years -- few years, it was Gut Morgen.

Q: Really?

A: And -- yes, and I don't remember the exact point in -- during which that wer -- heil Hitler was introduced.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But even by the way, a teacher would greet the class with a German salute, you knew whether the -- she -- it was only female te -- no, no, we had two male teachers, whether they were Nazis or not. I -- I knew why, you know. I was brought up with that six and seventh and eighth sense, and which has led me through my life, by --

Q: So what did -- what did you mean when you said what your -- your -- y-you were clearly a so -- sort of a wild kid --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- or at least very devilish.

A: Yes, yeah.

Q: Yes?

A: Yeah.

Q: But in this area --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- in the political area, you trusted what your parents said, and you followed them.

A: Yeah. That's right. Absolutely.

Q: So were they telling you to be quiet in school?

A: That is the most wondrous thing. I was never told, don't repeat that outside of the house. I knew. I just knew.

Q: You just knew.

A: Yeah. Oh, by the way, that -- that -- there was a period of rebellion after I -- in ni -- in 1933 my father had taken us to Unter den Linden to see Hindenburg and Hitler. And on the way back I remember my brother and I, we both decided to count flags hanging out of the windows. And when we arrived home, I had more, but that -- it came out that I had counted the -- I -- th-the swastika flags, and my brother had counted the black, white, and red. And I se -- I count -- I have more, and for that fact alone, my mother slapped me across the face. Hakenkreuzfahen. You just never do that. And then that night I decided to become Nazi, and with the goal of eventually marrying Hitler, or becoming his cook.

Q: That's quite an idea.

A: Well, you know Hitler -- and even my father was -- he w -- my father was so wonderful, he said, "Well, have you ever thought about the fact that when Hitler's getting older, and you will have to wait for an awfully long time to marry him. Why don't you plan to be his cook?" Okay. So every morning when he -- I came down, he say, "What would you like to cook for your führer today? Spinach? Brussel sprouts?" You know, he was a vegetar -- so that period did not last long.

Q: And your father didn't --

A: No, no, no --

Q: -- cri -- nobody criticized you, they just let you go.

A: -- no, not at all, he re -- he seemed very str -- stern, but --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- very serious about it.

Q: Right.

A: And then something happened that made me change my mind, not my parents. I was invited to the home of a mutual friend notorious anti-Nazi, who had a tea party in her beautiful house. And since I often visited her, I rang the doorbell, and I said, "Can a -- can I come in?" And the -- the servant said, "No, you can't come in today, Frau Pietschker," -- ha -- was her name, "she has her tea party." And sh -- there appears Frau Pietschker in a beautiful flowered dress. And she says, "Come in, come in, I want to show you to my ladies," you know. And she had a beautiful oval salon, with tables like this, and a free room in the front. She drags me -- I was in leather pants, you know? No socks are on, just -- just sandals, not washed, nothing. And she puts me in the middle of the room, and says, "Ladies, just listen for one moment. This is Ulrich von Sell's daughter. She is a Nazi." I -- I hoped the floor would open and swallow me because the laughter that followed was -- would -- I know it would follow me for a lifetime, and it did. I went home and all the Nazi things that I'd gathered, everything with the -- with the swastika on it, I put in an old handkerchief, and carried them out to the garbage, but I threw them in somebody else's garbage. That was the end.

Q: Now why was this the end, what -- what did it mean to you?

A: I -- I was so -- that my father -- well, you know, I -- everybody knew my father, you know? It was so humiliating to me, that I didn't show much character and stood up for the man I loved. I joined the other side. And that was the brief intermission, the brief period.

Q: Now, were these people pro-Nazi?

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

Q: They weren't. And so they were laughing because --

A: No, that's why they laughed.

Q: -- they couldn't believe it.

A: They just could not believe it. I --

Q: That's interesting.

A: -- we never had an ow -- of course we di -- we never went to Nazi's houses, nor did Nazis -- Nazi Germans, as one should really say, come to our house. It was just -- I -- I remember we were good friends, one of -- last German ambassador to -- Dickhoff was his name, he lived a few houses down the street. He came to dinner a few times, but then when Hitler progressed, he was persona non grata. I didn't even notice, but you know --

Q: As a kid, let's say up to the age of 15 -- 14 or 15, how did you understand what it was that your parents were against in terms of the Nazis? What -- what was it? Cause your father -- long time --

A: It was really -- and the -- he foresaw, years before Hitler came, what would happen if he came to power, because Hitler didn't fall from the sky like a meteor, you know? He had been a -- a known agitator on the political scene for 14 years. I was against everything that Hitler did or said, I didn't specify, you know? I -- and then of course, were the Jews, the Jews, the Jews. We had Jewish friends.

Q: Did you listen to Hitler's speeches on the radio?

A: No, no, no, Hitler's speeches were not listened to in our house. It was on very early put on the BBC, and that too, my -- there my father instructed us, when you -- when you listen to -- found the station BBC, you ha -- after you turn off the radio -- radio entered our house late, in '36 maybe, you have to put the knob back to anything else. Sure enough, when the Gestapo came to the house, it was after Martin Niemoeller's incarceration, the first thing the f -- man number one did, go the radio and turn it on.

Q: To see what station.

A: Uh-huh. Was a German station.

Q: It was a German station.

A: Of course.

Q: Right. Now, we can go back a little bit because I know you want to tell the story about the Kaiser.

A: I ca -- I have hundreds of stories.

Q: I know you do.

A: Yeah.

Q: But you wanted him to be your guardian, right?

A: Yeah.

Q: Or your -- your --

A: My godfather.

Q: -- your godfather.

A: But you know, girls are not godchildren of the Kaiser. So my brother for his birthdays received all sorts -- is beautiful pla -- silver -- pure silver things. And I never got anything, you

know, so I decided if I'd ask my -- my father why da -- isn't he my godfather. Because that's only boys, and so on. So I decided as soon as I learned to write -- that had noth -- something to do with it, I would bring about a situation where he couldn't say no. And then I thought -- I wrote, you know, like a child, and I addressed him Liebe Kaiser, dear Emperor, using no name, or majesty or some liebe. Some of them are -- one is printed in the -- in one of my books, you know, Liebe Kaiser, and then I -- I -- I se -- I didn't really ask him, but you know, I know you are the godfather of my brother, can I be -- please be your godchild too? Something like -- and then I thought it would be very nice if I included a little present, something he could really use. And I just learned from my grandmother to crochet, a white potholder with a red rim. And I enclosed that, and I put it in an envelope. And next time my father went to Holland, I said to him, would he please -- I trusted him, would he please give this to the Kaiser? And my father did, you know, vastly amused, of course. My -- the Kaiser was vastly amused, and from then on, he sent me things for my birthday, but no silver plates or anything like that. A scooter. A dynamo light -- a dynamo light for my -- for my -- for my bicycle, stuff like that.

Q: So really good things?

A: And I was conv -- I was convinced that he had tried out the scooter himself, you know, in the -- in the -- he went to the store, you know, and o -- did that all himself.

Q: That's a great story.

A: He was -- he was -- yes, he called me the little monkey. Never referred to me by anything else. But there's a story behind that.

Q: Yes, do you want to tell it?

A: Yeah, sure. Once we had the brother of the sis -- my sister's fr -- girlfriend, who was then a young officer, must have been in '37 - '38, who came to visit, not beknownst to us, and at the

table already ha -- he had developed Nazi ideas, and I saw my father's face grow paler and paler, but fortunately the young man had to leave right after -- after dinner, and I was delegated to accompany hi -- him to the -- to the underground. And passing Martin Niemoeller's church, there was a light -- it was already dark, there was a light in the church, and he said, "Well, this is Thursday evening, so what -- what's -- what's going on there?" And I said, "Well, those are the -- the prayer -- the -- the service is held every night for all the pastors in concentration camps." And then he started, "What? That is a scandal. I, in a German uniform, trying to defend the," -- and I was speechless, and then I looked up to him and I said, "You ze affe." "You monkey." And then ran away. We never heard from the young man again, fortunately. And my father told that story to -- to his majesty, and his majesty thought it was very amusing, called me little monkey.

Q: Little monkey, right. Now you had governesses?

A: Yes.

Q: And is that when you learned English, cause these were English governesses?

A: Yes.

Q: Th-That worked. You had a --

A: Three English governesses. Joy, the other one's name I don't remember, and Nell, the third one. All -- w-well the last one we kept connections until far after the war, yes.

Q: And so you learned English from them, is that right?

A: Yeah, yes. And I had a talent for si -- for -- for --

Q: For languages?

A: -- languages. And of course then we had a f -- a bon -- a French mademoiselle. She couldn't stand the food in the house, which was grim, you know. Prussian food? Forget about it. And --

Q: So did --

A: She couldn't stand it.

Q: Uh-huh. So is that why you ate a lot in Ditte's house?

A: Was always a place there for me. Yeah, sure.

Q: You get very calm when you mention that family. You -- you felt very comfortable there.

A: Yeah, because that was my rock of Gibraltar, you know, that was -- I was -- everybody was so happy to see me. I was one of their children.

Q: So your house was a very serious and obviously --

A: Sinister, almost, you know. You opened the door and the atmosphere was already coming at you. It was only forebodings of -- every day it was something new that Hitler had done, or order, whatever. And he -- my father had been right in everything.

Q: But it's -- it's also interesting because in this house that's partially Jewish, because the mother is Jewish --

A: Yes.

Q: -- they are not as -- it's not as sinister, and they are more vulnerable.

A: Oh, exactly.

Q: Or would appear to be more vulnerable.

A: Exactly, mommy -- I called her mommy. Mommy wanted -- she loved, she adored children. Every morning she would go to the bakery and buy heaps of -- of -- of cake, just in case the children brought home friends, and there should be enough to eat for everybody. But in -- you know, then came a time when they had to, except for the little boy, had to tell the three daughters what -- you know, th-the dangers they were in. And she -- they tried to get all the children out of the country. They succeeded with the oldest one, Eve. Eve still lives in England, she's now 86 or 88, and it was too late for -- for the other ones to get out of the country. And the little boy,

Herman, that was my so-called foster brother, he was the first German student to enter the United States after the war.

Q: Really?

A: Got a law degree, he married Phyllis Fritchie, does the name mean anything to you?

Q: So -- n --

A: He has the north -- had the North Virginia Sun, or something, newspaper man.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And he was Stevenson's campaign manager.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And Herman wound up as the ambassador for the United States under Reagan in South Africa. That's a career. But we got kind of, you know --

Q: Now, let me a -- the -- I don't -- I don't know if -- if you can even answer this question, do you think your house might have been severe -- y-you talk about a sort of Prussian atmosphere --

A: Severity, yeah.

Q: -- even if there were no Nazis?

A: Good question, I don't think so.

Q: You don't think so.

A: No, no.

Q: You think it really was this political --

A: My father tended to melancholia and to depression, that's what I inherited from him.

Q: I see.

A: Now, thanks to modern medicine, I don't have that any more.

Q: Right, right.

A: And my mother was, you know, she was even, and lighthearted, and -- and she must have suffered like hell, too, you know? Always grim moods. And then, of course, being in the position he was in, whenever he was there, there were daily fights with the so-called Empress, who loathed my father.

Q: Right.

A: And my fa -- I say that in my books, too, it came to such a point that the -- that at night i -- the door to the apartment of -- there were -- there was a glass door, was not knocked but hammered on in the middle of the night and my father opened the -- the door, and outside stood a little man with his nightshirt on, and a f -- and a coat thrown over it, the Kaiser, in tears. He would say to my father, "She was so bad to me again." "Sie war immer so schlecht zu mir." She was absolutely wicked, and the ki -- my father said at one point to us children, and he had also made it known in Doorn that he would not even go take her for a wa -- go for a walk with her, because she is capable of jumping into the moat and tell the world I pushed her in.

Q: Pushed her, right. Now there -- very early on, Gestapo comes to your house, your father isn't there. This is in --

A: This i --

Q: -- June of 1934 at the -- after the Night of Long Knives, when they kill --

A: Oh, no, no --

Q: -- that early.

A: -- the Gestapo didn't come.

Q: They didn't come?

A: Nothing happen -- nothing happened that night except for -- except for the fact that, you know, the next day we found out who had been killed, the man who constantly came to the

house, the former Reichskanzler von -- von -- you know, I say the name, I can't remember it now. Schleicher. He had been murdered, you know, the Gestapo came into his house, and they were having breakfast there, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang. He and his wife, dead. And my father was in Holland at the time. He came back, you know, just for a few days, he came back, I sat on his lap, where I belonged, in his study, and the phone rings. And my father said -- he was so tired, he said, "You take it." And on the phone, that must have been second of July, third of July, 1934, a fat voice --

Q: A fat voice?

A: A fat voice, not -- you know, I use -- they usually identify themselves, and this is so and so, can -- Herr von Sell! So I had the receiver to my father, and I saw, "Yes?" And then just a, "yes, yes." And then he hung up. It had been Göring, telling him that he shouldn't feel all too sure about his being safe, the next time they would get him. And from that day on, I was so afraid of my father's -- of my father's --

Q: And your father told you immediately, then?

A: Well, I was --

Q: 10 -- you were just 10.

A: -- you know, this far from him. He was paralyzed, almost. That overwhelmingly fat -- it's a fat voice, like nobody -- you know, high pitched. And because my father, of all the Nazis, he -- he hated th -- the one he hated the most was Göring, because Göring should have had [indecipherable] a flier, a gentleman, coming from a good family, he should have known better. Instead he played God, and the famous saying that, I decide who is Aryan or not, indicated that he was in the position to decide over life and death.

Q: And why would Göring be calling your father?

A: Because there was a list, obviously, and he was missed.

Q: He was missed? He must have --

A: He wa -- my father wa -- must have --

Q: -- must have been on the list?

A: Yeah. And so he took the receiver himself and called my father up. There had been -- my fa -- Göring was a personal enemy of my father's. My father had two personal enemies under the -- among the Nazis. One was Keitel, Field Marshall Keitel, and one was Göring. And those days it was Göring who was much more powerful, you know. Göring was, among other things, he was a big hunter. And he would deal with my father for the permission to hunt at one of the estates that belonged to the Kaiser.

Q: I see.

A: And my father said nyet just a few times too often, until Göring didn't have to ask permission any more, just went. And not even -- he not only came back with the horns or whatever, but for th -- terribly precious pictures, carpets and so on. But there was very little my father could do.

Q: Right.

A: And Göring once -- that -- that really did the trick. When Göring came to a party of the Hohenzollerns to which he had not been invited. Oh boy, yeah.

Q: And he was asked to leave?

A: Yeah.

Q: And your father was the one?

A: Of course.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: You know, there were Nazis among the Hohenzollerns. Victoria Louisa. The Kaiser's only daughter. The mother of the future queen of Greece, who went to school with me in [indecipherable]. She -- she was ready for the 80th birthday of her father, where the entire mishpowha came, to wear on her beautiful dress, a swastika of diamonds. And my father stood in the door, and he said, "With that thing on, you have to step over my body." She took it off. There was Prince Auguste Wilhelm, there were plenty -- and even the Crown Prince. He came to the -- he came to the -- the Potsdam ceremony without being invited. You know, to get himself in with the Nazis. He might be king one day, you know?

Q: Right.

A: No dignity.

Q: Now, your father is clearly known as an anti-Nazi, the family is known as an anti-Nazi.

A: Yeah, yeah, oh absolutely, absolutely.

Q: But there is no -- at this point, this is early on, '33 - '34 - '35.

A: Yeah.

Q: There's no resistance group of which he's a part. So he's not --

A: There were -- well, there was no -- you know, there was no resistance movement in Germany because we couldn't move. The first batch of resisters that had been, th -- the feared Communists.

Q: Right.

A: And the same time that Hitler, in Potsdam, said he would be a good and peaceful leader. The first prisoners were marched into saxen -- in-into Sachsenhausen concentration camp, only a stone throw away. It was the Socialists, the Communists, the trade unionists. And that was all the resistance there was. Then came that huge goo -- that group, sizeable group of those who said he

won't be so bad, you know, he's -- he's ra -- as a matter of fact, we'll deal with him. And then came the rather big group of those who decided to go into inner-emigration, be Nazi, and don't do anything. And those, after the war, were the most despicable ones, because they could -- they claimed they were not anti-Nazi -- they were anti-Nazis, but they didn't do anything.

Q: So you w --

A: And that's when my parents decided to put up a fight wherever it was possible. Getting to Hitler is as -- is as a -- was as impossible as it is now to get rid of Fidel Castro. Once a dictator has established himself, it is almost impossible to get rid of him. And so you must -- you -- there were plenty of things, especially helping, helping Jews. And that developed slowly, until the Jews were really in vital danger, in mortal danger. And that's when the Countess Maltzan was one of them. She worked with my fa -- oh, my father, I have to say, was inducted into the German army, even though he was so terribly wounded, and he was much too old, after -- a-at -- at the beginning of the war, and --

Q: In 1939?

A: -- in '39, and wa -- and he was sacked by them in -- must have been '42. His -- his boss was Canaris, and at the same outfit where he was -- where he was working, there -- it was since -- censorship of letters. And that is when he -- he and the ga -- Countess Maltzan -- and she only told me that after the war, and that's where we got most of the Jews that came to the house, you know?

Q: So Jews were being hidden in your house?

A: I -- they --

Q: Or passing through?

A: -- it wa -- passing through. Our house could -- even though where there were no children in the house, i-it -- people could not be hidden. They just -- they just pa -- they just received shelter for awhile, claiming to be a seamstress, a gardener. And then of course th -- of the greatest help were the air raids, and the -- the destruction, so a man could turn up, unless he looked like -- like a Jew, and say all my papers were burned.

Q: Right, right, so you didn't have --

A: So we loved the British, especially the British, for -- you know, unloading their bombs over our heads, even though I must say I was terrified of them.

Q: I can imagine, I can imagine.

A: Terrified. Yet we blessed -- we blessed them every day, and prayed for their safe home -- home-going.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And that's why -- it was as you d -- declare somebody as a -- as a cousin of a chauffeur of a something like that, wasn't all too difficult. Living in the house for any length of time would have been too -- too different.

Q: Well, especially in that neighborhood, I imagine.

A: I mean, hiding -- and especially in that neighborhood.

Q: Yeah.

A: Hiding in the middle of the city, not so bad. But in order to hide one Jew, that is not clear to everybody who just talks about it, you have to have -- first of all, no children in the house. They blabber out --

Q: Right.

A: -- the truth, you know, th-that new aunt of mine, you know, something like that. And there has to be -- there have to be extra rations.

Q: Right.

A: So you have to -- the butcher, have grocer, a doctor -- something like that, and it's a vast ho -- the smaller the cell, the better. You are not supposed to know what the other one did.

Q: Right, right.

A: I found out rather late about the Scholls in Munich. Munich was a planet away.

Q: Yeah.

A: There was nothing in the media, and that was -- it was, you know, that's -- of course it -- word got around, but Berlin and Dahlem, and with these five families were wonderful, we were never found out. Nobody was found out.

Q: And the Scholls, you're talking about The White Rose, you're talking about the students, yes.

A: Yes, The White Rose, yes, yes. Cause th-the surviving sister came to visit Martin often after the war, after he -- when I was there in Wiesbaden.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: They were true heroes.

Q: Yeah.

A: Those were true heroes. While the resistance group that concentrated, it must have been in '38 - '39, planning to get rid of Adolf Hitler, the 20th of July '44 group.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: You know how Hitler -- tha -- I don't know how many there -- SS nation attempts there were against Hitler, it's almost, you know -- several dozen, and they all failed. Hitler had, first of all, had the instinct of an animal. And my -- and a distant uncle of mine von Gasthof, he was a major

in the army, and was supposed to receive Hitler rather late for -- 40's, to visit a museum, that Zeughaus, the military museum in Berlin, and had stuffed himself with bombs, and he would -- was ready to embrace Hitler in a deadly embrace. Hitler sh -- used another entry, and my uncle had a hell of a time disarming himself.

Q: Wow.

A: But it happened again, and again --

Q: Right.

A: -- and again. And so then na -- by 1941 we started with the Jews, or na -- '40 - '41 - '42, then came these many evenings in our house where visitors came at night, among them our neighbor Admiral Canaris. General Oster, Count Henkel von Donnersmark, my two f -- cousins, Haeften, Ulrich von Hassel. And they came at night, and my ma -- the first time they came, I asked my mother what are they doing? And she said, "Sie morden." "They are committing murder." And then they would leave one by one, back of the house, and all that. The only one who survived was the Count Henkel von Donnersmark. And I saw him many times after the war, all the others were --

Q: They were killed.

A: -- hanged.

Q: Mm-hm. We have to stop the tape.

A: Again?

End of Tape Three

Beginning Tape Four

Q: In 1937, you are sent to a boarding school.

A: Yes.

Q: Why? Why did they send you away?

A: Well, for two reasons. First of all, I should get away from Ditte, my twin at heart, and I should meet girls from my own s -- from my own caste. And that was a b-boarding -- elite boarding school, small, for daughters of -- for the noble names. There were three girls there who were not members of nobility, and they g-got to hear it every day. That really wasn't fitting, you know, not [indecipherable]

Q: So there's a kind of meanness in this group?

A: Oh, a kind, yes.

Q: Yeah.

A: Well, anyway, I was there for t -- sent there for th -- the other was --

Q: Well, wait a minute, wait a minute.

A: Yeah.

Q: Why were you ha -- why did you have to separate from Ditte? Why -- were you two just crazy

--

A: W-We were two -- we had a terrible influence on one another, you know, that's why. But it was a friendship that wouldn't break to this day. And -- and then the other reason was that the situation with the BDM or the Hitler Youth was getting more precarious every day. So that was the beginning of a phase, you know, when I went to that school, later to other schools, where I trained myself -- or I s -- I thought of it myself. When asked, are you in the BDM, I said, "Of

course, in Berlin.” You know, I mean, I’m here only temporarily, why should I -- you know. And I did th -- I repeated that and it worked until shortly before graduation, they wouldn’t let me graduate.

Q: Because they knew it was not true.

A: [indecipherable] it wasn’t true, no, no. Found out.

Q: Now, how is -- how is Ditte surviving? Do they know that their mother is Jewish --

A: Miracle.

Q: -- or they don’t know?

A: Yes, by that time they -- of Jewish extraction, you know, somehow.

Q: So is she a mischlinge?

A: -- but Ditte -- she was a mish -- sh-she would have been called a mischlinge first --

Q: First class.

A: First grade or first class.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: And she even -- she went to st -- as a student to Heidelberg and -- and signed a document with her name that she was purely Aryan. She was -- it was one miracle after the other. And she did her own resisting in Heidelberg, my God --

Q: Really?

A: -- yeah. The more you were in danger, the more you did. You know, it became a sport.

Q: Why, because you think that some of these people had nothing to lose?

A: Well, it c -- became -- I don’t know what it was, I don’t know what it was.

Q: But that’s certainly not true for a lot of people.

A: Oh, you better believe it, yeah, but through those inactive anti-Nazis, I have very little to s -- all this they have really good reasons to explain their inertia. And those who said bad things will not happen in Germany because we wouldn't let them do them, you know?

Q: Yeah. Were you very sad to leave, to go to boarding school?

A: Oh, I hated it. I hated it and I planned my escape from there to Holland, to the Kaiser. And in my dreams at night, just before going to sleep, I would imagine how he would stand there, opening his arms, oh my poor, poor child, of course you can stay here. But then behind him was that witch, and she'd say no.

Q: And you --

A: No.

Q: -- and you knew that she would not approve, yeah.

A: Oh, of course.

Q: But you still fantasized this escape?

A: I met Kaiser in -- so-called majesty [indecipherable] only once, and there was instant loathing on both sides.

Q: Of her?

A: I wa -- of her --

Q: Of her, and --

A: And -- and -- and she for me. She later complained to my father, your daughter behaved in a terrible way, you know. My father just smiled.

Q: And how old were you when you met?

A: Nine.

Q: Nine.

A: 10 - 11.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Was in Berlin.

Q: Now you also had to leave Sunday school, so you couldn't see -- because this is 19 --

A: No, but I -- yeah --

Q: Well, '37 --

A: '37 I'm --

Q: -- he's already -- is --

A: I was home for the first time from boarding school for summer vacation, and then came the news that he had been arrested.

Q: Rested.

A: And I remember jumping on my bicycle, going from friend to friend to friend, telling them all the terrible news, which was in the newspapers the next day, you know. Awful.

Q: Were you worried over the last few years both about your father and about Niemoeller? Was he

A: Niemoeller, yes, of course, I had fallen in love with Niemoeller at age 13 - 14, al-allowed myself to get a first rate crush on him.

Q: Yeah.

A: Cause he would hardly notice me, you know. And of course I was terribly worried. And the whole family alone now, and my father went right over, he couldn't go on summer vacation with us, because he felt he had to take care of the family, but they had -- they had many friends.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: They did not -- were not needy, I mean, in a -- i-i -- in a physical kind of way.

Q: And where would -- where did the fam -- where did Mrs. Niemoeller and their six children at this point --

A: This -- they still -- they still lived -- they still lived in the parsonage.

Q: In the parsonage?

A: Yes. And lived there until 19 -- until the time that Martin was transferred from Dachau --

Q: To sa --

A: -- from -- sorry, from Sachsenhausen to Dachau, then she moved in with friends at Lake Starnberg so she could visit her husband.

Q: And she was allowed to do that?

A: Yes, once in awhile she could visit him.

Q: That's unusual.

A: There were di -- well, everything was unusual because he was Hitler's only private pri -- prisoner.

Q: Yeah.

A: Legally he could -- they couldn't do anything about him at -- the highest German court had acquitted him, which at 1938 proved that there were judges in Germany who based their judgments, their verdicts on the law --

Q: Right.

A: -- and on the law alone.

Q: Right.

A: Which deeply disturbed Hitler.

Q: Yeah. Now, when you're at this terrible school.

A: Yeah.

Q: You go for a walk. You actually shake Hitler's hand at the [indecipherable]. What happened?

A: Yeah, yeah, well that wasn't -- you know, we were taken -- we were dragged on walks every afternoon, and what --

Q: You were dragged?

A: How do you know -- two by two --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- and then -- and one day we did not go in the woods, we were j -- one of our classmates had had a -- an operation, I think it was appendicitis and we were supposed to visit her in the hospital. That was in 1938 in the summer, I believe. And we ma -- just four or six of us marched -- with a teacher, marched towards the town and in town, you know and the -- I still remember the street, I could find it again, with ugly apartment buildings. Eberswalde is the name of the -- the -- the -- th-the t-town of 37. Notorious now for anti-Semitism and anti-foreignism, you know. And the Nazism, of course. And we -- about twice as far as from here to -- to that door, we see several huge limousines with -- open cars and limousines with swastika emblems and we stood still and the teachers [indecipherable] what might that be, you know? And there was either policemen, I don't -- uniformed men who kept us back, just a moment, you can't pass through here. And the very moment we had arrived, as close as now as from here to the door --

Q: So about 10 feet.

A: -- that door opens and out comes a group of men, and with them a li -- a man ma -- about my size, with a moustache and a va -- za -- Bavarian hat on, trenchcoat, no uniform, nothing. And by Jove, it was Adolf Hitler. And he sees us, and he thinks we've appeared in his honor, of course, you know? And we just stood there, so he went fwa -- one -- one to one, shaking hands, and asking o-our names and where we came from and all that, and then he j -- just went in the car and

drove away. We didn't -- we didn't really b -- nobody believed us but the next day it was in the newspapers that Hitler had visited the widow of an old comrade in Eberswalde, so there was -- I'll never forget his fishy handsa -- shake.

Q: He had a fishy handshake?

A: Fishy handshake. And while my mother got sick while there wa -- once their eyes crossed in - - in an opera, during an opera visit, my mother became so violently ill my father had to take her home, she couldn't sit thr -- through the opera. And others were obsessed with his charisma and his blue eyes, I felt nothing. There was a ver -- a vo -- a very ordinary man, and he was even smiling. But I had no --

Q: Nothing.

A: Nothing. While one of the girls sank to the ground, and wanted to kiss the spot that Hitler's foot had touched.

Q: Really.

A: Well that's -- well, that was my meeting with Hitler.

Q: But of course, you were primed for so many years against hi --

A: Unlike my --

Q: -- right --

A: -- classmates --

Q: -- classmates, right, right.

A: -- of cour -- I couldn't believe [indecipherable] this man's supposed to have to done so much evil. Yes, and more.

Q: So how were you with these girls at the school, you --

A: I -- some of them, thi -- they were all -- all came, except for me and a couple of others who c -
- were -- came from Berlin or Hamburg, they came from vast estates.

Q: Uh-huh, very wealthy.

A: And never seen anything except foxes and hares and deer. Well, well, was okay, I'm --

Q: Was there any indoctrination at the school, or -- is --

A: No.

Q: -- nothing, nothing?

A: No, no.

Q: This is just --

A: None.

Q: Huh.

A: We knew the -- the -- the headmistresses both were very strong anti-Nazis.

Q: Oh, they were?

A: Oh yes. But they had -- for instance, they had to put up the swastika flag every day, and have
it a -- just to s -- let the neighbors think we were --

Q: And did most of you realize that this was a kind of conspiracy?

A: Most of them didn't give a -- didn't give a hang about it. I was the only one who was
politically informed.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: The only one.

Q: Uh-huh. So that must have also been difficult for you to be there.

A: All was di -- everything was difficult for me.

Q: Everything was -- how was the food?

A: Gecchh!

Q: Terrible.

A: You know -- yeah, it -- it was terrible, absolutely terrible. Insufficient too, you know. Cheap, and -- but that was Prussian, you know.

Q: This was part of the Prussian upbringing?

A: Part of the Prussian upbringing was also to be of nobility and not to wear glasses. Can you imagine Frederick the Great, and Martin Luther with glasses? Stupid. Two of the girls were extremely short sighted. Nearsighted.

Q: But you're not allowed to wear glasses?

A: Yes, they were.

Q: They were?

A: But they were put down every ti -- every day.

Q: Oh I see, I see.

A: How I loved the day when I left.

Q: But were the classes good? Were the teachers good?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: They were okay?

A: Yeah. Then we went the -- the second year we went to the local school.

Q: Uh-huh. Now where were you on Kristallnacht.

A: There.

Q: You were there.

A: At the house, at the main house --

Q: And did you see --

A: -- we saw the -- the sky, the dark sky lighting up.

Q: Yeah.

A: And then the -- the super's wife came in and said, "There's a fire in this -- in the town." And the headmistress, one of them, took th-the few -- they all wanted to -- to stay up there, nobody was interested, except for may -- three or four. We went down and saw, and -- and -- and just -- you know, as soon as we reached the city, the real ci -- as much as or little as there was, did we realize how many Jewish shops there must have been. There was of the --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- howling of people, chanting. Broken glass, broken doors, everything. And all of a sudden I found myself shoved and pressed against the -- the fence separating me and the -- and the synagogue. And I was immediately -- I noticed that the fire brigade, the fire hoses were in this direction, one house, another house, in between was the burn -- burning synagogue, and outside later the -- the -- the si-silver items and the Torah scrolls which they had taken apart and trampled on by Hitler Youth and SR. There was to -- there was no SS there, as far as I remember.

Q: Now you're 14 years old? No.

A: 15.

Q: 15.

A: 15.

Q: 15.

A: I was so shocked.

Q: This was a big impression on you.

A: That was -- of course, I mean had I been at home in Dahlem, I wouldn't have seen anything because there were no shops, you know, nothing. None of my family saw anything, I was the only one, thanks to the fact -- and then Jews driven out of the synagogue, with the --

Q: And you saw that?

A: -- ye -- I -- oh, I saw the -- must have been the rabbi's family and thrown on trucks, speeding away and that was it. And I went home and that same evening I wrote a description to my parents ending with the words in German, of course, people behaved like wild beasts. Yeah, that was it.

Q: And is this a turning -- for many people this is a turning point.

A: Well, it --

Q: -- or was this something --

A: Not for me, really.

Q: Not for you.

A: No, no, it would have -- course it was everything -- one hopes, especially as a child, that every deed like that will be the last one, you know? Ha! We hadn't seen the beginning yet.

Q: No. Did your parents want to leave Germany?

A: Never, never.

Q: Never. They never thought about it?

A: Oh no. A country they -- their families, their clan had helped to build up over centuries? Would have been desertion. And there is the fact that once you're out you can't do anything any more. No, no, they didn't have to for racial reasons. The Jews had nothing else to do if they wanted to save their lives. Because the --

Q: So there was a sense of responsibility to stay?

A: Absolutely. To be there, to stay there and take over once the time has passed.

Q: Right. Did you expect war?

A: My father told in -- i -- said that in 1933.

Q: It would be war?

A: I remember him saying to my then brother -- no, he later became my -- my brother-in-law, my sister's husband, and you will see that the day will come -- first of all, he was a paper manufacturer, that if you make toilet rolls this wide, and if you want to make them a little wider, you'll be in a concentration camp. And Hitler will start a war, he was only waiting for an opportunity. Of course, that we always -- and you know when -- when -- when the war started, I was kind of elated, because I thought now that's -- that's the beginning of a -- of the end --

Q: Of the end.

A: -- and the end will come soon. Of course we had no idea of how short the blitzkrieg would be. And I s -- I've seen my father crying three times in -- in my life. One was when Uncle Eberhard's wife, Maria died of blood poisoning. He couldn't grasp it. The next time was --

Q: And Eberhard is your mother's brother?

A: Eberhard's -- brother, yeah.

Q: Yes.

A: She was from -- our family was from Odessa.

Q: Mm.

A: Second time was when his beloved Rotterdam was laid into ashes by the Nazis. And the third time was when Hitler started his war against Russia. That I remember.

Q: So you were there at each of these times to see him?

A: Yes, yes, that's when I --

Q: So there may have been --

A: I witnessed it.

Q: -- many more times that he cried, but you --

A: Probably, probably.

Q: Yeah.

A: My father was so sensitive and so -- oh, well I sa -- I said to Elie Wiesel, you know, for 40 years, four oh years, I was not able to mention my father and his -- his -- not talk about ma -- about him at all, because I couldn't, I couldn't. Even my own son was of the opinion that in the wake of the 20th of July, my father had somehow lost his life. That was good enough for him, you know. And then -- but after I met Elie Wiesel, he said -- it was up in his apartment on th -- still on the West Side, which was gorgeous. Looking down -- it was April '85, looking down on the -- on the park that ju -- was just beginning to bloom, and he said, you know, "And now you must tell me all about your father." And I said, "Elie, I can't. I haven't done it for 40 years [indecipherable]." And he said, "You must." And under streaming tears I told him the entire story. After which he s -- Marion was there too. After that he took me in his arms and comforted me. And we were at Martin's grave, by the way, in Germany, together. And he said, "And now you have to learn to speak in public about that." I said, "I can never speak in public." "Of course you can." Then later -- a year later, I said -- and he said, "Now you have to write a book." "I can't write a book." "Of course you can." And then I came to him one day and I said, "Elie, I'm going to be Jewish." And he said -- he left -- were two -- two words of, he said, "Of course."

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Beginning and end of discussion. But he has opened windows in my life that I didn't -- doors of my -- in my life that I didn't even know existed. Bless him for that.

Q: Right.

A: And many other things. Yeah, now I'm home, and I've been sacked from school.

Q: You -- you were kicked out of school.

A: Yes, I was kicked out.

Q: What did you do?

A: Well, I was sent to one of my -- to -- out of the way, a-away, away, to an estate of friends -- of -- of -- of -- one of the many estates of family members and I stayed that -- there, until -- because -- yeah, I stayed there, helping in the household, you know, learning about household and all that. And then I s -- decided to do something that would vastly amuse his majesty. I declared to my father that I'm going to go be a -- a -- a -- an actress. Go on sta -- an actress. That had never happened in that family --

Q: Oh, of course not.

A: -- to stoop that low, you know?

Q: Right.

A: So he went to Holland. Must have been before -- of course, before his death. And he sa -- my father said to His Majesty -- I -- he had to tell him something personal and wanted his advice. The little monkey -- no, my -- my ba -- Billa, he called me, she wants to go on stage. The little monkey wants to be an actress? And then he -- he hit my father on the shoulder, and he said, "And to you of all people this must happen." And he thought it was a marvelous idea, so my father came home in a different mood, and he said, "All right, if you pass the entrance exam of the state actors school, yi -- I will let you." And of course, then these things developed, I was accepted, and the Kaiser even lived to see it happen.

Q: So where did you get this idea that you wanted to be an actor? How did that happen? Or had you been doing it all your life?

A: Well, I w -- I was enough -- it was probably first of all to shock my grandmother. But otherwise I wanted to be somebody, you know, by now it was clear that I would not always stay quite that homely. And I had boyf -- men friends, always older men as boyfriends. And I was --

Q: Even when you were in boarding school?

A: Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no

Q: No.

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

Q: No, once you have been kicked out.

A: Oh, after that, yes. And then, you know, the stage was a very safe place for anti-Nazis.

Q: Really?

A: You were practically taboo. Ye -- I didn't have to go to the labor studio -- attend the labor service, nobody asked me about the BDM or party, nothing. You were safe, you were on a different level. And I knew that, of course, because I knew enough actors in Berlin now. I had my two years in Berlin of ballet, and of -- education of -- you know.

Q: And when did you -- when did you go to the academy? Was it --

A: April --

Q: It was after the war started.

A: Oh yes --

Q: After --

A: -- a-after my 18th birthday, in a -- in '41.

Q: In '41 you started?

A: I became th -- I -- the favorite student --

Q: Of Walter --

A: Walter Franck.

Q: -- Franck.

A: A very famous German actor. One of the families who hid Jews --

Q: Yes, he had a --

A: -- [indecipherable] his wife.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: [indecipherable] wife.

Q: Yes, and your -- and this is the group from which sometimes Jews would come to your house

--

A: That's right.

Q: -- your families house.

A: Or -- or go vice-a-versa, you know?

Q: And you had a relationship with him?

A: Oh yes, we had a loving relationship for two years, and he taught me the basics and everything. And it's still -- it's still true, you know, what to do as a woman, too, and what not to do. Of course, as an 18 year old -- he would never touch a -- a girl who had no experiences at all, but we were in a relationship, can say that, and two most happy years ended, hit -- it never -- it wa -- grew into a deep friendship, and ended only with his untimely death in -- in -- I don't remember, '68.

Q: Did you live together?

A: Oh no, no --

Q: No.

A: -- he was very happily married.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: He was 30 years older than I. What else is new? And he -- but he needed somebody on the side, always, whether that woman was Marlene Dietrich, or Elizabeth Bergner, or I, it was always a relationship that lasted two years.

Q: Really?

A: Yes, very strange. And his wife, I don't know how much she knew. She liked me, I liked her. And well -- and then we --

Q: Was that odd for you as a young person, being with a married man, and knowing the wife, is that odd?

A: But it came so easily --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- if -- if somebody asked me was it odd for me to rav -- to -- to -- to convert to Judaism --

Q: Right.

A: -- you know? It was -- it came in such --

Q: It was -- uh-huh.

A: -- it was done so tactfully, and s -- based -- it was based on friendship, and the same political opinion. He was the fi -- that, he didn't tell anybody, the first cousin of Field Marshall Kesserling.

Q: Really?

A: And they looked alike.

Q: Did you work with him on the stage, or was he no longer acting?

A: Oh, yes, he was acting.

Q: He was then acting.

A: As a -- only on the theater that was under Göring. And Ger -- and Goebbels was movies. And those two had a very intimate enemy-ship, you know? So Göring wouldn't let anybody touch his theater, and in the -- and Goebbels, he struck him -- Walter Franck from the list of actors to appear in movies, because he had never b -- gone to one of his receptions, always inventing one ailment after the other. So -- but you -- it didn't -- didn't disturb his theater career.

Q: Right. Were you a good actress, you think? Did you like it?

A: I loved it. But I was then doing my first engagement in Danzig, Nazi town of the first caliber, which was -- I wasn't used to that, you know? I -- I began suffering from stage fright, and it became so bad that I -- aft -- then I went to Essen, and then came the 20th of July, and the theaters were closed, and Essen was in the war. No Nazis, strangely enough. But the east? They got what they deserved, and they deserved what they got. And the entire ensemble died, because they -- except me, because they tried to flee on the Gustloff, Wilhelm Gustloff, the ship that was sunk by a -- by a Russian torpedo. And I would have be -- by God's grace, I wasn't. Yeah -- and no, but then, after the war, I became -- I became a -- an announcer -- a speaker on -- on the radio.

Q: Right, right, right.

A: That I wer -- no problems at all.

Q: Did your parents see you on stage?

A: Yeah, my mother.

Q: Your mother saw you, not your father?

A: No, he was already in prison, I believe.

Q: Uh-huh. And did she enjoy that?

A: Yeah.

Q: She did?

A: Very strange experience.

Q: And your brother? Or was he in the war?

A: No, he wa -- my brother was --

Q: He was away.

A: He was a soldier --

Q: Right.

A: -- at age 16.

Q: 16.

A: But fortunately he was in Denmark, being stationed in the house of a pastor. And there was a deep friendship, and he -- until the pastor died, visited him after the war, all the time.

Q: Now, I understand that you, in a certain way rejected the confessing -- even the Confessing Church, at a young age?

A: What they did, when they could have done something.

Q: Why they could have done more.

A: What of -- something, you know.

Q: Something.

A: Well that's was, you know, the Stuttgart Declaration of guilt.

Q: Yes, explain that, what is -- what was that?

A: That was -- well, when Martin returned from the concentration camp, livid --

Q: This is after?

A: Yeah. A terrible embarrassment for all the people who claimed they couldn't have done anything, you know, and here he comes. Oh, had he only died, they would have built a church

with his name and all that. But he came back just at the moment when they began business as usual, without a -- anything.

Q: Right.

A: So he forced the part, that Stuttgart Declaration. But the most important sentences were stricken. The church said we should ask forgiveness because they had not prayed enough, and not done enough. And he said -- Martin said, bullshit. Excuse me. They did nothing. Which is true, after Hitler was very, very wise, taking him away from his flock, because -- which was supposed to become a resistance group. They -- there were -- there were martyrs there of the Confessing Church, fa -- fal -- Snyder you know, and many others. But -- excuse me, senior moment. But as a group they arranged themselves, only to claim after the war that they hadn't prayed enough. Hah! But you know, Martin was a thorn in their flesh from the f -- moment one to his death. Before his death he said into movie cameras, television cameras, "And if I did not receive my pension from the church, I would become a Quaker." He wasn't at the hierarchy, oh that bugged him. He would not resi -- accept the title bishop.

Q: Right. [indecipherable] remained a pastor, yes?

A: He remained pastor and president, president of the church [indecipherable] Council of churches, and president of the -- of the church of Hessen and Nassau.

Q: Right. All right, we have to stop the tape.

End of Tape Four

Beginning Tape Five

Q: Sibylle, I asked you a question close to when we stopped, and I think you answered it in a different way than I asked it. Why was it that you left the church when -- in your self description that you left the church when you were about 18.

A: 18 - 19, because I realized there w -- it -- the Confessing Church would not live up to Martin Niemoeller's expectations. And they were inert, they did nothing. And my [indecipherable] and to add something personal, you know there were three pastors in -- in Dahlem, and there was so much trouble between them, personal things, that my mother -- my mother and my -- I mean, leaving the church doesn't mean that I declared my -- my -- excuse me, I -- I have to think. No, my -- my parents also -- I didn't go to church any more, and neither did they. There were --

Q: But you still felt that you were a Christian?

A: Y-Yes, moderately so. But you know then later, when I came to New York and lived among Jews, the church -- I didn't -- I didn't go back to the church there either.

Q: Right.

A: And later when I ma -- ma -- I married Martin Niemoeller, he urged me to study about it more, and gave me books. And what that led to was my conversion to Judaism, because it's a logical way, you know? I found my roots, that's what -- how Elie Wiesel put it. I -- I told him I'm going to be Jewish, and he said, "Of course, you want to go back to your roots."

Q: Mm-hm. But during the war period --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- that's not the direction that you feel you're going in. You just simply are -- you're angry at the church for what it's not doing.

A: No, I'm angry at the church, but I would never have formally left it.

Q: Yes.

A: Because being a member of the Confessing Church was a sign, an outward sign that you were not for the Nazis.

Q: Right, right. No matter what it wasn't doing, it still was --

A: Exactly.

Q: -- clearly anti-Nazi.

A: Exactly.

Q: Right. Now tell me just a -- a -- the little story about Leni Riefenstahl's house and what was going on --

A: Oh, yes, absolutely.

Q: -- in the basement.

A: Mm-hm. Well, after -- that must have been around the 20th of July, '44, when my father -- first the Gestapo came and -- and took me on the 21st. But --

Q: Do you want to tell the story about the assassination plot, and then this -- and then go to Leni Riefenstahl, would that make more sense?

A: Oh no, we -- I can go back and forth.

Q: Okay.

A: And -- and after my father -- it was -- must have been around that time that we stopped being -- being part of that circle hiding Jews because the Gestapo -- and they always come unannounced, were searching the house all the time, and nobody was served by that. So, through a man I met on a train -- and my instinct always told me he's okay, or she's okay, or not, I found entry into a very interesting group of resisters in Dahlem who specialized in forging papers, forging money, and the whole thing. And ha -- hiding people, or sending them into hiding,

German army deserters, Jews, whoever came to their door, they were taken care of. And that all took place in the gardener's house, adjacent to Leni Riefenstahl's beautiful villa, which reminded one of Hitler's Berkoff. It was probably built with B-Berkoff in mind. I never saw the lady, she was out filming on th -- all through the war. But she had just been married to a German officer by the name of Jarkop, he was a major. And he popped up once in awhile, so we had to be very, very careful. And I remember going there once, there was the so-called caretaker, with his so-called wife. They weren't married, you know, but they gained, somehow, Leni Riefenstahl's trust, and were taking care -- you know, with all the bombing, care of the house and garden, and very fast through this -- this man, Hans Andres was his name, and he was a funny existence. He was very much anti-Nazi, and -- but he was dealing on the black market, I think, and black market meant money, money, money. And money was always needed. And in the cellar of that house there were machine -- first of all there was an arsenal of weapons. And then there was a money forging machine, and a money printing machine and -- and paper forging machine, and all that, and they -- they took me into that, you know, into their trust, they knew they could, and the s -- as soon as somebody had come, and there were -- usually they were received in the kitchen, and got something to eat and to drink. And with the slightest noise that was not expected, there was an opening in the floor through which you could go down in the cellar. They were quickly pushed down, and the carpet o-over them. And one day I was there, the caretaker, Powell and I were there. Powell was wearing an apron, green gardener's apron when there was a knock at the door. God, what is it now? There were two deserters in the kitchen. Down with the deserters. It was Leni Riefenstahl's dear husband. And Powell said to me, "Keep him out of the kitchen." And he pushed me -- bu -- bu -- bu -- made me drag him into the bedroom, you know. I was red -- not ready, but prepared for anything. And -- and he would -- and Powell said, "You

know, we've just wiped the floor of the kitchen, just will -- if you give us a minute." So I went into the little bedroom with him. An extremely stupid looking man by the way, and -- and then he just wanted to see if everything was in order. Oh yes, of course, Herr Major, of course Herr Major. At that time I didn't know yet who he was. There hadn't been time, you know, was just somebody. And then he came into the kitchen, looked around, everything seemed fine, everything had been pushed into drawers, and -- and bottles into the closets and all that. And then he said -- and the car was -- staff car was waiting for him, and he said now he -- he had to go back to the front. The front was probably 10 miles away, or 20 miles away. And then Powell told me, "You know who that was? That was Leni Riefenstahl's husband." And that was the closest call I've --

Q: That you had?

A: -- that I remember. And Hans was the one who furnished all of us with a weapon. That weapon, a little Ortgiess [indecipherable] that saved my life and shot an SS man.

Q: So that you got from him?

A: I got that from Hans. Because -- I write in my book it's -- was my father's --

Q: Yes, but it wasn't.

A: -- it really the -- no, my father had a similar one. But it was Hans' --

Q: I see.

A: -- who suggested that I always carry it.

Q: Carry it.

A: Yeah. In -- at the time I had been in -- I had been -- the theaters had been closed by the führer on the first of September. I had never lived to see the opening night for "Taming of the Shrew" in -- in Essen. And I was now a fr-free -- a free for all, what was I going to do? They came and

inducted me into the -- into the flak, the wom -- you know, the women for the flak, wh-what is the flak? Anti --

Q: Anti-aircraft.

A: -- aircraft. And I went for -- for an interview there, I mean, that was demanded. And a absolutely horrible woman, you know, a sergeant as a -- she was a Nazi, and she -- she really was -- was ready to let me have it as a daughter of a Junker, and -- and -- and a pra -- a jailbird and all that. And so it was agreed that by the first of October, I would start there. And I said to myself, no, I'm not going to do that. And one day I opened a newspaper, and in the -- were few newspapers at [indecipherable] time because of the paper shortage. And I opened the newspaper and there is an add that urgently girls -- females, were sought to replace men to go to the front, to train horses. A remonté -- a remonté is a ho -- a young horse not trained yet. So, outside of the Berlin there was the cavalries -- was the cavalry. And I went for an exam, and I was accepted, and I went back and I went myself to tell this female sergeant that the cavalry outranked [indecipherable] you know [indecipherable] and she cou -- wouldn't get me. And then I went into the -- in the cavalry, and --

Q: And you were trained as a young -- this is one of the things your father --

A: Yeah, yes, yes.

Q: -- wanted you to learn to do is -- is ride horses.

A: Yes, and I had a talent for riding, for dressage especially. I was always afraid jumping, to jump, always. Never lost that fear.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah, I -- before I was thrown so many times. Well, anyway, w-we -- and you know, training a horse from scratch is a very, very taxing thing.

Q: Right, right.

A: A horse doesn't like it.

Q: Right.

A: Not one bit. But we had to do it, I had six or seven horses every day, si -- ride six or seven hours a day. But you know, we were in a -- in a -- in a hut, in a barrack, with three bedrooms, all of us girls, and most of them were from nobility, because after all, who could ride, you know?

Q: Yeah.

A: And they were all, with few exceptions, very, very nice. I still have one I'm in contact with.

Q: Yes?

A: And it was very exhausting, but it -- I had a wonderful commander, th-the -- the colonel, Colonel Behnke. I call him different in my -- in my book. And he -- I told him -- I -- I -- I relieved myself of my -- you know, I told him of my father, and he was so good, and he said ma - - at that time my father was in a prison in Berlin, and we didn't know where. I had to search for him. I found him there, but only because that nice colonel let me go to Berlin on some kind of a mission, you know. I was wearing uniform, riding boots, e-especially t -- all tailored for us, you know? And well we -- I would stay there until the end of -- of the war, probably.

Q: Right.

A: And in the stables, helping us, were Russians, Russian prisoners of war. Every morning a troop of bedraggled le -- figures came from that -- the -- the -- the camp, you know, the POW camp to help us in the stables. And they were having a wonderful time with us. We gave them bread, the stables were warm. I once visited that camp to identify a certain man, and it was -- there were vi -- on -- they were sleeping on the -- they didn't even have straw, was stone floors.

And what -- what one of them told me they drag -- they dreaded nothing more than the Sundays when they didn't have to work, what were they supposed to do? And well that's --

Q: Let's go back a little bit.

A: Yeah, please.

Q: Cause when you --

A: Yeah.

Q: [indecipherable] ahead.

A: Yeah, yeah, of course, I'm going too far.

Q: There -- there -- there are two things I want to ask you. One -- one is, what rumors are you hearing about what the Nazis are doing to Jews in Poland?

A: Oh, no rumors, we listened to the BBC.

Q: And you -- and what are you told, di -- you -- did you listen to th --

A: The Voice of America.

Q: Yes.

A: Da da da daa.

Q: Okay.

A: Oh yes, it's --

Q: And what did you --

A: -- when I was away from home --

Q: You were --

A: -- I heard nothing.

Q: You heard nothing?

A: Nothing.

Q: But when you were back in Berlin --

A: Back in Berlin, in --

Q: In 40 -- you're back there by '43 or '42?

A: No, no, I was -- we are talking now '44, and I was allowed to go to Berlin from time to time, even though there was -- no other one of the girls was allowed out. I was still searching for my father. I found he -- I found his, the prison, the attastrasse number three, and --

Q: No, I'm asking now before, before he's imprisoned.

A: Yeah. Oh.

Q: A little before the assassination plot.

A: Yes?

Q: Cause he's -- okay?

A: Before?

Q: Do -- do you hear -- d -- are people talking about they're murdering Jews, are they saying --

A: Oh, yes.

Q: You -- you know this?

A: Of course, they were -- there were rumors but we didn't -- we didn't put too much importance on those rumors. But we heard the name Auschwitz on the BBC.

Q: Right, but -- but did you believe what they were saying?

A: Of course.

Q: You did?

A: Of course.

Q: Yeah.

A: And at that time in our house was a Jewish woman posing as a seamstress. She was Frau Thiele, but her real name was Rittenburg. And her son and -- and -- and husband had already been deported to Auschwitz. They were -- they didn't survive. She -- she by the way is the only one we know by name that sur -- that survived in Ditte's house.

Q: Really?

A: And went to England right away. And my father, after his demise from -- from the German -- from the army, with the help of Canaris, he escaped the concentration camp then. He was at home, and shortly before the 20th of July he went to -- to the estate of -- of friends of ours to be away for the time, and return right after to resume his planned post as a liaison man to England.

Q: But now you -- does he know about the July 20th plot?

A: Well, he -- the -- the -- the -- the --

Q: His part --

A: -- meetings had taken place in our house.

Q: Taken place in your house, right.

A: And now the last question that had to be solved was who is going to do it? Must be somebody willing --

Q: Right.

A: -- able, and still allowed in Hitler's presence.

Q: Right.

A: Because at that time he was a full grown paranoiac, and Stauffenberg was still -- still permitted in his presence. And there was a briefing that was to take place at hit -- at the wolf's lair, his headquarters, on the 20th of July, and my cu -- my cousin Werner, and he -- Stauffenberg and his adjutant Werner von Haften, they flew by military plane of course, up to ca -- to -- to east

Prussia. And in with them they had the attaché case with the two British made bombs. And full of hope that maybe this time. And they entered the building, but my cousin Werner was not allowed to enter the room -- the conference room. First of all, the conference was a -- a ba -- supposed to take place in an underground bunker, where the bomb -- the explosion would have torn everyone to bits. At the last moment, it was -- it was transferred to a -- to a -- a hut, a light hut, where most of the pressure went out the windows.

Q: Right.

A: Hitler again, because a wa -- the -- of the intense heat that day -- and as you know, I wa -- I'm not going to ta -- to -- to -- to talk at detail about how it then went, but Stauffenberg put the bo -- he had excused himself for changing his shirt or something like that before he reported to the führer, and had done what had to be done to the bombs in order to set them for time.

Q: Right.

A: And nothing could go wrong, really, nothing. So he -- he had been planned on the -- on this underground bunker now, and that. He put it underneath a heavy oak table. And then 24 -- 24 people attended, and wa -- wa -- the -- the bombs were set for a certain time, so my cousin was -- was advised to -- to disturb, in order to get him out, he was allegedly to be called on the phone. And Stauffenberg went out and the two made it back, with a chauffeured car back to the airport and on the plane to Berlin. But already on their way, they heard the explosion and they knew that everybody must have got -- been killed. Three people were killed, 11 were heavily wounded, but Hitler was not among them.

Q: Right.

A: He stood there, his trousers in -- in shreds, and one arm was paralyzed and all that, but he was expecting Mussolini that same afternoon, visiting him, and he made it. He was bereft of his

speech for awhile, but he again -- and he made it by the time that -- that we were home, I was -- I was outside of Berlin at the estate of a friend of mine, made it back to Berlin. And at my -- shortly after midnight we turned on the radio and there was Hitler speaking.

Q: Right. Did you -- did you know about the plot before --

A: Oh yes --

Q: Before?

A: That was the trouble. Too many people knew, too many people knew.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And I remember the day before I went to the countryside, be-before -- it must have been on the 15th of July, I took a walk with my father in the neighborhood and from a lantern right close to our house, hung a German soldier. I was not worth dying for the führer, you know. And my ha -- my father had been let out of the -- Hitler's prison. He was -- wait a mo -- no, no, no, no, no, no, no, wrong, wrong, wrong.

Q: You were talking about [indecipherable].

A: We are now '44.

Q: Right.

A: Yes, of course. And -- and we -- an-and by this -- by the church my father stood, took me by the shoulders and he said, "Something is going to happen." And it'll happen tomorrow, whatever it was. "We have to do it, and it will -- it will not work. It will not -- I have a feeling," he said, "it will not work." As Alan -- keep for -- no, forget. Anyway, he said, "It will not work, but we have to show that some people cared." And I knew then that he did not count himself above this err -- among the survivors. And he said, "When all is over, I want you to seek your luck under another star. You -- and for you and your children." And I've never forgotten that, he want --

Q: Was that the first time he said that to you?

A: That was the only time he said that to me.

Q: The only time?

A: Yeah. And we went home arv -- you know, and then they -- there came f -- my father left for the Mackensan's, and I -- I was visiting my cousin Ilse, I came back and -- after it happened, and the next day at six o'clock in the morning the Gestapo came and searched the house. And my fa -
-

Q: But your mother's there.

A: My mother is there.

Q: And you were there.

A: My mother is there, but I tell you something now that shows -- demonstrates the naiveté of th -- all the plotters. They were not trained mur-murderers, they were gentlemen, you know? And on my father's desk -- oh, you're father's absent. Yes, he is with so and so, you know. On my father's d-desk is a little piece of paper and on it is a telephone number. And the Gestapo man takes it, and says, "Whose number is that?" My mother said, "I don't know." You know? And -- and she snatches it away from him. And then he -- she tries the number, or allegedly that number, it was a different number, and she said, "I can't get through." And she says, "You know, give it to me, I'll try from the upstairs phone." And upstairs she manages -- it was pencil written, to erase two of the numbers and falsify them. The number was that of Goerdeler, who was going to be the head of the new government. And they never found out.

Q: [inaudible]

A: That was my mother. Typical. Well, anyway, that was --

Q: So you're saying that in some way she was, if not smarter, more strategic?

A: Oh --

Q: She saw, yes.

A: -- she was smart too, and cunning.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Cunning, yes, and --

Q: And also pretty brave.

A: -- they never even took my mother in for -- for an interrogation, they took me.

Q: But they took you.

A: Oh yes, because I was -- not so much because I was my father's daughter, but because I was mu -- Werner's cousin.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But you know, I made them believe that I -- Werner and I were lovers, which was not too far from the truth, but -- we had fallen in love as a matter of fact. And -- and sh -- you know, I -- I don't know -- know about that, we made love, we da-da da-da. And they -- and, you know, my father had trained me, he had said, when you get into the hands of the Gestapo, only answer with yes or no. And when they get friendly, then beware.

Q: Then beware.

A: Then beware, yeah. And they got very friendly. And I played stupid, and -- and during the second interrogation, the Gestapo man by the name of Wipper, [indecipherable] Wipper -- we never found him after the war. He called another man in because he wouldn't hit anybody and that one let me have it.

Q: He hit you?

A: He hit me in the face with his -- with -- he had a -- a bo -- twice the size. And I was bleeding like a -- like a -- how does one bleed?

Q: And was -- di -- did he hit you just because he felt like hitting you, or he was --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- asking you a question and you didn't answer?

A: Yeah, yeah. He didn't even ask any question anyway, he just let me have it to prepare me for the next session, you know. And then -- but then they let me go. And on the way downstairs, cowering on a -- in a -- in a chair, I saw a beautiful girl, classmate from Eberswalde, who was le -- the legitimate bride of my f -- my -- my cousin Werner von Haften. He was a big one with women, you know? And she to this day, acts like his widow. I've never told her that he and I were a bit attracted to one another. And she is the only one of the family, that family, who never married. Well, anyway, I went home, and --

Q: So they -- did they believe you, that you were having a relationship with Werner?

A: Oh yes.

Q: They did.

A: I -- I only said I only know him personally. I've not the faintest idea.

Q: Right.

A: And then, you know, on the 23rd, they came for my father. It was a Saturday or a Sunday. And then they came [indecipherable] sie holen [indecipherable]

Q: And this injury, how bad was the injury to you?

A: Well, I had a black eye, you know, and a s -- and a scratch from the ring.

Q: And you -- was your eardrum punctured, was it --

A: Punctured, yes. Excuse me, was this side.

Q: It was the right side.

A: This is my -- this is my -- this is my -- the punctured ear. Oh, it was -- it was -- it was ter -- it was so humiliating, you know, and the -- you feel so helpless against that bru --

Q: Right.

A: But I found the brute again, right after the war.

Q: You did find him?

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And what did you do?

A: I reported him to the British.

Q: And was he arrested?

A: Yes, he was arrested, he got a few years, I believe, and then he died, unfortunately. Was a unbelievable story.

Q: Before we talk about your father's arrest, how -- how do you understand what they were assassinating in assassinating Hitler? What were they trying to stop? In -- as far as you understood, what were they really doing?

A: As far as I understood, they were going to kill him, and when he was gone, getting rid of all the others would be child's play. Maybe it would have been, you know? But that was the main goal, to get him out of the picture.

Q: And they were --

A: The head of the snake.

Q: And the snake --

A: Was the Nazi.

Q: I -- I unders -- no, I understand that. But what did the Nazis mean to these people? Because they were -- they were in the army, they were -- they -- they were --

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: -- part of the system.

A: Well, it -- it -- they all had different motives. Some of them were true anti-Nazis from the beginning on, joining the army when they were forced to, you know, because what else could you do but die, and if you died your whole family was gone, probably. And others went along, because they thought maybe it's the right thing to do. And yet others, they really, they waited until it was clear the war was lost. So they are -- they -- they joined -- and among those who died a miserable death on the -- on the -- th-th-the piano wire, was a German general, who -- it's -- it's documented what he said, quite late, maybe '42 - '43, he said, "Well, you can think about Hitler what you want. The only good thing is that he rid us of the Jews." There were those people, too. So there were not -- and the major -- the minor -- the -- the -- the real from the heart resisters were in the minority.

Q: Really?

A: Absolutely --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- absolutely.

Q: So it's a very mixed --

A: A very mixed group --

Q: -- mixed motives, yeah.

A: -- but you know, they make a big thing about them in Germany now. Every year they have ceremonies and ji -- th-the f -- on the 55th -- no, o -- o -- in -- in si -- '94 I went and the guest of

honor was Simon Wiesenthal, uh-huh. And that was wonderful meeting him. He was thin, so fragile and little. And now he's still alive, having lost his wife.

Q: Uh-huh, right.

A: Yeah. No, I don't have much in common with the -- with the people of the 20th of July, just a few ma -- family members. Course the family has tremendously grown and intermarried, you know.

Q: And your father's motives for joining this is clearly one's that you're telling [indecipherable]

A: One of conscience.

Q: One of conscience.

A: Absolutely, one of conscience.

Q: Right, right.

A: And he was ready to -- he was ready to sacrifice his life.

Q: In order to stop this.

A: And he knew he would have to.

Q: Right. We have to stop the tape and change it.

A: Okay.

End of Tape Five

Beginning Tape Six

Q: Sibylle, the third day after the assassination, the Gestapo co -- your father is -- is home.

A: My father is not home at that point.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: The f -- the -- the -- two days after the -- was probably on the 22nd that they got me.

Q: Uh-huh, okay.

A: And my father came home if I am correct, while I was at the Gestapo because he saw how I looked. Now, I went twice --

Q: Really?

A: -- that was the 21st and the 22nd, and on the 23rd they came and got him.

Q: And they knew that he was part of this?

A: Oh yes, yes. It was all documented, you know, by -- they didn't think much of secrets. Like the -- that is German, b -- Germanic, because the -- the -- if -- if they had not been so -- so thorough we would never know about how many people di -- were killed in Auschwitz, and so -- it had to be -- all had to ha -- have order.

Q: So when he was taken, did you expect your father to be killed?

A: Yes.

Q: And he probably expected that, too.

A: Yes.

Q: And you knew all these other people were being killed?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you know -- you knew?

A: Yes, one -- one after the other. And we -- of course, we didn't know then by what brutal means they were being killed.

Q: Yes.

A: And then he had -- he disappeared, nobody could find him.

Q: And how did you find out that people were being killed?

A: I went from one pr --

Q: No, no, not about yo -- not where your father is. How are you being informed that --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- people connected with the plot were being killed?

A: I really -- all in all it was 5,500 people. I do not remember, I really -- how -- the means by which we were informed. I think it was probably the BBC.

Q: But then it would be after your father was taken, don't you think?

A: Yes.

Q: Would you --

A: Of course.

Q: So you d -- you don't -- you don't know what's going on in those two days, necessarily, before he's taken?

A: Oh, no, no, no, no, no. No, and with most of the people Hitler took his time. He put them on trial, trial, you know?

Q: I see. Well -- that's right, yes, cause they're s --

A: Only the first four were -- were -- were shot. Albrecht, Stauffenberg, Merzenkronheim, and my cousin.

Q: Werner?

A: Werner.

Q: Was shot [indecipherable] also.

A: Yeah, Werner was shot.

Q: He was young?

A: Well, not e -- just 30.

Q: Yes.

A: Yeah. But like all the Brauchitsch, he had -- his mother was a Brauchitsch, you know, they -- he looked very, very young. Young and soft, but he wasn't.

Q: He wasn't.

A: He was determined, also determined to sacrifice his life without thinking.

Q: Were you in the house when they -- they took your father?

A: Yes, yeah.

Q: Were they brutal with him? Do you remember?

A: No.

Q: They weren't?

A: No, no, no, no, no. The Gestapo -- with the Jews they might have been brutal, not with people like, you know, in this case.

Q: Even -- even s --

A: No, they were very -- they were very matter of fact, polite. He could take a toothbrush, or a tis -- a little -- pack a little something. And then he went between them.

Q: Even though he's connected with a plot to kill Hitler?

A: Yeah.

Q: Isn't -- isn't that --

A: Yeah well, he did -- you know, you di -- didn't know how many people were watching in the street.

Q: Yeah.

A: But ah -- no.

Q: So he takes the little bag and he goes, and he goes in a car?

A: He goes down the block, across the -- a-a-around the corner, they wouldn't -- they wouldn't park in front of the house. And there he s -- he is seated between two SS men in the back, that's was -- and one in the front, and the driver. And the driver turns around and says, "Oh my God, Herr Baron." It was the taxi driver who always took him to the station when he went to Holland.

Q: So it's a taxi driver, it's not --

A: No, he had been inducted, you know, there were no taxis.

Q: I see, so he's inducted --

A: No, he had been inducted.

Q: -- to work.

A: Yes.

Q: And ha -- and this is what your father told you after he came back, that that's what happened in the car?

A: Well, he -- during the brief hours that I s -- I saw him, yeah. Yes, of course.

Q: Right.

A: You know he -- when -- his release was -- well anyway, he was gone, he was -- he had disappeared, and I went then already in the -- in the -- in the cavalry and before, went from prison to prison, dolled up to the teeth, you know, high heels and -- I was quite -- quite pretty then. And I went in and I just -- what was my excuse? Oh yes, I was told my father was here. So

th -- the idiotic guards let me in and I was wa -- these hallways of the Lehrter strasse prison, that was the military prison.

Q: And did you go from prison to prison like this? [indecipherable] find him?

A: I went f -- yeah. No, never heard of him, must be an error. I said, "Oh well, [indecipherable] is all mine, and all that." And the last prison Lehrter strasse drei, I w -- I standing in the hall, a door opens of -- an office door opens and out comes a dashing SS man, black uniform. And I just stood there, and I see a blackboard with the most illustrious names, and I see my father's name. That was a list of the -- big, you know, in big le -- white letters. And then I re -- when he came back he said what could he do for me, and I said, "I -- I know my father's here," and I da da da da, and, "Can I see him?" "No, you have to -- you have to -- you -- well, si -- fill certain forms and you -- and -- and maybe," -- and I got home and at least we knew where he was. So my mother somehow arranged -- and I do not know how it was possible. The first time we went to bring him things. A down -- a featherbed, I remember that.

Q: Really?

A: Cause it was -- yeah, a feather blanket, very light. And the most important things were the thermos bottles filled with real coffee. In the SS they made a sport out of it, accepting it from you and then dropping it. Which was so terrible, you know, but it -- nothing happened. My mother and I, we went -- we were led in -- we were told we were not allowed to use the Hitler salute. Terrible punishment. People like us, you know.

Q: You were --

A: Yeah that -- we were --

Q: -- you were not good enough.

A: -- we were crushed.

Q: Yeah, I bet.

A: And th -- we went in and on the benches there sat also wives, mothers, you know, and -- but we -- if we recognized anybody we didn't let g -- let n -- let anybody know. So we sat and waited, and from time to time, the-there was a little booth with a black SS man behind it, who would call out names. And a woman would get up with her little package, spend some time there, give the package, and then leave. It was our turn and my mother and I went to the window and there was a man looking like Satan himself. Really, a bit like Adolf Eichmann. Black, piercing eyes and he took the thermos bottle, examined everything and said, quite politely, well that was - - that was it, and then on our -- we -- we turned around and then he called me back. Oh God, what have I done now? And he said -- he didn't even lift his eyes to mine, he went on writing, and he said, there now in that position, "Do you have -- could you -- do you think you -- next time you come you have some more bread, or anything to eat?" And I -- I went speechless, and he said, "You know, I have many prisoners here who don't have relatives." That was Oberscharführer Knuth.

Q: Knuth?

A: K-n-u-t-h. And oh -- h-he was -- he was the t-turncoat too, you know? He realized at some point in his career that he'd joined the wrong party. He did a wonderful thing, and by the way the Nazi, th -- his own colleagues took care of him, he didn't survive the war.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: Was found out. But our friend, to be the minis -- social mi-minister of s -- Teodor Haubach, he was a Socialist. Dr. Haubach, a lawyer. He was -- he was also in Lehrter strasse. He had been condemned to death and he was -- they had to carry him on a stretcher to his execution, can you imagine? And his -- his fiancé had received -- had received -- which we did not, permission to

see him at Christmas, visit him in the -- in -- in the -- in the prison. And she went -- the way that I just described to you, to that window, and Knuth, you know, with a face like that, he said, "Wait a little, wait a little, until I'm rid of all the people here." And then he turned to her and he said -- urged her ga -- s-summoned her into his office, and there was a little office behind, and there was a Christmas tree, a burning -- with burning candles, and there was Teodor Haubach. He had arranged a farewell meeting for the two. Can you imagine that? Must have been very emotional. And then he was hanged. But much emotion involved in that.

Q: So how many times were you able to see your father in this prison?

A: I d -- I never saw my father. My mo -- ba -- a -- to -- to gi -- to deliver things.

Q: You could, but you couldn't see him?

A: I could -- no. My -- my mother only, saw him.

Q: And what did she say about him? Did she tal -- tell you?

A: Oh he -- yeah, yeah, she -- he looked terrible, and of course, while you were waiting there, for educational reasons they dragged by prisoners at has -- had just been tortured, or led to torture. Yeah, that was the way. And then one day it must have -- it was on Good Friday, 19 -- oh no, it was -- it's still March, and I was released from the -- from the cavalry because I had double pneumonia -- no, wa -- pleurisy -- pleurisy. And spent time at home with -- I'm glad. You know, it was a good idea to be with my mother, and my mother had tried to free -- get my father freed by Kaltenbrunner. Kaltenbrunner was a darling. And he had not received her. And then one day she tried it again, sh -- that woman went into -- in Berlin, to Kaltenbrunner's office, and -- and decided not to leave until she had seen him. And she came back, she was, you know, finished. She said that he -- when she walked into Kaltenbrunner, who decided to see her, office -- he was one of the worst -- he didn't even get up to greet her, and let her stand. And she said, "My

husband is a -- you know, the last survivor of four brothers.” And so on. “Had nothing to do with,” da da da. And then he re -- she -- sh -- he said nothing, and then he -- she went -- she went home. And then on Good Friday, beginning of April it must have been, I was home when a telephone came -- telephone call came to the house, we still at the beginning of April, had a working telephone. Still it went into the middle of the -- of the month. And on the phone was my father, and he said, “I’m free. Come and get me.” And we decided -- I said, “Should I pick you up from the prison?” He said, “No, no, no, no, on the S-bahn station,” you know, the suburban station, on the S-bahn station, and I -- I don’t know, I must have flown on angel’s wings, because th -- ow -- the -- the -- the -- the -- the subway, the buses, if they came, they came very, very seldom, but I -- somehow I made it and running up the steps to the -- the -- to the up -- upper platform. And I was mobbed with people, I couldn’t find my father, because that figure that stretched out his arms to me had nothing in common with my father. He was -- had a gray face, he was completely bloated -- he had a very slender face -- completely bloated from the -- you know, from hunger, edema. He looked terrible and we sank into each other’s arms and just cried and cried. And behind my father, there was a touching sight, was a young SS man, 16, inducted into the SS of course, and had tears streaming down his face because of that sight. And then my father noticed that he had left his blanket behind. That was a -- you know, precious in those days. So the young man ran back t -- and then came back with it.

Q: Really?

A: With the blanket, and then we somehow made it home, and sl -- you know, slept in the cellar and then -- it was -- it was the -- until -- it was the 23rd of April then, on the -- in the afternoon.

Q: S-So your father is in prison from July --

A: July til April.

Q: -- July '44, until April '45.

A: Yeah, yeah. And that's -- you know, if he had not been in such a terrible condition, he would have had a better chance to survive what was coming to him.

Q: And so how long then are you working with the horses?

A: With the horse --

Q: It's af -- is it after he's arrested --

A: Yes, yes.

Q: -- that you start?

A: September, you know?

Q: Uh-huh.

A: After the first of September, when they closed the theaters, and I was w --

Q: Right.

A: -- nobody was allowed to do nothing. And I was then -- in January I came down with pneumon -- pleurisy, and in March they released me, and that's when I went home. And I got a little better, but never completely better, you know, and then we're talking about the end of April, my father is home. And -- and just he was home not more than five days maybe, three, five days, I don't remember. And on the 23rd, you know, I said I would like to go f -- yeah, that was the reason. Potsdam had been bombed, something nobody ever expected. And in Potsdam was my old grandmother, my father's mother. I said, "I'm going to go on a bicycle and see if Grandma is still alive." And I took the bicycle, steel helmet on, of course my -- parts of my uniform, thank God, you know. And my ortkeys. And somehow made it to Potsdam on a bicy -- a bicycle. The other reason why I went was I wanted to see how my -- my horse, you know, she

was already mine, how she w -- wa -- w-what happened to them, because the unit that had been stationed in Baseco, east of Berlin, had been stationed -- had been moved to Potsdam.

Q: I see.

A: So the Russians had been in Baseco a long time ago. And I found my grandmother alive, and I found her -- her dis -- dip -- her com -- her apartment undisturbed. Her maid, Marta was there. And I could tell my grandmother that her son, her last remaining son was alive. And then I left and made my way north of Potsdam. There were so many corpses right, left, and center, and cadavers from horses. And I made it to the barracks where the cavalry unit was now stationed. And I fell into the commanders arms and he says, "You can't go back to Berlin, they just blew up all the bridges, and we are moving out. We are moving west." So I --

Q: When was that?

A: -- I -- on the [indecipherable] at the head of the whole troop -- behind us were the Russians, each leading two horses, and they walked on that trip. And we had to go -- the temple that the -- that the Russians were able to go, you know? Because we didn't lose one to lose one man or one -- or one -- or one horse. And my two favorite Russians, Fjodur and -- and Pawlik, they were walking right behind me, and I was on the horse, and the commander, and the major and we walked -- we walked west. Was -- it was a night already. And the second night I fell asleep on a horse. And I woke up, had I not worn the steel helmet on my -- I would have cracked open like a coconut. On -- and I remember seeing --

Q: Fell off?

A: -- Pawlik's eyes, you know, he picked me up and he said, "Kaput, kaput, nichts kaput, nichts kaput." And then he lifted me up on the horse again.

Q: And you're riding Arabella all this time?

A: Nobody else could.

Q: [indecipherable] nobody else, right.

A: Yeah. Nobody else could, and then we finally were met by the American 82nd Airborne after what -- 12 nights.

Q: Did -- did you consider this a liberation?

A: Do I consider it as a -- ha! It was wonderful. I'd known all about the 82nd Airborne.

Q: Really?

A: [indecipherable] oh yes, BBC, you know? And it was wonderful, it was wonderful.

Liberation, yes. And --

Q: You were in Berlin when there is bombing? This -- y- you were in Berlin --

A: Yes.

Q: -- when there was a lot of bombing, right?

A: I don't think I missed a single wa -- a sing -- single raid, and --

Q: Right. That was pretty scary, right?

A: -- I was -- well, the only one in my family who was never scared was my mother because she had the second sight, whatever you call that, nothing's going to happen. Nothing is going to happen to the house. While my father and I, and later on Liyala, we were scared to death by the bombs. And you know, it was like resurrection, surviving a -- a raid. And fo -- wa -- you know, I was br-brought up to praise the bombers, you know, who put our -- and to -- I saw that city die inch by inch.

Q: Right.

A: It was terribly sad, but it had to be. But you know, I was liberated by the Americans, and the Russians came and there was -- one of the famous meetings on the Elbe, cause that -- that's

where we were, between the Russians and the -- there was only one meeting. After that there were no more friendly meetings. That was it. I mean some of the G.I.'s almost died of the consume of alcohol, you know. They weren't used to that, but that was fraternization, and I was be -- left behind and th -- with the Russians, and was -- and was liberated, saved by young -- a young American officer. I know his name but I told him since he had a -- his rencontre with a -- with the army later, and received a -- not for that, for other things he did, received a dishonorable discharge, which to this day follows him. Could not remain in the army, but he became a famous lawyer, and after 40 years I found that he has a practice in Florida. So we were reunited again. Yeah, and then I -- the British came and then --

Q: How chaotic was it? How difficult were those first few months?

A: Wonderful.

Q: It was wonderful?

A: It was wonderful. I was in that village, I was hired by the Americans right away to be an interpreter.

Q: Interpreter, yes.

A: Which meant that I was -- could be disturbed any day of -- any time, night and day. And you know, they've -- the famous, the most famous thing tha -- things they found things, I'm saying, people that are found, were hiding SS men. And some of them were already half beaten to death by the population or by -- by their victims. So it was -- there was never a dull moment.

Q: But when you think about the whole sit -- maybe your situation was a little bit less chaotic, because you need to ha -- but --

A: It was very chaotic, but very v -- very nice.

Q: It was very nice.

A: Very nice.

Q: Do you think it was nice for all the refugees that were going --

A: It was terrible.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: It was unbelievable --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- because we saw them passed when we -- when we moved along these two -- 12 nights, what we passed, these -- these thousands and thousands of refugees, falling, and then attacked by the low flying planes --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- and falling into the -- by the side of the road. How many identification I took, you know --

Q: Right.

A: -- can't even tell you. Yeah, and on the way, before we were liberated, the last day before -- before we met with the Americans, we -- we collected our tri -- train, and ready to move on, and the officers, the -- the veteran, he was in the rank of a major, and I don't remember his name, and the colonel and I, we were waiting for all the others to come close so we could move on. When the SS man came with a -- an SS man came with a -- on a motorcycle, and he said -- asked for identification and he told us we had no business going west, we should go east and defend Berlin. Fine, great. So without a word, it was only a glance we exchanged, the vet -- the veterinarian -- the veterinarian, a thin blonde man, and I wi -- drew at the same time the pistols, and we shot at the same time. And he just sl -- slowly was sloping over his bike, and we still heard the engine going when -- while we moved away. Yeah, we killed him. I don't know which bullet killed him, but I don't [indecipherable] my shot.

Q: And you had no --

A: We had --

Q: -- it was a completely automatic response on your --

A: -- completely, because we sho -- it sounded like one shot.

Q: Have you ever shot? Did you ever shoot anything in your life?

A: Oh yes.

Q: You were trai --

A: Oh yes.

Q: -- you were trained with a gun?

A: Oh, my father taught me, of course.

Q: This is when you were younger?

A: Yes.

Q: I see.

A: I was a regular sharpshooter.

Q: Really?

A: So, I have a -- maybe I did, but maybe he did, I don't know.

Q: Uh-huh. But that's the first human being you shot. That seems a little --

A: And hopefully the only one.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah. I have one other person that I probab -- I caused the death of another person, probably of a Russian prisoner. My friend Pawlik, and -- you know, that we took along. He was such a beautiful little human being, he was -- looked like 16, you know, with -- with al -- infected eyes, and sometimes he was crying, and I said, "Pawlik, what is it?" And he said we have such a one --

in his halting German, he could speak a little German -- bad, bad man in our outfit, he is a commissar, a commissar. And he is giving them hell for being on friendly terms with the Germans. And that's when I went to inspect that -- that camp, and was pointed out the commissar, and the next day he was gone. I don't know what happened to him. But Powell, and Fjodur, and all the others were very relieved. But you know, Powell never made it home, you know what happened to the -- to the -- to the Soviet prisoners. The British, they were -- they made it safely into American hands and then were handed back to the Soviet --

Q: Oh, back to the Russians, right.

A: Yeah.

Q: And then they were killed.

A: Well, that is --

Q: But what happened to Powell, your friend --

A: I don't --

Q: -- did he -- he didn't go -- did he go back?

A: I don't know.

Q: You don't know.

A: I don't think a single one of them survived.

Q: Yeah.

A: According to what you now know.

Q: Now in -- in your book you talk about a lot of rapes that happened to women, and a lot of s-sex all over the place.

A: They raped anything that moved.

Q: Now, you're talking about the Russians, you talking about the Americans as well?

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

Q: You're talking about Russians.

A: Russia. There were alleged rapes by -- by the -- the Americans, but they had been invited, really. But the Russians raped anything -- I think only female, no -- no boys were raped, was -- so between the ages of three and 103. It was absolutely terrifying.

Q: You also said your mother was never raped. Or she -- wa -- she said --

A: Well, I'll tell you --

Q: -- that's what she said.

A: -- we -- w-we agreed in the family we wouldn't talk about it.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: But my mother knows she, and I believe her, that soon as the Russian -- and now she was alone, my father was gone, you know --

Q: Right.

A: -- they had taken him from in front of the house where he was sweeping the sidewalk. A truck came by and collected all the men, you know, and only one came back from [indecipherable] and that was our neighbor who had been in the party and was well fed and younger. And my mother's --

Q: Wait, which party had he -- had he been in?

A: Nazi.

Q: The Nazi party?

A: Yeah. Across the street.

Q: So you di -- so --

A: The neighbor across the street.

Q: So why do you think the Russians pi -- did -- do you think they picked up the -- these men, including your father cause they thought they were Nazis or what? You don't know.

A: Probably, but there are various theories about that. In the -- on the truck was an old friend of my father who said, "I told the Russians to drive by your house. I've lost all my documents and now they came to -- to arrest me, and only you can tell them who I am." And my father said, "Of course, I'll come with you." And my mother at the last moment said, "Here is -- it might be a cold evening, take a jacket." And that was the last we ever saw of him.

Q: And that was the last time --

A: Yeah.

Q: So nobody's -- nobody is sure what this rounding up was about.

A: Nobody to this -- to --

Q: This sor --

A: -- well later, when they interrogated my father, of course they found out that he was a baron.

Q: Right.

A: Probably a spy.

Q: Yeah.

A: Most likely a spy.

Q: So that they were worried, huh?

A: Ho -- wer -- but it's all --

Q: Speculative, yeah.

A: -- theoretical, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: And on the 12th of November, he -- his -- his bed bunk neighbor, a famous German actor who survived, by the way, found him dead on the floor. So.

Q: So this is why November is a terrible month for you always?

A: Yes. We were all taught to fear November.

Q: As a bad month.

A: Yeah.

Q: All right, we'll change the tape.

A: Oh, yeah.

End of Tape Six

Beginning Tape Seven

Q: When did you find out that your father had passed?

A: My father had disappeared, dissolved in thin air, so to say, and there were -- was a rumor here and a rumor there, and there were little pieces of paper found in the mailbox telling us that he is alive, but not where and -- and all that. We are talking between the end of April and -- and -- well, until he died on the 12th of November. What month it was I do not remember. Oh yes, it must have been after April 1946. I had gone over the green border, so to say, on the first of January 1945, to see where my mother was, you know, how things were in Berlin. But there were no official documents that -- that would allow you to pass from one zone to the other. So I left my horse in Hasseldorf with my family there, friends, and boarded a train and somehow, fastened by -- by something to the -- what do you call these things between trains, you know, I mean there were --

Q: I don't remember what you call it.

A: -- were no room on the train.

Q: I don't remember what you call it.

A: Ice cold, they had -- had to hack me loose in -- in -- in Berlin, I arrived there. And somehow I remember h -- the happiness when I saw American soldiers on the subway, it was great. But I knew that our house was still there. So I -- I kind of ran home, and there w-was my mother, very thin, very much alone. I mean, she had a house full of refugees, of course, and in good spirits as I -- you know, of -- always collected, calm and collected. And then -- yeah. Then I'd stay -- I stayed until -- until the first us -- beginning of April, 40 -- '46, April '46. I decided to go back to Hasseldorf, see how my horse is, and ra -- I worked for the Norddeutscher radio station as an announcer and I wanted to go back to my job, and how was it -- yeah, there was no way to get

back, either. And so I smuggled myself into a refugee camp, even got food rations there, I remember. And somehow th -- there was a train, like cattle cars, like the ones, you know, that were used to ship the Jews away. Cattle cars, maybe twen -- 10 - 20 cattle cars. And right smack in the middle was one car reserved for the British -- a re-regular car -- a car reserved for the British who would accompany the train and tried to -- would try to protect us against the Russian soldiers. And at the -- at the checkpoint, I conversed with one. He said, "You speak English, you'll be our interpreter." And so I was very glad. I was allowed to travel in the -- i -- I put my things in the -- in a -- in a -- in the cattle ca -- in the cattle car, and in the next one that was the British car, oh, I got a beautiful meal and beer, and whatever. And whatever my services were -- were demanded, I did it. I did it, and you know, g-going a stretch that nowadays by car would take from Berlin two and a half hours, then took 24. 20 f -- more, or more. I v -- know we left in the afternoon at three and were there the next morning at seven. So, 12 - 13 - 14 - 15 - 16. And they s -- the sergeant, Atkinson was his name, Sergeant Atkinson told me that before the border dividing the Russian zone from the British zone, I should get out of the British car because the Russian soldiers would come and inspect the British car and they did not like German citizens mingling with the British, meaning a -- I would go into the -- into the car in front of us and pretend to be one of the -- well, I was one of the people. And then he would give me a sign with his -- with his flashlight that I would come back. And so, go there and the -- the Russian guards come in and they read the -- they -- they read the documents upside down, you know, most of them couldn't read it, other than Cyrillic, if they could at all. And everyth -- they went out and the train begins to go into motion again. And I look, standing by the open door, that were not sealed, fortunately, I see a signal from the other car. Aha, this is my signal and so I j -- clad with thick under, you know, pullovers, and a sheep coat, I jump down and I find no bottom and I fall

and fall in spirals, and finally the water of the river closes over me, in freezing temperatures.

There were no -- you know, the -- the -- the -- the -- the tracks were all damaged, and what Sergeant atkin -- Atkinson had -- had tried to do was warn me of that, but I had, you know, the original message had been -- and I was the -- it was the very, very shallow river, but I came up again like a cork, and saw the -- the train was halted, it was standing, and I saw the -- all the British soldiers coming to rescue me. And they -- they -- they had to wade into the water and pull me out. And I had a gigantic -- it's still to see here, the bump on my forehead. I had bump --

Q: Even in all your clothes you popped up?

A: Well, the -- the -- the next second I would have been pulled down again, you know?

Q: I see, right.

A: I -- I popped up and they d -- they -- and then something happened which -- of which I was hav -- half -- you know, I was half conscious. And they pulled all the clothes from me, stark naked and -- and -- and wrapped me into army blankets and put me on a stretcher there, or a bunk bed or whatever it was. And I was -- I was in a very elated mood, you know? And captain - - no, it wasn't a captain -- he sat next to me and after about four hours I went into shock. And that was it, I started screaming and crying and having fits. And he knew how to handle this. He took my hand and kept talking to me about his family in England, northern England. He was an electrician, I believe, or a plumber, and his children and everything, and by the time we reached Hannover about 10 hours later or eight hours later, I had developed an eye like this, you know?

Q: Huge, huh?

A: I looked terrible, and everything was dry except the fur coat, that took an extra two weeks. And on the platform stood the man I would -- was -- who was responsible for me in my job, Captain -- Major Clark. Major Clark a Scotsman from Scotland. And he t-took one look at me

and started laughing like hell, singing black eyed Susan. I was not amused. And he took me to the British army hospital in Hannover, they x-rayed me and I had a concussion, of course, and other than that, I survived it. And I had very little to wear, I've -- I stayed in the castle with a -- with the princely family of the Schoenaich-Carolath, where my horse was, and I re -- was allow - - course I had to rest for awhile, and Sergeant Atkinson gave me the promise of what -- he went back to Berlin, he would visit my mother and tell her that I'm all right. And then he took another four weeks or so, I remember it must have been May or June that he came back, carrying a big suit, I was -- I -- he came with a Jeep, carrying a big suitcase that was for me, with clothes. Clothes, you know, I didn't even know what clothes were, I only had those riding boots. And he said -- I took him to the park, it was a beautiful day, and he was so in awe by all the -- the -- the royal highnesses and -- and wh-whatever. We went to the park and he said, "I have very bad news for you. Your father is dead." And then he spilled out the story that had just gotten to the ears of my mother, over a year after -- after my father had been taken away, what had happened to him. So that's how we found out, and later my si -- my brother would find out that this -- this famous actor, Berlin's you know, he was the manager of the Staatstheater, Gustaf Gründgens, had been acco -- a friend of my -- had been there when my father was -- died. And I'm s -- was died. And I am so grateful the two had each other, because they -- they had a lot to -- to talk about. And he told the story, but he -- very reluctantly because the Russians had released him under the provision that he would never talk what happened to him in the -- in the ca -- in the camp.

Q: Mm-hm.

A: So he broke the promise. He died shortly after, but a natural death, so that's it.

Q: So that must have been a -- that [indecipherable]

A: That's how we found out.

Q: Then that must have been a really big shock for you, given how close you were to your father.

Or did you expect it?

A: Well we -- we gave up all, then we had to go -- gave -- give up all hope.

Q: So you gave it up before?

A: We had, really.

Q: Yeah.

A: We really had. But now we had confirmation, and --

Q: Sure, yes.

A: -- closure.

Q: Right.

A: You know, closure. And the -- this actor, Gustaf Gründgens, after my father died, saw to it personally, together with other prisoners, that my father, who was very much respected -- my father had turned politically much more to the left than anybody would have thought. You know, he would have wound up a social democrat, you know, and not a rightist any more. Rightist, no he was never a rightist, but the si -- the Nazis were rightists. And he was highly respected and to this day I get do -- not to this day, for years I got messages from hi -- how wonderful he was, and how well he behaved, and well anyway, he saw to it that my father was not thrown into a mass grave, but has a single grave in Jamlitz, somewhere. I mean if I was to inspect a thousand skulls there, I would have found my father's because of the shrapnel wound in the first World War.

Q: Right, right.

A: But we never tried, we never, you know --

Q: Right.

A: -- they dug up corpses there and they gave it up. What's the use?

Q: What's the use?

A: Yeah.

Q: Right.

A: Well.

Q: So now your brother's alive, this you found out, yes.

A: My brother, I was at the Hasseldorf castle when one morning while I was asleep, the door opens, the princess stands there and said, "Somebody to see you." That was my little brother, you know. And he worked on the farm then, you know, before he went back to Berlin, and in Berlin he eventually was one of the founders of the Frei University.

Q: Really?

A: Yes, yes, because the Humboldt University, he was not the son of a laborer, refused him.

Q: Right.

A: And everybody else who was not a laborer's son. And then he founded the univ -- the university, became a lawyer.

Q: And how is your mother right after the war? Are you -- do -- do you go back to her once you've -- once you're better, do you go back to Berlin?

A: Oh yes, frequently, then I've -- I've -- I've moved back to Berlin. I moved ba --

Q: But when do you marry the first time? When you have [indecipherable]

A: I -- oh, I married -- not for awhile.

Q: Not for awhile, okay.

A: Not for awhile. I -- I was, you know, still under the illusion that after the war, things will be all different. The Nazis will be dealt with and all the anti-Nazis would come up and rule the

country, you know? It didn't quite happen that way, the Nazis had it good, and those de-Nazi vacation trials, I beg your pardon, you know. Were nothing but a farce. So I went to work in Berlin, in a famous organization, it was of course ba -- instituted by the Americans, by the CIA. The Fighting League Against Inhumanity. And I was one of the first people there, and then they somehow did things that the Americans di -- I didn't like either, and then I -- but I -- I interviewed, interrogated more people than you can shake a stick at. You know, refugees. Clearing them -- are they political, or are they not? None were sent back but the ones who could prove they were political prisoners, they left for political reasons, that their lives were endangered, they received extra help from the Americans. Taken by plane from West Germany and so on. That was the time when they came by the thousands before the -- the wall was built.

Q: Now, did most of the people you speak with, you think they were -- they were just trying to leave the east and come west?

A: You had to -- you had to use your judgment and I have a very good instinct. I could tell by the way a man entered a room.

Q: Who he was.

A: But once -- I describe it in my book. A man -- a gentleman, middle aged, enters the room, sits down and tells me his real name. Doktor Reckzeh [indecipherable]. Doktor Reckzeh was responsible, he was a Nazi spy, was responsible for the death of at least 30 people, a terrible death, because he had attended the famous Thadden tea party. A woman by the name of Fraülein Fron Thadden, who was the headmistress of a famous girl's school, had invited people who then was living in Berlin, had invited people for a tea party and independent of each other, al -- my mother almost went, and the Countess [indecipherable] almost went. Both held back, you know, by something that could not be explained. And guest of the party and the only man was a very

nice young man by the name -- he was a medical doctor, and he was allowed free access to and from Switzerland and people who wanted to give him messages should do it, he would gladly take them. And he wasn't Gestapo spy and he denounced all of them. And Fraülein Fron Thadden at a ripe old age, was beheaded. And -- and many -- all the -- all the -- all the people were -- were hanged. And I -- right away I registered, I knew who that man was, even maybe my face gave me away, I don't know. And we talked, and then I -- excuse me, as I said, "I have to go the next room, just one moment." And I said to the pers -- "Call the police, call the police right away." And by the time I came back, he was gone.

Q: Was gone.

A: And he went back into the Russian zone, where he wa -- they gave him a wonderful life, anyway, I don't know why he ever wanted to leave. He was a doctor and had a beautiful home with a sky high wall around it, and I never knew what happened to him. He reported his own daughter to the Russians for being anti-Communist. Yeah, nice guy. Yeah, I missed that boat.

Q: So he could move from one group to another, it didn't matter, as long as he was --

A: Oh yeah. And then, you know, the leader of the place was Dr. Rainer Hildebrandt. He was terribly naïve, too. And of course we had all the Communist spy we could meet in our office, so we sent our spies into the cowan -- the Communist side. And then I left and then I -- I decided with the Nazi time, and I say it in these words, something wonderful had broken with the end of the war. The ti -- feeling of togetherness with all the people who were against the regime. Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Communist, monarchy, didn't matter. They -- for the moment of the end, each went in his own separate direction again. And that would never, ever be the same again. That I really missed. Everybody missed it.

Q: So there was a moment when it didn't matter who you were, as long as you were against the Nazis?

A: It didn't, no, it didn't --

Q: And then -- and then --

A: -- as long as somebody --

Q: -- people split again.

A: Yeah.

Q: Right.

A: They went into their old accustomed directions.

Q: Right.

A: And that's when I -- I -- you know, our family -- and I describe my friendship with -- I called her Aunt Edith and Uncle Otto, he -- Jewish, but Christians for centuries. And they had been dragged to Theresien -- Terezín, and they had been -- had survived Terezín and went to America, then ba -- went back to Berlin, and she had her son from her first marriage, who was then chief of staff of the children's hospital in -- in Detroit, Michigan. He came to visit and he said, "Why don't you come to the United States?" Ah, that was the moment when I woke up in the mor -- mor -- morning and said to myself, "I'm going to the States." And my -- my little ba -- I had already been divorced, and my little boy was not well. So he had been prescribed a time in a climate where he would heal, you know, lungs and everything. It did the job, but what would I do when -- you know, I gave myself those six months, that I would go to the States and establish a -- an existence somehow.

Q: And then bring him over.

A: And I -- I did, and my mother brought the boy, and I -- in New York they had told me newcomers need seven years to get accustomed to new y -- I needed one hour. All it took. This is my city, you know.

Q: And of course you had --

A: I had English.

Q: -- the English language.

A: Yeah.

Q: Which made all the difference.

A: So I got a -- got a wonderful position with NBC right away.

Q: Right away.

A: That's where I met -- later met my husband number two.

Q: Right. Now husband number one, when did you get married?

A: We got married in January of '52.

Q: Uh-huh, okay.

A: We worked together for the American newspaper, the [indecipherable] in -- in -- in Munich. He was a journalist. Son of a Jewish mother, by the way, who had muddled through.

Q: The war. Let me ask you again about the League Against Inhumanity. You said there were things that the Americans were doing that you didn't like.

A: Not, not the Americans, that group was doing, yeah.

Q: That group was doing, I see.

A: You know, unnecessarily sending people into the Russian zone, just to -- to put an F on the wall somewhere, which mean frimins -- Freiheit, freedom.

Q: Freedom, uh-huh.

A: And stuff like that.

Q: But I thought they were an anti-Communist group?

A: It -- there was -- they were the anti-Communist group.

Q: So why would this --

A: And -- and then, you know, on their staff --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- they had a man tha -- he wa -- came after me, long after me, and he comes in the door and I say to myself, SS. Sure enough. Yes, but -- and I went to the -- the manager, Dr. Rainer Hildebrandt, I said to him, "How can you do that?" He said, "He knows how to put up a new file system and all that, isn't that great? Good-bye." And I was furious with him, but actually there was a reason why the Americans, together with Willy Brandt, they decided to dissolve that group, but that was long after I had gone. But while I was there it was interesting.

Q: Were you anti-Communist most of your life?

A: It was no issue during the Nazi time.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And before the Nazi time I was too small.

Q: Yeah, no, no, clearly.

A: Yeah.

Q: Right.

A: And then, you know, I -- I was -- if I was anti-Communist, I was never as anti-Communist as a -- I was anti-Nazi.

Q: Nazi, yeah.

A: I mean to -- of course we -- thanks to the Communist threat, erlof -- I -- Adolf Hitler came to power. No, I've never really given it any -- ma -- my husband, you know, who accepted the Lenin o -- oden -- and stuff like that, he said, I am accepting declarations from anyone if it for -- is -- is -- if it's for the sake of peace. But he would never cease to speak his mind when the Russian delegation, th-the -- the -- and then east German delegation came to the house, the talk was -- of course I kept my -- my mouth shut, h-he said, "You know, I'm a -- Germany -- West Germany is only a colony of the Americans." And my husband, you know, shook his head and said, "Yeah, just like East Germany is a colony of the Soviets."

Q: Yes, absolutely.

A: And then he predicted the downfall of worldwide Communism so early you would never [indecipherable] in 1975.

Q: And you -- you're talking about your third husband.

A: That is my third husband, of course --

Q: N -- N -- Niemoeller, that's right.

A: -- yeah, my third husband. My second husband -- no, he -- they all died. I'm a threefold widow.

Q: And your first husband you married from '52 until you leave, or you were [indecipherable]

A: No, until '54, I couldn't take hi -- I couldn't stand him any more.

Q: I see.

A: He was a very interesting man, but we were too different. And I couldn't frankly see myself staying in Germany, nor could I see my son staying in Germany.

Q: Uh-huh. And was your -- was your son close to him, or was he --

A: No, he was a baby. He met him later.

Q: He did meet him?

A: Yeah, yeah, of course, several times.

Q: Uh-huh, right.

A: But didn't particularly care for him. I -- I f -- I took his father from him, but I furnished him with two good stepfathers. Husband number two, he was not very effective, and he was a very mixed up and confused and difficult person. He was very good to my son, very good. Well, my son made it very easy for him to [indecipherable]. And then Martin Niemoeller and he, that was love on first sight.

Q: That was [indecipherable]

A: Not on first sight, on second sight.

Q: On second sight. And your s -- your second husband, you -- you met him when you were working at NBC --

A: Right.

Q: -- when you came to the United States in '56.

A: Yes.

Q: Yes.

A: I met him in '58.

Q: Ah, in '58.

A: And we married in '59.

Q: Okay. So you were married for nine years.

A: Then I was married for -- on paper for over 10 years, which made a great difference --

Q: I see.

A: -- because I'm getting survivor benefits.

Q: I see.

A: Yeah, and how. You know, I think of Ross Donaldson, I remember him with a -- with very mixed feelings, you know, gratitude is among them.

Q: Right.

A: Because that's a nighta -- nice addition to my Social Security, to my pension that I receive from Martin.

Q: You've had many relationships in your life.

A: I had ma -- relationships because people interest me.

Q: Yeah.

A: I had relationships with many completely different people on different levels. I have -- and I can say that -- not with pride, but with humility, I've been loved by great men, and I've loved great men. I've never -- in all my life, I've really never been out of love to this day.

Q: That's great. So now where do I go? All right. What is happening to you? You come to the United States, and you're with more Jewish people, probab -- perhaps, since you're living in New York, you're involved in theatrical or --

A: Not yet.

Q: -- entertainment. Not yet.

A: Not y -- oh, no, no, I was -- I have that position, but I had a small apartment on Blist, 25 West 95th Street. And I shared the floor, were two apartments, with a Jewish student from -- from Israel.

Q: With Leah?

A: Leah. And Leah taught me the first things about Judaism. And all the time I was in New York, aside from [indecipherable] I had a feeling I'd been there before. When I went to the

Jewish qua -- the Jewish quarters, which was about to be dissolved really, in Lower East Side, that's -- that's -- that's my people, that's my youth. It was very strange. And you know later, when I had to learn Hebrew -- you have to learn Hebrew in order to convert, and it came so easy to me. You know the Sh'ema Israel, within the two days I knew it by heart.

Q: So you begin to become comfortable. Is this -- does yo --

A: I was never uncomfortable with Jews, never. Of course, I mean, I was always overprotective of Jews, you know? My father, you know, I remember, when -- if the word Jew fell at the table, I saw him, his ears going up. Can we help? Should we help? Where? When? And so on.

Q: Mm-hm. No, I don't mean that you were uncomfortable with Jews, or not uncomfortable with Jews, but rather the notion that you should be part of this tradition, as opposed to part of the Christian tradition --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- comes later to you. This is not something you think about in the 40's, right?

A: No, we had other things to think about.

Q: Right, right.

A: A-Absolutely.

Q: Right.

A: Every day was filled with -- was import -- every minute was important that you survived, that you had a piece of bread, that you -- you had this, or that. No, no, no, that -- that really came to be of an issue when I arrived in New York.

Q: Right. But your divorce comes in 1969, right? And you remeet --

A: I don't -- yes.

Q: -- Martin Niemoeller --

A: Yes.

Q: -- who was coming to the United States to give a lecture.

A: Right, on the 20th of April, 1968.

Q: Before you see him, do you recall this childhood crush that you had?

A: Of cour --

Q: You have never lost it?

A: Never lost it --

Q: Never lost it.

A: I've never lost it. And I see myself, you know, all cried out over the last months since I -- Ross left for Hollywood and didn't leave me a penny, you know, and I had to get -- I had to get a lawyer and all that.

Q: Right.

A: And I was wearing a red suede dress in the [indecipherable]. And he had -- wi -- I found him over the phone after I read in the newspaper that he was preaching down there. And I found him over the phone and the voice sounded so familiar to me. And he said, "Why not have lunch with me tomorrow?"

Q: And he remembered you?

A: And then he -- I arrive at the Gramercy Park Hotel, and there were only, in the foyer, the two -- that I knew on -- on what floor he was, let's say it was the 14th floor. And I see the elevators stop, knowing he was as punctual as I am, you know, and going down. It comes to me finally, w-w -- will he recognize me? Will -- wh-what will I say, how will I call him, you know. And the door opens and there stands, with a world wide, you know, smile, this beautiful old man with whi -- snow white hair, brown face. I always said to him, "Don't stay in the su -- in the sun too

long, or in the south they'll put you in the back of the bus." You know, because he was getting so -- so tanned. And he -- clad in an elegant suit, gray suit, with a wine burgundy -- what the British call waistcoat. And he opens his arms and he says in German, "You haven't changed a bit." And that was the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

Q: And we have to stop the tape.

End of Tape Seven

Beginning Tape Eight

Q: So Sibylle, the elevator opens and who comes out?

A: There stands a man who doesn't go -- move first, opens his arms, and at some point he took me in his arms and says, "You've not changed one bit." And I was so impressed by, you know, an old man and an old man are not the same, not necessarily. And he was full of vigor and he took me to lunch, and it was beautiful lunch. First of all, it was Hitler's birthday.

Q: It was April 20th?

A: Yes. And it was also -- would have been the 49th wedding anniversary -- anniversary of him and Elsa.

Q: Who had died in a crash -- car crash.

A: Who had died seven years before -- five years before in that horrible car crash in Denmark.

Q: So that was quite a lunch.

A: Yeah, that was quite a lunch and it -- somehow it clicked right away.

Q: But tell me something, it's been 40 -- you haven't seen him since 1930 --

A: Between '37 and -- and --

Q: Sevent --

A: -- 41 years -- 31 years.

Q: 31 years.

A: So [indecipherable] yeah, 31 years.

Q: And you were --

A: I was then 40 --

Q: 13 -- four -- 14 years old.

A: 14, yes.

Q: And you hadn't changed a bit, huh? That's g --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- that's a great line.

A: Isn't that great? You haven't changed a bit.

Q: [indecipherable]

A: And he was so needy for -- for love, for a loving partner. You know, Hitler knew exactly what he did to him when he put him in solitary. He wouldn't have suffered had he been with others.

But having it -- he was used to sharing every thought with somebody he cared for, who cared for him. And he couldn't do that for so many years, that was --

Q: For so many years, right.

A: -- that was brutal. Of course, Elsa was -- Elsa's attitude was that of the pe -- women of the generation above me. There was no talking back, and when there were -- was -- pr -- his -- hi -- her way of protesting was to sit in a corner and cry. While I -- I viciously attacked him.

Q: You did?

A: You know? And that's what he loved. That's what he loved. He had these famous, infamous temper tantrums. They would flare up and he would insult you, whatever, and it was over. And he expected the other one to forget that right away, you know. Person couldn't, all the time.

Q: You tell a story of at one point he does this and you start -- your son comes up --

A: And that was right after my son had moved in with us. You know, we had -- we had got married and I had put him -- he was -- had been thrown out of several schools, among them the Kennedy school in -- in -- in Berlin, where I was for the first y-year and then I married Martin -- or I married Martin only in '71, because my divorce wasn't legal. I had a Mexican divorce.

Q: So when did -- when did you -- when did you actually meet? Was it '70? 69?

A: Meet? '68.

Q: So it was right after --

A: In '60 -- right after my husband left me -- my husband left me on the date of liberation for Auschwitz, also Hitler -- also Mozart's birthday, also the Kaiser's birthday, 27th of January. And Martin stepped in my life in April.

Q: And did you know then that you wanted to marry him?

A: I -- something in me must have se -- there must be some sense in our meeting, you know, because he was so -- he was so alone. He had so many women, he -- he was very attractive for women, I can tell you that. But i-it -- he said the key word for me, you know, when I visited him once in Wiesbaden, took me out to a beautiful dinner, and I had asked him, I said -- he had asked me to call him Martin, which I found extremely difficult.

Q: What were you calling him?

A: Pastor Niemoeller, of course. I said, "How come that you have stayed single now for so many years?" And soon as I said that I said to myself, I shouldn't have asked that question. And he just smiled, and once we were out of the -- out of the restaurant, the hotel and walking, the snow was falling, it was like in a fairy tale. Was only November. And he stopped and looked at me; he looked so cute. And he said, you asked me a question, and because, you know, I'm a ver -- I'm -- and Elie Wiesel says the same thing. I'm very, very shy. So he would never have done the first step. He had legions of women adoring him. So I took that, and I kissed him. And that was it.

Q: And that was it.

A: We were engaged by the time we reached his house, yeah.

Q: Yes?

A: Absolutely.

Q: Absolutely. He was just waiting for that.

A: He was just waiting for that, and he -- he -- he enjoyed having an exotic wife. How often was I asked -- no, his siblings were all alive, and they were all -- he was -- he was his -- the bigger, the -- the -- the older brother. And whatever he does or says is all right. Now he's marrying that butterfly?

Q: Yeah.

A: All right, we'll sanction it.

Q: And they were okay.

A: His -- his children, was mixed emotions, you know, the girls.

Q: But did they remember you? Cause you played --

A: Of course, I have -- I have --

Q: -- you played with them.

A: -- I've always been in touch with them.

Q: Right.

A: And there were the mixed emotions, especially the daughters, who loved their father, you know, a little too much. And they were beastly to me, but I -- I won them over, I won them all over.

Q: And was part of the problem that you were closer in age to them?

A: Of c --

Q: It was that.

A: I was twice divorced, I was an American. I used lipstick and other horrible means of beautifying myself.

Q: I see. And you were young.

A: And they always -- yeah, and -- and I was asked the question, are you still an American? And I said, "Yes, and I'm going to be one for the rest of my life." Because that is something that is not for sale, for anything. And Martin, of course he -- he -- he loved it.

Q: He did?

A: And -- yes, and he -- being seated in a restaurant, when the waiter asked what his daughter wanted, was me, you know, he would kick me under the table. Was very wise of him to marry a woman that much younger. He would have died. During our marriage he would have died many times for neglecting himself and his -- his -- his health, you know? He would not go to bed when he should --

Q: I'm sure he didn't marry you because --

A: No, no, no, I was very stri -- I was called the dragon, you know?

Q: By whom?

A: By all the people that I tried to get off his back.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: He couldn't say no. And -- when he had the flu he was in bed, and I did the right things for him, making him get up, for instance, and walk around. Medicine in Germany was, and still is 30 years behind.

Q: Was it difficult for you to move back?

A: I never moved back.

Q: No, well, physically you moved back.

A: Physically no, because I knew I was coming to a very Americanized town, Wiesbaden. The Air Force headquarters was still there, the hospital was there. And all through my years in Wiesbaden, I have not made one German friend.

Q: Really?

A: No, because as Martin's wife, that was -- he didn't have friends either. He had people who either loved him or despised him. And on his own level there was nobody, so he took all my friends in. The entire staff of the hospital came Sunday after church for instance, for a drink and a cigar. And he -- Martin's -- Martin's English was flawless.

Q: Really?

A: He spoke with a German accent, stronger than mine, but his -- it was -- when he --

Q: And -- me -- go ahead.

A: -- when he composed a -- a sermon, there was nothing I had to change. Not even a comma.

Q: And what did you speak with each other? German, or --

A: Both.

Q: Both.

A: Both, yeah, both. And we had our political -- our political views that was very di -- were -- were very different. He was naïve in many ways. And one of these days, you know, it was -- started off as nothing, and all of a sudden my husband has a -- has a tantrum. He's still seated at the desk, and he begins to trample with his feet, scream.

Q: Really?

A: And I went to the door, and I sh -- screamed up, "Marc, come down, come down, you have to see that." And he was not even -- his father was not even aware of it. So Marc came down and we start laughing in the back you -- the tears were coming from our eyes. We were going down to the -- on the floor, and all of a sudden there was complete quiet and after he stopped howling, he turned around and saw us --

Q: Laughing.

A: -- dissolved in laughter and tears. And what does the man do? He starts laughing with us. He -
- that was typical, typical. Once his sister was there when I had allegedly insulted him. When she
descended on me like an eagle, you know? "You cannot speak like that to my brother." And he
turns on her and says, "I love that about her, you know." His wife Elsa would never have dared
that, it wasn't done.

Q: So -- so was -- was -- was he able to stop the tantrum sooner because --

A: It stopped itself, he was spent.

Q: Because you were not responding, and -- and stimulating it.

A: No, because -- of course, of course.

Q: Right.

A: There was nothing i -- he was -- he heard funny noised in the background, you know?

Q: Did you write to each other between '68 and when you went over there, when --

A: I have collected about 70 love letters from him. Nobody is getting them, no. My son has --
will have them.

Q: Yeah.

A: Handwritten.

Q: This is before you're married?

A: We wrote to each other every day practically.

Q: Really?

A: Every other day.

Q: And do you have your letters to him, or only his letters to you?

A: I have his letters -- my letters to him, too.

Q: Too, you have both.

A: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Under lock and key. He wrote beautiful letters. But yes, he was shy. There was only one woman in his life and that was Elsa.

Q: Right. And then there was a second one.

A: And he knew very little about women. Amazingly little. Didn't matter.

Q: This was your best marriage.

A: The only one.

Q: Or the only one, yeah.

A: The only real marriage yes. And God gave us so many years together, you know, thinking -- the man was 79 when I married him.

Q: And you were f --

A: I was then 46.

Q: Right.

A: And the church -- his successor's successor, I cou -- I -- before we were married, I -- I wanted to find out about my status, you know? I had married him after he was retired, so there would be little money. There is not much money now, but th-they did the best they could with me.

Q: Right.

A: They really -- the church of Hessen and Nassau carried me on angel's wings, I can't say it any other way. And after my conversion, ah, was marvelous the way they behaved.

Q: Interesting.

A: And also most -- th-the children. The children were pretty good except for maybe one of -- but they wouldn't say anything to me, but I know they disapproved.

Q: They disapproved.

A: Which is their right.

Q: Yeah.

A: Absolutely.

Q: And they didn't adjust during all those years?

A: No, no, no, no, no, no. They've all been very composed about it --

Q: Right.

A: -- and very -- my, of course my -- my favorite child, Niemoeller child is Hammon, after Joachim, who fell in the war. The oldest one, he is six years younger than I am. And he is my -- he is my buddy, and he is the most talented -- also medical doctor, of all his children. He plays the piano -- I mean, concert, you know.

Q: Right, right.

A: And he --

Q: Besides Joachim, there was another child who died of diphtheria, isn't there, early on?

A: Yeah, that was Utë. She was the most gorgeous of them all. But Utë's death he heard in the conce -- in Dachau. [indecipherable]

Q: Right. And he could not go to the funeral.

A: No, not only that, but the g -- the SS guard stopped him in, you know, a hall going from one cell to the other, they were allowed to visit later --

Q: Right.

A: -- oh by the way your daughter died. Which one? I don't know [indecipherable] don't care, either. And then after a few days that must have been hell, he always hoped, he says, that it would be Utë because he had a guilty conscience towards the other children because he showed his preference to Utë all the time. She was an angel, she really was.

Q: Really.

A: Gorgeous looking, wise beyond her years. And it was Utë. And then his -- his favorite son Joachim, the only one who wanted to go into the --

Q: [indecipherable]

A: -- into -- into the -- theology, he fell -- and he knew it before he went out. He was only 19. And I knew them all, I knew the entire family --

Q: Right, yeah.

A: -- of course. But they are dying out now, you know? This -- well, the oldest daughter, who was my grimmest fiend, she lives in Connecticut. But she is so far gone mind-wise, that I hesitate to call her. We are friends, I mean, she --

Q: Yeah.

A: And all the children who are fair, they realized that without me he would have died.

Q: Much earlier.

A: They would have lost their father many times, cause he didn't take care of himself.

Q: Right. And he was 92 or 93 when he passed.

A: 92.

Q: Two -- 92. Let me ask you something, did -- did -- did you two talk about his years in concentration camp, and what he --

A: Never once, but not because he blocked it out like you know, so many survivors.

Q: Yes.

A: And I count myself among those survivors, having not been able to talk for 40 years. Four zero years. If Elie hadn't kvetched that out of me, you know, I would be quiet to this day. He had worked it through over the years. He was at peace with himself about it. He only -- people, some people would ask him, was it really so bad? And he would have one stereotype answer, he would

say, "No, it was a thousand times worse." And that's all he -- all he said, he would never -- he'd cut you off very briefly. And so I wouldn't --

Q: So did he -- okay, so that -- there's something about him not talking about his own private pain or his experience. But what about the war and the Holocaust and what the Nazis did? Did he talk about that?

A: Of course, I mean he -- he opened his mouth after -- and I quote him I think in my book, in my -- both my books, I quote him as saying in -- in -- as declaring that he -- he thinks the church is -- of all the institutions and the people to blame, the church holds the biggest responsibility for not having done anything. And he never excluded himself, never. Oh, he was very, very aware of it. You must remember, there is a man, who unlike me, had been brought up in the anti-Semitic, anti-Jewish --

Q: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

A: -- attitude of the Protestant clergy.

Q: Right. And --

A: He was -- he was the Christ killer The Jew, that Jew was the cri --

Q: To him?

A: Sure. My Anna, my old nanny, she went through all the anti-Nazi things we did, but in her heart she remain an anti-Semite. So often I said, "Anna, think about it, why?" "They killed Jesus." Would not fo -- close her ears, so.

Q: So it's a very interesting combination that you can both be anti-Nazi --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- but anti-Semitic.

A: Oh yes --

Q: And not care that this part --

A: -- and that was done by many.

Q: -- that this --

A: Right.

Q: Right?

A: But then he -- he realized the full impact of his own anti-Semitism only after the war, of course.

Q: And did it take him a long time, do you think?

A: No, he had a -- something happened to him when he, for the first time as a free man, with Elsa, visited Dachau concentration camp.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Wanted to show her, you know, and the American officer.

Q: Right.

A: Because they kept the camp.

Q: Right.

A: And the only block that was standing, as a prison for their own G.I.'s, you know, for all sorts of things, from murder to black market. And he finds himself standing in front of the crematoria, and so the crude sign, you know, board of s-something, on which it said, here so and so many inmates were killed between 1933 and 1945. And there, he says -- and he -- I -- I can quote him, I don't know if I can do it now by heart, verbatim, he said, "It wa -- like a cold chill came da -- went up my spine. I heard God's voice saying to me," -- wa -- well, you know, he said, "I knew I had an alibi between 1933 -- between 1937 and 1945. But here God was asking me, where were you between 1933 and 1937, and I had no answer. Cain, where is your brother Abel?" And that's

when he fully realized that he bore the same amount of responsibility, eight years of concentration camp or not. He was -- and when people accuse him now of anti-Semitism, you know, they're running into open doors. He admitted it publicly again and again.

Q: Yes, there is this -- there are people who will say --

A: I know.

Q: -- at a certain point he was anti-Semitic, but then they don't speak about ho -- ho --

A: Right, it's easy to say, yeah. And never stopped asking God's forgiveness.

Q: Did -- did it cause a conflict in him about his religious beliefs because anti-Semitism was so strong within --

A: No, it could --

Q: No.

A: -- the ji -- the Christian church he felt could do very well without --

Q: Without it.

A: -- anti-Semitism.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Anti-Semitism of the church is a contradiction in itself, he said.

Q: Mm-hm. In spite of itself.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah. How did he feel about the state of Israel, do you remember? Early, when --

A: I really don't know, he went to Israel only once when I was --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- when I was there. He was what -- I heard from conversations with the ambassadors, and so I know that he was very pleased.

Q: But I would imagine that the politics also was conflicting in some ways. Or not? You don't know?

A: Really, quite frankly, I don't know.

Q: You don't know.

A: I really don't know.

Q: What other theologians, when you were married to him, were quo --

A: Well, he never considered himself a theologian.

Q: -- logian, okay.

A: You know?

Q: Other people of the religious --

A: Yeah. I know.

Q: You know what I mean. Abraham Heschel, or Tillich, or Niebohr. Were there people that he associated with or not?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: But it's not bec -- I came too late into his life.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: You know, Paul Tillich, of course, he knew him.

Q: Heschel may not have been alive when you --

A: I beg your pardon?

Q: I -- H-Heschel, I can't remember now when Heschel --

A: No, no. And I really don't know, but considering him, he would always raise his voice when people called him a theologian. He had, you know, walls of books, theology books that he never

read, didn't interest him. He was a pastor in this world to spread the message of Jesus. And that's what he would not ever understand about me turning to Judaism.

Q: Yes, I would -- I would like to ask you, you would not --

A: He would -- but I could not -- I -- I -- I wouldn't have done a -- I couldn't have done otherwise, you know? Tr -- my -- my connection with Jesus is still the same, only he was a Jew, he was a pious Jew. And -- but the -- our faith, we are divided by Christians faith in him, and the Jews, the faith of him. His faith, you know? So he was not, you know wh-when -- when Christians nowadays, so -- so-called Christians say, still talking about the Holocaust, isn't it time that we moved on, you know? And they have all sorts of marvelous [indecipherable]. First of all, who would put closure? Who is there?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: And then I always say, what would a pious Christian say that if the Jews answer -- if the Jews accuse them of, my God, the death of Jesus is 2,000 years ago, isn't it time to put -- that was different because Jesus was the Messiah.

Q: Right.

A: Jesus was the son of God. Son of God? No Jews contradicts, because we are all the children of God, created by Him in His image.

Q: But let me ask you something, when you marry -- I can't call him Martin, actually, I --

A: Of course you can.

Q: -- okay, all right, Pastor Martin Nie -- Niemoeller. Martin Niemoeller, you're going to church every Sunday?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes? So what does this do t -- I mean, do you talk about faith? When he speaks of -- is he giving sermons at this point?

A: He was giving a sermon almost every Sunday. I --

Q: Okay, and you're listening?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: I listen to his sermons while they're being made, of course.

Q: Right.

A: He calls me up every half hour to change a word or so. And --

Q: So, are you looking at this as an esthetic experience as opposed to a religious experience?

A: As a humanistic experience.

Q: And so --

A: Not as a --

Q: Not as a religious one.

A: No. And --

Q: And does he understand this, or is he not sure?

A: He is not sure and he -- I had a feeling he didn't really want to know. Might not have liked the answers. But I could not, being married to him could not -- of course, I could never -- I mean, the Halacha forbids it, I could never -- not the Halacha in this case, the -- the -- the German law for - forbids -- the theologian law, that a priest is married to a Jewish spouse.

Q: Really?

A: Only after ist -- rightfully so, rightfully so. They should be not a Catholic either, they should be of the same faith.

Q: Of the same faith?

A: Yes. But he was already retired, but I wouldn't have done it to him because it would have hurt him. But after he was gone, I didn't think twice. I went -- the next week I went to the f -- to the place where I could lean -- learn j -- learn Hebrew.

Q: So this was brewing in you for a long time?

A: It was brewing in me for a long time.

Q: So ex -- you do explain it in your book in some way --

A: Yeah.

Q: That th-the -- it's as if -- I don't know, it's -- it's as if --

A: The Christian view of God di -- didn't go well with me.

Q: It just didn't.

A: No, it just didn't.

Q: Which means --

A: -- and you cou --

Q: -- the crucified Christ, is that the image that you -- is -- that you throw out, or is it some other
[indecipherable]

A: No, not that --

Q: No.

A: -- necessarily. It was either God is almighty.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: And then He would have spared His son the death of the -- on the cross.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: Or the Holocaust. Or He is not. What am I doing with a God who's not almighty? And then the Christian way of life is geared to the hereafter. That's how the Catholic church especially, gets their people. If you suffer here, it means that you'll have a glorious whatever.

Q: But that's not the Protestant view?

A: That is -- oh well, more or less, yes. The hereafter is very, very important. While we Jews, we live for this life. And what -- not what we think, but what we do is important. And that went very well with me.

Q: Mm-hm. How do you --

A: The Mitzvot, you know?

Q: Right. But how do you deal with the notion of an all powerful God as -- if you're a Jewish person who believes in God --

A: Yeah, yeah. At this point I'm not really sure.

Q: Aha. That's not the issue.

A: No, it's -- it's no issue for me. But I know there is -- they -- as far as I'm concerned --

Q: Right.

A: -- as I said, I'm being led by a higher power all the way, so He must have something in mind. Not she, but He.

Q: And not a she-he. Only a he.

A: That's -- that's not -- it doesn't really matter. I belong to a conservative --

Q: Well then it must be a he, I guess, right?

A: No, we pray for -- for Rivka and for Leah and all that.

Q: Really. Yeah.

A: Yes. They are quite -- quite Reform, many ways.

Q: Yeah.

A: I was converted in a Ref-form movement.

Q: In Reform?

A: Oh yes --

Q: Uh-huh.

A: -- at the progressive, as they call it. Liberal, as they call it in England. But I had to, in -- in order to be converted in England as a liberal, I had to go to the Mikvah.

Q: Right.

A: Which I did in New York. Which I loved by the way.

Q: It was nice?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: It is, you know, sa -- it's so meaningful.

Q: We have to change the tape.

A: We have to change?

Q: Yeah.

End of Tape Eight

Beginning Tape Nine

Q: What was your mother's response to your getting married to Martin?

A: She did not take it very well. First of all she said, "He's much too old for you." And then she said, "He's much too old for you." And then she came out with the truth, that years before -- and I even knew that, she had mentioned it at the time, when Elsa was forlorn and -- and -- and -- and always when she was very depressed about her husband's absence when he was in the camp, Dorha, the housekeeper, the one who was called -- was killed with her in that car crash; Elsa and Dorha were killed together. Dorha would call my mother and said, "Would you please come over? Frau Niemoeller is so depressed, she wants to see you." So my mother raced over there, sitting at her bedside, or whatever it was, and then, you know, after she complained, she did her bit of complaining, she said, "You know, if your husband," my father, "somehow gets killed during the you know, one way or the other, and I die, and my husband is still alive and you are still alive, you've got to marry him. I am not strong enough to be married to him." And my mother to -- obviously took that very seriously. But then we were being as graceful, as gracious as she was, she arranged herself with the given situation, and they became very close and dear friends.

Q: They did?

A: Yes. It was almost touching to see those two, so close in age, together.

Q: Right.

A: She was born in August, and they were separated by -- by four months, Martin was like Albert Schweitzer, born on the 14th of January.

Q: And were you living close by, sh -- was she -- she was living in Berlin?

A: She was living in Berlin. And h-had a massive stroke at age -- well, she was 80, she was about my age, and -- which robbed her of her speech and use of her right arm and right leg, and I was called to Berlin, somebody else took care of -- of my husband in Wiesbaden. I drove to Berlin, and the doctor took me aside and said, "Frau Niemoeller, have no illusions, this clock has run out." And I said, "Doktor, you don't know my mother," you know? And my mother lived for more than 12 years, regained her speech, use of her right arm, she could walk with a little limp.

Q: You're kidding.

A: But she was there and all with it. So you se -- it's very dangerous for a medical man to make prognosis of a person --

Q: Right.

A: -- he doesn't know, and my mother was a bundle of energy.

Q: Did you become closer to your mother as -- as you got older?

A: Yes, for the reason that she got older and more helpless, of course. But there is not a day that goes by that I don't -- the I re -- really regret for not having had a relationship with my -- with my mother. But my brother didn't have one either, in the end, you know.

Q: Neither one of you did.

A: No, no. She just -- but I realized it long before my -- my brother did, I think, that she was not to blame, that was the way she was made, that she had been educated. She lived in fear of men, and to -- she was not allowed, and she couldn't partake in discussions.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: She hadn't been brought up in -- you know, and Elsa was -- no, she -- Elsa was a -- a teacher of English, so she knew more. But in our circles a woman was raised as a girl to be married off. Married off.

Q: [indecipherable] off.

A: Yes.

Q: And be -- and be off.

A: And become --

Q: So how did Martin and your mother have a friendship if she was so -- I mean, what -- what -- what did you see?

A: On -- oh, she was much ten -- more tender to him than she ever was with us, you know.

Q: Really?

A: Her son-in-law, and she t-talks of very amusing stories, like visiting the cemetery of Saint Anne's, where she was buried by the way, and s -- seated, resting on a bench, she was approached by two ladies, and the ladies say I wonder -- to my mother, "I wonder if you can t-tell me, we're here as visitors and we are looking for Martin Niemoeller's grave." And my mother rose to her full height of -- she was much taller than I, and said, "He is not dead. I talked to him 15 minutes ago, he's my son-in-law." They left in a panic, I think they must have thought she was --

Q: Crazy.

A: -- bananas, yeah, yeah. No, she was very proud of being his mother-in-law, you know.

Q: Right. How would you explain to him your becoming Jewish?

A: I couldn't.

Q: You couldn't.

A: And I never even imagined it. I only know he would have been hurt that I left the Messiah. Jesus was his reason for surviving, you know? And it started early, when he was 14, he had a -- a happening that when his father, who was a -- I remember my own -- my own father-in-law and

my mother-in-law, I met them when I was very little. And his father very much believed in something that pastors, or sometimes even rabbis don't do any more, visiting members of the congregation and getting to know them. And his fa -- and whi -- pastor -- old Pastor Heinrich Niemoeller was exemplary. Every afternoon he'd go and see somebody. And he visited th -- the home of a miner. This was where he -- this was a mining district where they lived. And on the wall -- and the miner is -- is eaten up by some dreadful lung disease and on the wall Martin sees some words under glass in German, "Was würde Jesus sagen?" What would Jesus say? So this word guided him through all his life. Whatever he did, he would ask first, what would Jesus say to that? And how I could miss out on it because he would -- he would suspect a terrible void in me, what wasn't there, you know? I don't know how.

Q: So you don't think he would even understand it?

A: No. It was -- would have been beyond him.

Q: But I just couldn't have done otherwise. When people ask me, and I'm often asked, now tell us the motivation why you became Jewish. I said, "Very easy, I had to." I had to.

Q: But then people say, so what's behind the having to?

A: There is no [indecipherable] first of all, I do not -- I follow my mentors, Albert Friedlander's, and London's advice not to ever get in argument with Christians about it because I would soon notice that I was being maneuvered into a corner where I have to defend myself. So when I'm asked in a -- in a -- by the -- a member of the audie -- now tell us about the -- I said, "I don't discuss that in public." But I will in a s-smaller and preferably Jewish circle. But the funny thing is that Martin's successor in office, Doktor Spengler, Jewish president of the Church of Hessen and Nassau, I didn't have to explain anything to him about the co-conversion. He called me one day, and he said, "I've heard you converted to Judaism." He said, "I think it's marvelous."

Q: Is there -- I don't -- I don't even know if you can answer this question, but is there some way in which you've come -- I -- I don't want to say back to your roots, cause I'm not sure what that means. You -- one's roots are many different things, and you weren't particularly religious as a child, in spite of th --

A: I was god-fearing. The fear of God was God sees everything, you know?

Q: God -- everything. I see.

A: But otherwise --

Q: A-Assuming that you lost that --

A: -- not with a great love for God, yeah.

Q: Otherwise, you had no great love for God. But there is, in some way you grew up under the clouds of National Socialism all your life.

A: Heavy clouds.

Q: From the ni -- from the day that you're born --

A: Yes.

Q: -- they're not in power, but they're there.

A: Yes.

Q: So there's -- and a central feature of the -- who they are, is ridding the world of the Jews.

A: Yeah.

Q: And that is in some sense very important within the context of your family of trying to negotiate and help and to figure this -- it's not unimportant in your family. So there -- I -- it's not payba -- I don't -- I don't exactly know what the words are, but it's almost as if you're trying to reverse part of that history --

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: -- and make yourself whole by being part of what was being destr -- destroyed. I don't know if that's right.

A: Yes, that is part of it, I am sure, I am sure. Because what was destroyed by Hitler, who was almost -- I mean he -- he almost managed to -- to get rid of all the Jews in Europe, must have been so powerful that he felt it and he feared it. And that's why I had to find out what that is, you know? Power has always attracted me, and Judaism is a very powerful religion. But not alien to me, but it's now part of me.

Q: Right. And do you consider yourself religious now?

A: Yeah. Always -- ever since I became Jewish, I consider myself religious. I go not only because I -- I read the -- the Torah regularly and -- and the prayer book. I pray the Sh'ema three times a day, and I don't keep kosher, but I believe God is mo -- has become more -- what is the -- now I can't --

Q: Tangible?

A: Tangible for me. More real for me. He is not the old man with a white beard any more, but something I truly cannot define.

Q: Well, I have to thank you so very much --

A: Well --

Q: -- for spending the day with us.

A: Well, it was my pleasure. I'm so proud and so happy to be Jewish, you know, that is my favorite subject anyway.

Q: It is, yes?

A: Oh yes, mm-hm.

Q: Well, thank you again for coming [indecipherable]

A: Thank you for listening to me.

Q: It's been a pleasure, thank you.

Q: And tell us what this picture is here.

A: That is my mother's mother, Helena von Brauchitsch, née von Korn, who died at age 49 after giving birth to seven children.

Q: And this group?

A: That is my mother's family, the -- the parents with the five one -- five or six children?

Q: One, two --

A: Five children. And on the left is uncle [indecipherable] he was call -- called Kunz, he was Conrad. He was the one who became an S.A. man. And that's my grandfather, and that is little Eberhard, the youngest. And that is Herta, the oldest girl, and that is Siegfried, that's the oldest boy. And that is Hildegard, who died shortly after that. And that is my mother, and that's my grandmother.

Q: Do you know how -- when this photo was taken?

A: I can guess, of course. How old does my mother look? 14?

Q: Something like that.

A: Yeah, then it was taken in 1900 and I would say -- does it say anything on the back, or nothing?

Q: Don't think so.

A: I would guess 1905 or '06.

Q: Okay.

A: That is the castle of Rimbürg that is on the border between Germany and -- and the Netherlands. And the first stone was laid around Charlemagne, in the year 800. And it has any

number of rooms, it has torture chambers, underground -- underground ways leading to the city of -- as far as the city of Aachen. And my oldest -- my oldest -- Uncle Siegfried's oldest son Conrad is living there with his family.

Q: Does he have a large family?

A: Not really, no. Well, it's a muse -- was a museum once, but --

Q: It's great. Who are these dapper gentlemen?

A: The man in the middle is the last German Reichskanzler before the outbreak of war, World War I, von Bethmann-Hollweg, and on -- speaking to the man seen from us on the left, is bar -- Baron von Milbach, he was the German -- either ambassa -- German ambassador or the German chargé de affair in Czarist Russia. He lost his life during the revolution. And on the right side is Bethmann-Hollweg's adjutant, my father. My father was a tall man, but next to -- next to Bethmann-Hollweg he looks like a dwarf.

Q: And what was your father doing?

A: My father was -- as of -- an attaché, as an adjutant, going with his boss. And in those days they didn't -- the German head of state did not travel by an extra train. His salon car was attached to the regular train to Petersburg. That was the Prussian way of doing things, not wasting money.

Q: And who's this?

A: That is my mother at her debut at the emperor's ball. The de -- where the debutantes, then 18 years old, were presented to the majesties.

Q: That's quite a gown.

A: Yeah. She was allegedly the most beautiful girl at the emperor's ball.

Q: Who is this?

A: That is my mother, at the time probably around 40 -- 40 years old.

Q: And she was born when?

A: 1891. Wait a moment here --

Q: And who is this cutie pie?

A: That's me, probably at the age of two and a half, something like that.

Q: Do you remember what you're wearing around your neck?

A: No. It was not the Star of David.

Q: No. Really cute. And this picture?

A: That's my nanny, who came into the house as a housekeeper, cook, maid for everything, four years before my birth. She was of Vendish blood, the Slavic tribe that lived in enclaves in Germany, and learned German only when she went to school. And she looks like a direct -- what's the word for it? Related to Ghengis Khan.

Q: And this picture?

A: In the foreground is my father, and in the background is Kaiser Wilhelm, and it's taken in Doorn, in hol -- Holland, while feeding the ducks each morning.

Q: He's wearing spats.

A: Oh, always.

Q: He always dressed that way?

A: Always wore spats.

Q: And what is this a photograph of?

A: That's a bust of my head. That was me when I was young and pretty, done by the sculptor Ernst Kunst, in Berlin. And this bust survived the entire war and it's now with me in Doylestown.

Q: Was there an occasion to have it done?

A: No, he just was in love with me.

Q: That's quite -- and who's on the horse here? This picture. This picture.

A: Yes, well that's me, that is me on my horse, the horse that carried me all the way from Berlin, escaping the battle of Berlin. And Berlin had almost been taken by the Soviets by that time.

Q: And the name of the horse?

A: The real name, or the one I use in my book?

Q: Both.

A: I -- in the book I call her Arabella, and the real name was Zita, Z-i-t-a, like the queen of what was it, Spain or something. And on the left it's her with her little colt.

Q: And who's that?

A: That's me.

Q: Why did you change the name? Why did you call her Arabella in the book?

A: I -- I changed the names of most people, I don't know.

Q: It's an animal.

A: Yeah, you know, but maybe I was afraid the -- the -- the -- the man it rightfully belonged to would catch up and demand her back. I don't know [indecipherable] by time she had been dead a long time.

Q: And who's this?

A: That is Martin Niemoeller, leading for the last time before his incarceration, leading the group of boys to be confirmed into the church. ... Eyes.

Q: Yeah? And this picture here.

A: That's Martin Niemoeller, it must -- this photo must have been taken right after his liberation.

Q: So around 1945 sometime.

A: Mm-hm.

Q: And here?

A: That is the famous and legendary Countess Maria von Maltzan, a professional veterinary surgeon, who literally saved hundreds of Jewish lives during the war. And me at the ceremony of the 20th of July in 1930 -- 19 -- 1993 or so.

Q: What is she smoking?

A: Black cigars.

Q: She sm -- that's what she smoked all the time?

A: All the time. And you should have heard what her protests, screams, when -- at the -- at the airport -- I took her once to fly to the United States, when she was told that was a non-smoking flight, oh!

End of Tape Nine

Conclusion of Interview