

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Ingeborg Protentis**  
**August 8, 2016**  
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## PREFACE

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## **INGEBORG PROTENTIS**

### **August 8, 2016**

Ina Navazelskis: This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Mrs. Ingeborg Mayer Protentis on August 8, 2016 in Brockton, Massachusetts. Thank you very, very much Mrs. Protentis for agreeing to speak with us today. For agreeing to share your story and let us know a little bit about the experiences that you had, the family history that you have and how that all was part of the huge catastrophe which ended up being the Holocaust. I'm going to start with the most basic questions and we'll go from there. So my very first question is could you tell me the date of your birth.

Ingeborg Mayer Protentis: I was born February 17, 1932.

Q: What was your name at birth?

A: Ingeborg Mayer.

Q: And where were you born?

A: I was born in Wurzburg, Germany which is in Bavaria.

Q: What is the closet large city or town near Wurzburg so we'd have an idea geographically.

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A: Munich.

Q: Oh so you're really close to Munich.

A: Yes.

Q: That is the heart of Bavaria.

A: Yes.

Q: Can you tell me your parents' names?

A: My mother's name was Rosa. Her maiden name was Reichenberg.

Q: Reichenberg.

A: Reichenberg. My father was Max Mayer.

Q: Were you an only child?

A: No. I was the youngest of four. But there was a large gap between my siblings and I. My oldest brother Emile was 20 when I was born. My sister Betty was 18. And the other brother was 15.

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Q: What was his name?

A: I'd rather not talk about him.

Q: So Emile and Ingeborg are very German names.

A: Yes.

Q: Was your family very assimilated into German society?

A: Very much so. So much in fact that my mother who was very much a part of the business that my father was in said you know let's put the, they owned a bakery and a cafeteria. Let's put the ovens on a ship and go to Israel. And my father said I'm a German first and a Jew second.

Q: And he didn't want to go.

A: And he didn't go. And that was a catastrophic thing because he ended up in Dachau and Buchenwald.

Q: We'll get there. Right now we'll talk about prewar life, but yes, decisions like that that were often so fundamental and they made a difference in the destiny of an entire family, whether to

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stay or to go. Let's talk a little bit about your family. Did your father and mother come from Wurzburg or where they from other places?

A: My father came from I think Marabel and my mother, my mother's parents' names are very French. They were Babette and Raphael so I think there might have been some French ancestry there but I'm not quite sure where she was born.

Q: Did your mother come from, did she have siblings? Was she the only child or did she have siblings?

A: No, she had two brothers.

Q: And what were their names if you remember?

A: Yes, Ludwig and Solomon.

Q: And did they live around you? Did you –

A: I don't recall. Ludwig came to the United States. I don't know what year but I know that he lived in Manhattan and he became a baker. Solomon I didn't know when he came to the United States but he did.

Q: So this is all before World War II?

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A: Yeah. No. Yes. I have to think.

Q: You think there was a French influence on your grandparents on your mother's side. Because

–

A: Possibly.

Q: Because they had French names but that Raphael, I think you said.

A: Yeah, Raphael and Babette.

Q: What was their name again, Reichen –

A: Reichenberg. Yeah.

Q: When you were born, did they live in Wurzburg, your grandparents?

A: I only had one grandparent and that was Raphael. My father, now this is all things that were told to me.

Q: I understand.

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A: Since I was the youngest. My father was orphaned at a young age, about 13. And so I had no paternal grandparents. My maternal grandmother had passed. So I just had my maternal grandfather, Raphael.

Q: Do you have memories of him?

A: Definitely.

Q: What kind of a person was he?

A: Oh. He was Mr. Clean personified. He would get dressed up in a suit, watch fob, walked with a cane, that had a silver head and after his walk, he'd come home, wash the bottom of his shoes. The bottom of his cane and we only had one bathroom in this apartment in Manhattan and I used to desperately say oh pop please come out. I have to go.

Q: When you already lived in the United States?

A: Right and he walked, he walked me to school every day. And picked me up from school every day.

Q: Was he a person that you could get close to?



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A: He was in a German way. I think Germans are they're not as affectionate as Mediterraneans so yes he loved me a great deal.

Q: You felt that?

A: Yes.

Q: That's the important thing is that a child feels this.

A: Yes.

Q: Do you remember him from Wurzburg when you lived there?

A: Not at all.

Q: You mentioned that your father had a bakery. What was it called?

A: Mayers.

Q: Mayers **bakerei** [ph]

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A: Mayers **bakerei**. We also had a restaurant. Now if you guys are since you're all Massachusetts or have been, the size of Pier Four in Boston, that was the size of the restaurant.

Q: Like Anthony's Pier Four.

A: Anthony's Pier Four.

Q: That was a large restaurant.

A: Yep. And my father since my parents were 44 when I was born, used to show me around the restaurant before he was put in a concentration camp and I would get to a very important antidote in this, about this restaurant, if I may.

Q: Sure, you mean an anecdote. Right.

A: **Anidote** [ph], yes.

Q: Sure, please tell us now.

A: Ok. The restaurant was basically across the street from the University of Wurzburg. So a lot of students mostly men, would come in to eat. And now this was told to me, you have to understand now. I was very young. And sometimes my father if one or two of these students couldn't pay their whole bill he would say you know when you become a famous lawyer or a

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doctor or architect, you'll pay me back. And it did, may I go into that because it's a very important part of the story. We had a very large house. And after my father was put in a concentration camp and the servants had quit because they were not allowed to work for Jews. I had a nanny who quit. So we moved into three little rooms but other Jewish families that were basically evacuated from their homes came to the door. And since we had the room, my mother would tell them to go upstairs and just take some rooms. Well they were like shadows to me. Basically you know.

Q: When you still had the large house?

A: Yes.

Q: Before you yourselves were evacuated from your home, you would take in other Jewish families.

A: Yeah. We were not evacuated from our home. We left willingly. Well anyway, Kristallnacht came in November of 1938. And I slept in the same bed with my mother and all of a sudden I heard all this noise and noise again, we had almost they were castle doors and I heard pounding against them and then men shouting. And then we had marble steps going up there and I could hear, to this day I can hear the boots on the marble steps. Excuse me. *(She wipes tears from her eyes)* And I would hear the children crying, the women screaming. I would hear a lot of yelling. MY mother took a dresser and pushed it against the door and she held me and she said, Inya, which is Inge in German, tonight we're going to die. And I didn't know what dying was. It, but

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she was crying and I cried. And we heard glass breaking. And so much going on. And then the sun came up and we lived in **more routes** in what you now would call almost a cul-de-sac.

There were just three big urban mansions in this area. And there was a knock on the door and said Frau Meyer, Frau Meyer (*she raises hand in fist to indicate knocking on door*) and it was a man from across the cul-de-sac and he said they're gone. But she wasn't sure so she didn't move the dresser. But then he convinced her and opened the door and there were dolls and shoes and clothes and glass strewn all over.

Q: All over the house?

A: All over the house. And we couldn't understand why were we left. It was just my mother and I left. And I don't know the time span because again I was six, but my mother found out that one of the students who my father said you pay me back found out where my mother and I were and he stood in front of the door and told them to pass by. So he paid back.

Q: Wow, wow. So that day who was taken, that night who was taken from the home.

A: Everyone who was there.

Q: All the people who were –

A: All the people my mother gave shelter to.

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Q: And your father?

A: My father was in Dachau.

Q: All ready?

A: Yes.

Q: And your siblings?

A: Were in the United States and Palestine.

Q: So it was only you alone with your mother at that point?

A: Yes.

Q: That is a very important anecdote, a very important story and with a very pivotal arc to it. Because your father was so generous, it saved you and your mother.

A: He just thought you know as a joke, he knew they wouldn't come back to pay money. That they'd forget that he had us in college. But whoever this was and we never found out the actual person but we knew there was a Gestapo officer and that's all we know.

Q: And you knew that he came to the restaurant and had not been able to pay.

A: We were told you know by other people because the restaurant was closed, naturally. My mother had no workers. And the bakery was closed and I'm sorry. (*She raises hand to face, crying*) I'm sorry.

A: I feel I've earned the title survivor. And uh.

Q: Let's step back a little bit.

A: Why don't you ask me the questions.

Q: Let's step back a little bit. Before all of these things happened, I want to get a sense of what was this world like? And I know that you were only six years old when Kristallnacht happened and you were the youngest of the family. So a lot of what you can tell me is what other people told you.

A: Right.

Q: But I'd like to get a sense of who was your family. From what you are telling me your father went from being orphaned to being somebody who was quite well to do.

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A: Mm.

Q: How did that happen?

A: Well again I was told he had lived in that area and he saw the house. I have his diploma from, he is a master baker and I have his diploma hanging up on the wall upstairs. And he saved his money and at the age of 22, he bought the house, the picture that you saw.

Q: I see and we'll show that picture later and film that.

A: Right.

Q: Is that the house that had the marble stairs as well.

A: Yes.

Q: And you said that during the war it was bombed by the British at one point.

A: Yes.

Q: And then rebuilt.

A: How I found that out was in 1978 one of our sons was on an exchange here in Switzerland at

the University of Freiberg and we went to see him. And I said to my husband, no matter what you do, don't go on the Autobahn. And then I said you know we should go on the Autobahn. It's faster. And all of a sudden he stopped and I had fallen asleep and he said Inge look at the sign and it says Wurzburg.

Q: So from Switzerland into Germany.

A: So I said let's go. I said maybe I can bury some ghosts. And we went to Wurzburg and I kept asking, I speak German. Not very well any more cause it's been a long time. And I kept saying in German, **wo ist de strasse Franciscana** [ph]

Q: **Franciscana**

A: **Franciscana**. And they gave me a street. It wasn't a street. Then one young German woman said maybe you mean **Hansigana Gasse** [ph], which meant cul-de-sac. And we went there and an old man was walking with a cane. And I said to him, did you know a Jewish family named Mayer. And he pointed to the house. (*She raises her hand, pointing*) And he said right there, they lived there. The British bombed it. But it was rebuilt to specification and was now an apartment house.

Q: So it was rebuilt in the style that it had been –



A: Oh yes. They rebuilt, the whole city was devastated, mostly by the, some American planes, but mostly by the British. And we saw pictures when we went to the city in 2013. It was just rubble, just rubble. But the German mentality is you put everything back where it was. And in a way it's good, in a way it's good. And the people we met then who were younger, who weren't even born, were absolutely wonderful. But it was, and somebody asked me. Wow, you must be getting a lot of money from that. And I was notified several years ago, many years ago that the state claimed the property for back taxes, because my father was in the concentration camp and nobody paid the taxes.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: So I got in touch with a firm in New York called claims against the Holocaust and I'm going to use language. The man down there said to me Mrs. Protentis you were screwed. That property now this was in about 1980 something. In 1980 something, he said the value of the property is about a million three quarters. And, but you know, not important. It's not important. I had my life. I had, I live in a country that is absolutely beautiful. I had a wonderful husband and four wonderful sons. Fourteen of the best grandchildren. And I will always be grateful to this country for giving me asylum.

Q: Thank you for sharing that and for taking me forward to a place where I would have asked questions later but it's one of the questions that we had is that did you ever go back. How did you respond to when you went back? What did you find there? The answer to all of those kinds of questions and the one about restitution. Did you ever get any restitution?

A: And if I had been eligible, if I had been eligible. I had gone to the consulate in Boston.

Q: The German consulate?

A: Yeah, the German consulate. I had two little cousins, a girl my age and her brother who was maybe three, two or three. I would never have taken the money. I could see these little hands coming out of the earth saying Inge you're alive. You're married, you have children. We have no life. We are gone. We can't leave any memories, even though yours are bad. You have memories in your life. I would never have taken the money. To me it would have been blood money.

Q: Tell me about this branch of the family, these cousins. Were they children from your mother's brother.

A: I don't know. I don't know.

Q: Did you know them personally?

A: Yes. Yeah.

Q: So what were their names?

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A: I don't remember.

Q: Whose children were they?

A: I don't know.

Q: But you know they were your cousins?

A: Yes.

Q: And you knew that they, do you know how they perished?

A: In a concentration camp. Because after the war my father came to this country and after the war he went to the Red Cross to find out about relatives. It seems the whole extended family ended up in concentration camps. And –

Q: Now when you talk about the extended family, did your father have siblings, even though he was an orphan?

A: He had a sister who was a teacher and she also perished in a concentration camp.

Q: Did you remember her? Was she –

A: Yeah, she looked like a typical teacher. She had a bun (*gestures with hands at face to indicate bun hairstyle*) and she dressed with high neck dresses (*gestures with hands to indicate neckline of dress*), white collars and she always said to me, now when I tell you this, remember it Inge. Teacher like. And we didn't see her often though we did see her.

Q: Did she live in the same city?

A: I don't know.

Q: What was her name?

A: Rosa.

Q: Rosa, like your mother.

A: Yes. Yeah, seemed to be a very popular name. It's like Mary, you know.

Q: In the 20s, well they would have been born earlier, it was a very popular name here in the States in the 20s. Do you know whether these cousins were from your mother's or your father's side.

A: I have no idea.

Q: Let's talk about your mother a little bit. I'd like to get a sense of what kind of a person was she. You say that she had you pretty late when she was 44. Was she the same age as your father?

A: Yes.

Q: Tell me about her, what was her personality like, your mom's?

A: Very ahead of her time. Very driven. Now since my parents were very wealthy she had a lot of jewelry. She had a tiara with stones in it and bracelets. And I remember when they had dances, my nanny would let me sit on the steps and I could watch the women. And they had all these beautiful things with green stones and white stones and red stones which I later found out where diamonds, rubies and emeralds you know.

Q: A lot of bling.

A: Yeah a lot of bling. And when this prosperous era ended and we were alone, she would wake me up in the middle of the night and take me to the roof. Bring a blanket and a pillow. And she had a barrel that she carried and in it she had some tools. And the support beams in the attic were made of wood. And she would dig out holes in the wood, catch the sawdust in the bucket and put in jewelry and she'd come over, wake me up. Inge, you've got to remember these numbers. One, three, seven. In other words the support post one, three, seven. If anything happens to me,

you come here. I made them low. You can reach them. And you don't tell anybody where you get them. And you go to, gave me a name of two families. (*Gestures with palm up*) And you tell them you're going to give them this and they should take you in and protect you. And then she would take, she would be there for a long time. And I was cold you know. And then she'd take the sawdust and flush it down the toilet. And at times, we went to Gestapo headquarters (*looks down*) and she took one of the jewels and put it in her hand and inquired about her husband, my father. And afterwards she would shake the hand of the Gestapo officer and the jewel would be gone. And –

Q: Do you know if she got any information?

A: She never told me. But my father survived and was released so something must have worked.

Q: You mentioned the Kristallnacht

A: (*coughs*) Excuse me.

Q: You mentioned that during Kristallnacht that the rest of the family had already left. They weren't there or your father was arrested. So was it just you and your mother in the house.

A: Yes.

Q: The storm troopers or these Hitler Youth officers, they were aware that there was just a woman and a small child in the home.

A: I have no idea. The Gestapo man who obviously stood in front of our door, must have known. It's hard to say because there were other incidents. My parents had, my father had a huge library. With a lot of (*gestures with hand to indicate size*) used to go around and on the bottom he used to have a shelf for my books. And one day it was during the day the Hitler Youth came in. They took all the books including mine, put them in a pile in the middle of the cul-de-sac and burned them. And my mother said to me, those are the ideas of men that they want to destroy. And I watched the flames and I could see (*gestures with hand, moving upward*) heads of men coming out of the flames. And then I saw my books being burned. And they were animals coming out of those books.

Q: They were stories about animals and you saw it in your mind's eye?

A: Yes. And so I became when I came to this country I became an avid reader. And very interested in a lot of things but –

Q: A lot was taken away from you when you were such a baby still. A little toddler, a little girl at an age where children are so open to the world, and they are vulnerable. They don't have defenses up. And –

A: And then now I don't know how far I'll get with this part of the story. My mother and I for some reason were put in a camp. Now it wasn't a camp. It was more like a warehouse. And they had bunks in there and it was all women and little girls. And one day some Gestapo officers came in with some Gestapo women. And they picked out some little girls, including me. And I was either four or five. And they took us outside and I was so happy to be outside. I thought we were going to go play. And they took us to this big house, who, it was full of Nazi soldiers.

*(Closes eyes)* I'm sorry.

*(filming stops)*

A: As sex toys.

Q: Little girls.

A: *(nods head, yes)* Yes. And my mother said to me when they took me, she said keep yourself clean, keep yourself pretty. Don't scream, don't cry. And I think she knew what was going to happen. And after a few I don't know the time span, I, I they came and they said the Mayer girl is not supposed to be here. And they took me and they brought me back to my mother. And she never asked and questioned. She just wrapped me in a blanket and held me. *(uses Kleenex to wipe nose)* And a lot of the little girls who screamed and cried disappeared. *(coughs)* And, but I was going to make it out of there. I was going to get out of there even if I had to crawl through the door. I was going to get out of there. But they came and brought me back to my mother. And I kept washing myself, I kept washing myself. And I had this compulsion to stay clean and I



was obsessive compulsive as I grew up about cleanliness, even my house. I'm better now but  
(*smiles*) in personal cleanliness and –

Q: Were these young men or older?

A: Young men.

Q: Young men.

A: Yeah. And actually one of them came to our house after we were released from this whatever it was. Asking for me. Asked my mother. Where Ingeborg was. And I heard his voice. And I hid in a closet. And I don't know what my mother said to him. I'm sorry. (*emotional pause, cries*) Even as a little girl. And I was not going to let this ruin my life and I was going to be (*wipes tears from eyes*) best of them in school. And since we came over, two weeks before my seventh birthday and my parents didn't put me into school until the fall and we came over in February. I was like a year and a half behind, but I skipped half the second grade, half the seventh grade and half of a high school grade. And I actually graduated before I was 18. And –

Q: Did you have any idea, you were such a little girl. Did you have any idea what this was all about. You know because children don't know at that age.

A: (*shakes head no*) No. None, none whatsoever none whatsoever. And actually I was told afterwards too that they arrested my father, not for being a Jew, but he was in the café and where he went to the, they didn't call it a pub, they called it the house.

Q: Like their little –

A: **Hofbrauhaus. Hofbrauhaus.** They say that Hitler is going to ruin Germany. So he was arrested as a political prisoner. And –

Q: Were your parents religious?

A: To a degree. To a degree. Not you know they kept a kosher house and but my father didn't go to synagogue that often. When he came to the United States he went more often. And would ask me to come cause he wanted to show me off that he was older and had a little girl, you know.

Q: Did he ever find out what happened to you?

A: I never told him.

Q: You never told your mother or your father?

A: I never told them. I never told them. I told when I was sixteen, it old the doctor and he wanted to tell my parents and I begged him not to. I said I don't want them to know.

Q: That's a huge burden to carry.

A: (*nods head yes*) And after I met Sam who is not Jewish.

Q: Your husband, yes.

A: He's very Greek. Did you ever see the movie *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*? Well that's I was what the male was in that movie. That they were so lively and so loving and Sam said Inge I don't want to know what happened. I like, being and when we met, but he encouraged me to go into therapy which I did and I was in therapy for years. And told everything there, and well, not everything. But a lot. There are some things, I just get to a point where I think I'm opening a door and I can't go on. And I don't know what it is. And I know I remember one part where somebody put me in a box and covered me with blankets and put the cover down. And that's all I remember. I mean I can't go any further, but I'm claustrophobic. And –

Q: Did you ever tell your children?

A: My children know all about it. Well, know as much as I want to tell them.

Q: You have four sons and that must be, you know sons are protective of their mothers. And –

A: My sons are the most incredible human beings, next to their father. They are very protective. And they are, they're just love, they love. They're big guys. You know two of them are six, three. They're all college graduates. I made sure of that. And my grandchildren are even more protective of me. Five of them have, as a matter of fact the fifth one is coming home Wednesday. Have been to Israel on the birth right program. And Nicholas, Ryan, Alicia, Rachel and Justin are the last ones so far and they're very proud of their Jewish heritage. Yet, none of my sons married Jewish women. And I had the most fantastic daughters in law. Two of them called me and they wanted to know whether they should come over and here and hold my hand today.

Q: Do they all know these parts of your story?

A: *(nods head yes)*

Q: That's also pretty incredible. Many people who go through such traumatic things keep that so bottled up inside and their families are never given the chance then to try and wrap their arms around them and be protective of them. Doctors say that that's a very common, when a person has been that abused and traumatized, that that's a very common reaction, is to just close completely and it takes a huge step to share that, as much as you want to share that. And as much as you can share that.

A: They know because I tried to tell them you know that the people in Germany now are not the

people that committed these atrocities. They're dead. They're gone. That not to have hard feelings against the people there now. But they're not quite into thinking that way.

Q: I also want to thank you because in telling me you are also making this public to a wider audience and I know what a huge step that is and I'm very grateful for it, but I know other people who will be grateful for it. It's not just to share a horrible event. It is to bare part of one's soul. And there is a cost involved to such things. And thank you for taking this step. Because through this people will be able to see what happened to a little girl. The little girl who was born in a family that loved her and could not protect her.

A: (*nods head yes*) But I've learned to protect myself. I've learned to protect myself. I'm very thick headed. I'm very but I also know there are situations that should be avoided. I know we've traveled a great deal and I see that you know there are things going on in good countries that are not healthy. That again I say I'm grateful for this country. And no matter what is said politically, America is great. It doesn't have to be remade great, it is great. And it should welcome people who want to come and make a life for themselves here. I think my coming to this country, me and my husband and having our sons. We always told them since they were little, you weren't born just to take. You were born to give back. And our oldest son is with the FBI. Our next son started a program for under privileged children in high school. And even started a step program so that they could go to college. Our third son is a microbiologist and he does as a matter of fact this weekend did the Pan Mass ride for cancer. Our youngest son is a psychotherapist for the mentally retarded. So

Q: They've done you proud.

A: Yes. And they're giving back so I think you know there was a reason for my surviving and meeting the wonderful man I call my husband.

Q: Let's go back a little bit to the history. If we can. You said that your other siblings had left. What propelled them to leave? When you were born, were they already gone or when did they leave?

A: My mother's son, my brother Emil. He couldn't get a visa to the United States so she sent him to Palestine. What was then Palestine. She sent my sister to her brother in New York who was a baker because they were using the Jewish girls as sex objects.

Q: Your sister's name again, tell me.

A: Was Betty.

Q: Betty. And about what year did she send her away?

A: I'm trying to think. If we came over in 39. Maybe 37, 38. Cause we came over in 39.

Q: And the sibling who you don't like to talk about.

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A: I still don't want to talk about.

Q: Ok. I just wondered where he went. But that's ok. Back at your home, when was your father arrested.

A: I was three.

Q: You were three. So you wouldn't have a memory of it.

A: I did for this reason. We had a German shepherd dog, surprise, surprise. And I was playing outside in the cul-de-sac with him. And a black car pulled up. And I don't know whether it was two or three men in black coats with black hats. Came over to me and asked me what my name was. And I told them. And they asked me where my father was. And I said I don't know. I think he's in his office. And then they came out with my father who was handcuffed. And they said and my mother was running after them. And she said where are you taking him and they said don't worry. He'll be home in a few days. That was three and a half years that he was in Dachau and Buchenwald. And that's why I remember it because I was sort of involved.

Q: Did you feel guilty about that?

A: Pardon me.

Q: Did you feel guilty that if you hadn't told them you would –

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A: No.

Q: Ok so you didn't feel that way.

A: No I didn't because I was a three year old child.

Q: Children sometimes assume a responsibility that isn't theirs.

A: No.

Q: Ok. Did you see him again in Germany?

A: Yes. Once. My mother said they're moving papa from Dachau to Buchenwald. And I found out that the train is going to stop in Wurzburg in the middle of the night. So she woke me up and we went to the train station and you could see the prisoners through the windows of the train. And there came my father and he put his hand out and my mother lifted me up and I kissed him (*gestures with both hands raised*) through the glass. That was the only time I saw him.

Q: When did you leave, how did you leave Germany?

A: We left Germany in January of 1939.



Q: That's a couple of months after Kristallnacht. And your father must have lost the business several years before. Was there anything else that you were able to take with you.

A: Yes. First of all well they move pewter, there was pewter here. (*gestures and looks off camera to her right*) And some pewter downstairs. That vase that the flowers are in. I was told by an antique dealer it was a soup tureen that belonged to the King of Prussia. My parents had this furniture which was I hated it because sometime had a duster and had all these curves. This was in the United States though.

Q: That they brought the furniture.

A: So about a room and a half of they're called Biedermeier and baroque furniture. And my mother took me down to the pier where they were packing these big crates. And we walked down and they said oh Frau Meyer. My parents obviously were known. And they said is this your things. Yes and they talked for a few minutes and he said, whatever the other guy's name, Fritz, Hans. We haven't eaten yet and we take a long time to eat, about four or five hours. So we'll see you later, which was telling her if there's other things you want to get within four to five hours, so she hailed a cab and we went back to the house, got some things. I don't remember what. And brought them back.

Q: This is in Wurzburg. Because was it near a river.

A: I don't know, I don't know, I don't know. I don't you know, you know these are things that puzzle me. Where did these things happen but I was too young.

Q: The servants and the nanny, were you attached to the nanny that you had.

A: No. No. I was actually glad she was gone.

Q: Was she cruel or was she harsh?

A: She was weird. (*laughs*) She was not to my liking. She didn't teach me things. it's, give you one example. It's probably ridiculous but I had this little table with two chairs. One day she puts this orange thing on the table. And says here, here's an orange. I'd never seen an orange before. I tried bouncing it and didn't, I tried rolling it. Figuring make noise. It didn't make noise.

Q: What a weird toy.

A: So then I said there must be a reason that she gave it to me. So I dug my thumb in and I saw something come up and juice came out. I thought, it's a drink. (*points finger*) And I started peeling it and then got the juice all over myself, all over the table (*motions with hands*) but I discovered how to peel an orange.

Q: And she never told you –

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A: She never told me it was, it was self-exploration.

Q: And it was also to her mind self-explanatory.

A: Yeah.

Q: You did not know that this is an orange.

A: Did not know, no. I had orange but it was already peeled, but this was the first time I was given an orange (*indicates with hands round shape of orange*). So no she was weird.

Q: Do you remember anything about the bakery or the business? How it looked.

A: Yes. One of the reasons that I think I've always tended to sweets, cookies and stuff like that was every time I fell he'd say here darling, have some whipped cream on a cookie. And you'll be better you know. And yes it was a very pretty bakery. My father was a master baker and he decorated things that were like a fairy tale. They were fairy tales. I mean castles with moats around them and days and days of work. Beautiful things. And they tasted good too. And you know he made me special things for special days and I didn't even want to bite them because they were so pretty. But it's the café I remember more. He would have the nanny dress me and he'd take me around the café and say this is my daughter. You know. She's well this was, I was young. I was three. And he'd introduce me and specially to ladies. And the older ladies had hats

on you know. (*gestures with hands, hats*) And I remember that more and it was beautiful table cloths and silverware and plates and you know it was so pretty and flowers in the middle. And –

Q: Did your mother work with him or did she have an –

A: Yes, she was also the brain of the business.

Q: Was she?

A: Yes. My father was tremendously innovative in business but my mother was the director and I think that's where I got my inspiration from. Yes.

Q: In what way was she inspiring?

A: Pardon.

Q: In what way was she inspiring?

A: She would, she would give orders and people would listen. And I was, she was, listening to a woman. So when I got married and had four sons, I said to myself, well since I'm the only female, I says guys before you start first grade you're going to learn how to make your bed. Well they did. It was a sloppy mess but they made it. They learned to cook basics. One would

set the table, one would clear the table, one would sweep the floor. And put the wash away. We were an equal opportunity house. And –

Q: And it started with Mama, modeling

A: It started with Mama and I actually trained very good husbands. (*laughs*)

Q: I'm sure your daughters in law agree with you.

A: And they were wonderful when they were little boys. You know they, for mother's day they'd bring me boxes of pansies and they would pick dandelions. And give them to me. And it was, it was a good melding of mother and sons.

Q: Did you ever become close to your elder siblings, Emil and Betty. Did you ever, because they left when you were so little.

A: No. Well. I married Sam when I was 19 and my sister was 18 years older and she had a hard time having children. She just had one daughter who was born handicapped who just died last December. And there again my sons went down to New York to visit her. They took care of all her affairs, her papers. They made sure that she got the proper service before she died. They got hospice for her. She had pancreatic cancer.

Q: This is for your niece.

A: For my niece my sister's daughter. And they were very good to her. And I went down several times but you know it was very difficult because she was like my little sister. My father opened a bakery in New York. And after school I would go over there, pick up Evelyn. That was her name. And bring her home. And she had, she was born premature and she had several operations so she had a body cast. And I used to bring her into the house and take care of her. And so she was like my little sister and it was hard when I lost her. And I called her like a couple of times a week. And when she was younger she always used to come up here for part of the summer. And she always came up for Thanksgiving. My sons would go and pick her up and bring her back. And even my youngest granddaughter, Dreslin who's nine. She remembers Evelyn would send her \$2 for her birthday and a card. So this year I sent her a card with \$2 and I you know.

Q: What about your sister herself, when did, did she live a long time?

A: My sister died at the age of 69 from liver cancer. And so Evelyn lived alone for a long time. As close as we could be because our lives were so different.

Q: What did she do when she came to the United States, your mother had sent her away to –

A: She was, actually she was a maid for wealthy Jewish families.

Q: Did she stay in the New York area?

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A: Manhattan, mm hmm, upper Manhattan.

Q: Near Inwood you know there's that area in upper Manhattan. Was it Washington Heights?

A: It's, that (coughs). Excuse me.

Q: And Emil, what became of him?

A: Emil never came.

Q: He stayed in Palestine?

A: He died in 1969 the same year as my mother. He was obese. For a while, he was in the Israeli army, the Haganah and but he, let's put it this way. He was spoiled rotten. Like when a bunch of them would go to the Alps hiking, his idea of hiking was paying other guys to pull him up the mountain.

Q: It was inventive.

A: And I never knew him. I never met him. He left when I was three. However, my sister called me one day and she said I just received a call from someone who said they were with Emil's daughter in Manhattan and she was visiting. I said so what did you do. She said she hung up. I figured it was, it's a joke. So I said the next time they call give them my telephone number. So

they called me and I went down to New York and met them. And they came up here. and so this was my brother's oldest daughter and her husband. And so we went to Israel three times and we met the whole family (*gesturing with hands*) and toured Israel. And now my five grandchildren who have been to Israel have stayed with my grandnephew **Nitzan**. He built a house with one room just for our family.

Q: The grandnephew.

A: Yeah. (*clears throat*)

Q: How nice. A relationship that was fractured but never really was able to grow and you never really met him after he left. And yet the other generations have been able to connect again.

A: Yeah and he, he is so funny. And he's a riot and we are so close. He's like our fifth son. And he's 44. He taught our oldest grandson Nicholas how to play soccer. He's been here a few times and there was one story very funny. They came here one year. He and his wife. And they said they were traveling with another Israeli company, couple. And said ok so one night he said Sam we have to go to Boston and pick up or friends and as they're walking out the door, they were coming down from Canada. I said where are they staying. He says here. Surprise, surprise. So luckily at that time our oldest son Russell was living in Brockton. So I sent Jeffrey who was home on winter break and Scott to his house to sleep, changed the sheets.

Q: Like you said command central.



A: Yeah.

Q: It sounds like from this that you're the only one who went back to Germany ever, of the family.

A: Yes.

Q: You mentioned your mother bringing some extra items to where the Biedermeier and the baroque furniture was being packed up. Do you remember anything from the journey itself?

A: Very much so. We came over in February from Germany. We left the port of Bremen and we had a cabin. My mother and I never left the beds because we were deathly seasick. One time we were feeling a little better and we had decided to go to the dining room and we were watching the other patrons eat. And my mother says to me, look they're eating food that we feed to the pigs. They were eating corn on the cob.

Q: I guess Europeans don't do that.

A: No. So we sat there for like ten minutes, went back to our cabins and got sick.

Q: How is it that you were able to come to the United States?

A: You have opened another book. When my, my mother kept saying we had cousins down south. When my sister died.

Q: 1969.

A: No, my sister died (*closes eyes*)

Q: Oh that was Emil who died in 1969.

A: I'm trying to think what year she died. No my brother died in 69 and my mother died in 69. My sister died wait a minute I have to figure my daughter in law's age. My daughter in law is 62. She died when she turned 30, so 32 years ago is when my sister died.

Q: So it would have been 84. 1984. Ok.

A: So I went down with my son Paul and my niece asked me to go through her papers. And so Paul and I went through them and I found a letter from a Jamie Miller from Memphis Tennessee.

Q: A Jamie Miller.

A: Jamie Miller mm hm, and said I do genealogy and I believe, this was addressed to my sister that you're related. And the letter was two years old.

Q: So it was 1982. That it was written.

A: And with it was a genealogy chart. And I'm saying ehh. But Paul pulled the stuff out of the trash basket (*lifts hand in fist*) and says take it home. We'll look at it. And when we got home, Scott was home on winter break or spring break from college. He went to U Mass Amherst and he loves research. So I says Scott look at this and see what you can come up with. And he looked at it and he said mom the closest I can come is that there's a family named Kamien in Cleveland, Mississippi.

Q: Kamien in Cleveland

A: Kamien. That are related to you and I said bet you those are the cousins. Now this man put up the money for all of us to come over and sponsored us. At the time I think you had to put up a thousand dollars a person and leave it in the bank for five years. So that

Q: Why?

A: The immigrants would not become a burden to this country. He never knew us, he never knew us.

Q: So you never met him.

A: Never met. Anyway I pick up the phone and I say I'd like Kamien in Cleveland, Mississippi and the operator said to me, there's a Kamien's department store. I said put me in touch with them. So a woman answered and she says Kamien's. I said this sounds weird but I'm calling from the Boston area. And I think I'm related to the owner of the store. And she said well honey child, I'll put you in touch with the president of the company. I.A. Kamien. And I spoke to him and he said oh my aunt, she has all the information. Her name is Rosebud Davis, not Rosa, Rosebud. And I called her and it seems my maternal grandfather had eight brothers and sisters that came to the southern United States in the early 1900s. And I have relatives all over this country where I thought I had nobody.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: So we invited Rosebud and her husband up here and we went down south and met them. And it was, this Kamien that sponsored us and also said he had jobs for us, which was not true. He did. But he was also an amazing man. He hired the first black in Mississippi to work to manage his store and it was a woman and he gave land to both the Baptist and Methodist churches. And, and as a matter of fact, at Sam's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday which was June 4<sup>th</sup> of this year, Jamie Miller came up here with her husband and her brother came from Los Angeles. And –

Q: Wow. So your grandfather, the dapper mister –

A: Yeah cleaned the bottom of his cane and the soles of his shoes.

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Q: So it was one of his siblings.

A: No, it was my mother's. It was the Reichenberg family.

Q: That's what I mean. But I thought –

A: Oh yes, yes, you're right. Yes, you're right.

Q: So it was one of his siblings who was –

A: It was eight of his siblings that came to the United States, the southern part.

Q: And do you know how the Kamiens were related to him.

A: This Kamien who sponsored us was married to my grandfather's sister. (coughs) And so that's she had married a Reichenberg and --

Q: So when you came to the United States was it just your mother and yourself or did your grandfather come with you?

A: My grandfather came with my father. Afterwards. I can't remember how many months later but it was just before Germany invaded Poland.

Q: It was the same year but Germany invaded September first 1939 and you left the last days of January 1939 so it was sometime between early February and late August that your grandfather and father would have –

A: Right.

Q: So tell me how was it that your father was released. Many people were not.

A: Ok. I had told my doctor that Lauren was doing this project on my family through the Holocaust museum.

Q: The interview we're having today.

A: Mm, hmm. And we couldn't understand how my father a German Jewish man was released from two of the worst concentration camps in Europe. So he said when he was in college, he read this book and it was titled the Extermination of the European Jew. Now I started calling around different libraries. None of them have it. But the Brockton, the main library had one copy. And I went down and I got it and I read it, very difficult book to read cause it had so many notes and other things. (*gestures with hand*) But I found out that the Nazis decided the Jewish men who had fought in World War I and won a medal. My father won the Iron Cross, which was like the Distinguished Service Cross, would be given more liberties. And so I guess that's why he was released. That's the only thing I could think of.

Q: So he had had military service during the First World War.

A: World War, yeah.

Q: Was the book written by Raul Hilberg?

A: By whom?

Q: Raul Hilberg. Is that the book, the Destruction of European Jewry? Is that the book you –

A: The Destruction of European Jewry. I can't remember the, I have, went online, I can use a computer.

Q: As I told you, I'm impressed.

A: I went online and I got two paperback copies, sent one to Lauren and I have it upstairs.

Q: We'll take a look later. We'll take a look which book it is. So you were calling around to find out and this book is the only one that gave you a sense –

A: That gave me that information.

Q: Your father. Did he ever talk about his time in Buchenwald and Dachau?

A: Never, never. He had a lot of scars on his back. I guess that was from beatings. But he never talked about it. And to tell you the truth I didn't want to hear him. I. I had a very horrific childhood. I had and I had, I didn't know I was such a pusher as a child, but I was. But I was determined to survive and to bring some good into this world.

Q: When you say I was a pusher.

A: A pusher to survive. And I wasn't going to let anybody destroy my will. And when I came to this country and saw this unbelievable freedom, like we lived in our first apartment, we lived across the street from the school. And there was a playground and I saw these kids keep throwing a ball through a round thing. After in the evening I went across the street with a little ball. And I kept practicing throwing the ball through the hoop. Because I wanted to be like them. Well I ended up being captain of the basketball team in high school.

Q: Good for you, good for you.

A: And I was in all the accelerated (*wipes eyes with tissue*) classes but then I was time, I got accepted by City College of New York. My father wouldn't let me go. He said women don't need an education. But I did go. I applied for a job to [unintelligible]. And I went at night. I went from work to CCNY. (*points finger for emphasis*) Then from CCNY, took the train to the



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Bronx, was up til 3:00, 4:00 studying. Got up 5:30 to go to work. Had a breakdown, couldn't do it anymore.

Q: It's a huge stress.

A: And, but I completed one semester. Better than nothing.

Q: Of course. When you were working –

A: What?

Q: When you were working, where were you working.

A: Endicott Johnson. They were a shoe company. And I was secretary to the treasurer. And learned a lot about the stock market. And Sam was training to be a road salesman. That's how we met.

Q: I'd like to take a break right now.

A: I'd like to take a break too.

Q: So let's do that and have some lunch and...

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Q: Your father and your grandfather came over separately than you and your mother.

A: Yes.

Q: Did your grandfather, why did he stay behind?

A: I don't know. I don't know.

Q: And the only time you had seen your father was when your mother lifted you up to press you against the pane of glass as he was being transferred from one concentration camp to another.

A: Right.

Q: Do you remember the moment you saw him again after that?

A: Yes. But, I was afraid of him. I didn't recognize him. He had turned gray. He was very thin. And I held back and I couldn't hug him at the beginning because I thought he was another man who was a threat to me.

Q: Did you see him as he got off the boat or did he come to where you were living?

A: No, to the apartment. He came to our apartment.

Q: Can you paint a picture of how he looked to you at that moment when you saw him again?

A: Stranger. A stranger. Because when he left, he wasn't fat but he was you know a little over normal. He had, my father had red hair and a red moustache and a goatee. (*gestures with hand goatee*) And now this skinny person who's all gray, I didn't know who he was.

Q: How did he behave?

A: Geez, that's hard to tell. All I know is he was here for two, in this country for two days and we lived in Manhattan then in the 80s, 98<sup>th</sup> street, something like that (*gestures with hand*) And he went into a bakery and was a German Jewish section. And he said my name is Max Mayer. I'm a master baker and I want a job. And this was two days after, and he got it.

Q: Wow.

A: And very hard worker.

Q: Was he someone that, how long did it take or did it happen that you got used to him again and wasn't, weren't afraid of him?

A: I can't really pin a time on it. You know but I was the apple of his eye. And the Jewish high holidays, he would have, my mother'd buy me a new dress. You know she was, and he'd go

*(holds palm of hand up)* and he'd go to the synagogue and you know in New York, at that time, you know this is I hate to say it a long time ago. Children could walk the streets safely. So my father would go to the services early and then I'd go about 10, 11:00 all dressed up, walk to the synagogue. And he'd look back to see me and he'd bring me and sit me next to him. This was so wonderful cause you know he was strutting. However, at the age of 11, I developed and that year my mother bought me a white dress. And I did my usual. Went to the synagogue, not thinking about anything. And my father looked back, saw me, escorted me next, sat me next to him. And all of a sudden, Jewish men call what they do **daven**. They say their prayers out loud and they are **davening** the crescendo rose. Because they saw now I was developed. The rabbi comes down from what they call the **bimah** or the platform. And he asks my father and me to come to the back of the synagogue. And he says Max your daughter has to sit with the women. She's a woman now. He says my daughter is my equal and she will sit next to me. And if you don't approve I'm leaving this synagogue and he took off his shawl. And he took me by my hand and he walked out and joined another synagogue. Now so that made a big impression on me, that well I always thought of myself as his equal. You know. I was never I never felt different until I wanted to go to college. Then, then there was a conflict, but as I was growing up, we would have conversations about everything and he respected my opinion. Even at the age of 12 and 13 or 14. And I respected his.

Q: Were you closer to him than to your mother?

A: Yes. Yes. But I loved my mother more. But for this very reason. I owed my life to her, even as young as I was, I realized it. And with the jewelry and the bribery and going to Gestapo

headquarters and my mother, I usually had a hard-boiled egg and toast for breakfast. She would peel the egg, slice the toast (*gestures slicing toast*) in little bite sized pieces. This is when I was 18 you know. And it was a love hate relationship. I don't know how I can explain it you know other than that. There were things I'd rather not go into about that.

Q: It sounds to me that you were also the apple of her eye. You know

A: Yes.

Q: Who would cut the egg and the toast when you already have a teenager in the house? You know they'd do it themselves.

A: Right. Right. And yeah and you know I would have conversations with both of them but I never recall having a conversation with the three of us. It was always me and one of them.

Q: Did they get on with one another?

A: I never saw much love. No, I didn't. It's not like Sam and I always kissing you know. Even at this stage of our life. No, I never saw much love between them. But yes, they both, they both adored me.

Q: Did they ever speak about what had gone on in Germany in the 1930s when you were older.

A: Never.

Q: Never

A: Never. Never. The only thing my mother ever said is America is the most beautiful country in the world. You can be anything you want. This is the land of opportunity. But they never spoke about what went on. As a matter of fact I didn't even know about the property. I didn't know anything. They never told me anything. I didn't know that my mother's father had eight brothers and sisters that came to the United States in the early 1900s. I knew nothing. I was, when people ask me. It's so hard to understand, it's hard for me to understand. I also couldn't understand why she didn't bring my brother over from Israel. And I asked questions but if you know me for a little while, I ask a lot of questions. But I wasn't given any answer. I was given evasive answers. And but you accept them, you know.

Q: Your grandfather, did he live on his own or did he live with you?

A: He lived with us for a while. That's why he was so clean. I had to learn to control my bladder. Cause he monopolized the bathroom.

Q: The one bathroom.

A: And then for a little while he went into a nursing home and I recall visiting him. And then when I was nine he died.

Q: He died very soon after arriving here?

A: Yes, yes, so –

Q: Had he had his own business when he was in Wurzburg?

A: I don't know. I don't know. You know I tell this to my children. I want them to know as much as possible about me. And Sam tells them about him (*gestures with hand*). And his Spartan Greek heritage. Because I was left with so many (*gestures with hand at chest*) blank spaces. I can't answer, I want to but I don't know.

Q: But you don't know.

A: But I don't know. And Ursula, my, we went to Germany on the survivors' group. She's the retired OB GYN. She went to Munich and found out so much about my father that I didn't know.

Q: For example.

A: I don't want to tell you. My brother Emil was born. I can't remember exactly the year but let's just say 1910 (*gestures with hand*). He was born in April of 1910 and they were married in February of 1910. I wish I would have known this when they were alive. I could have blackmailed them. Don't put that (*points at interviewer*)

Q: No, such information is worth something.

A: And you know there are so many blanks and she was able to give me the city he was born in. There were only seven Jews there when he left and went to Wurzburg. How ambitious he was to buy this building at the age of 22. How well respected he was and obviously by the students at the university and even the packers down at the pier, who packed my mother's furniture. They knew her on sight. And so there are a lot of spaces in my life and I have no information on. I wish I did but I don't.

Q: Did your parents ever talk about, if they didn't talk about the bad times, did they ever talk about their own childhoods.

A: No.

Q: And your grandfather did he ever talk about when your mother was little?

A: No.



Q: Or himself when he was little?

A: No. I had to figure everything out for myself. I learned to play basketball. I learned English. There was a teacher when I went to first grade and I was old. I was seven and a half. And she indicated to me that she wanted me to stay after school every day. And I didn't understand her but I figured it, to teach me English. For a year. Every day this Polish teacher taught me English. And I credit her with so much for and also in teaching me the language, making me aware of things in science, in the animal world and she taught me well. Halloween when she hid pennies. I always found the most of them.

Q: Do you remember her name?

A: Yes. Mrs. **Shelisinsky**.

Q: **Shelisinsky**.

A: **Shelisinsky**.

Q: And you went to school where, in what part of –

A: In Manhattan.

Q: The upper west side.

A: Yes. Well now wait a minute. Let me think now. Yeah I started school in Manhattan, but then we moved to the Bronx but I can't remember what year. We moved to the Bronx, maybe after two years. But by that time I was really well versed in the English language. As a matter of fact I became my parents' interpreter.

Q: That was going to be my next question. What language did you speak at home still?

A: German.

Q: And they continued to speak German?

A: Yes. Yeah, that's why I was on one of the committees that was, here in Brockton was the linguistic, the immersion of children from foreign countries into a second language class. And I said I didn't think it was necessary that it was a waste of money. And the superintendent of school and I were like this. (*gestures with fingers crossed*) So the woman who was in charge, the bilingual program said oh you cannot imagine how hard it is for a child who comes from a foreign country, doesn't know a word of English. And goes into a class where only English is spoken. And the superintendent of schools is sitting next to me smiling. He says I'd like, I'd like Inge Protentis to discuss this with you. I can't remember her name. But I knew she hated me after this. I said I'm one of those children, came from Germany. I went into a classroom. I had no idea what the teacher wanted. She pointed. I sat. She said get (*gestures with finger pointed*)

*upwards*) up, I got up. She said when it's time to go home, she showed me to put on her coat. And I said and I learned English and I skipped three classes. And graduated before I was 18, even though I was a year and a half behind. So after that the woman wouldn't talk to me. I mean I understand it's her job and I understand that with some children it probably is very necessary. Specially if they're older. But I still think immersion into the language totally you learn quickly.

Q: Children are like sponges

A: Right.

Q: They pick this up very easily. It sounds like that was a difference in policy decision and with policy decision comes money so whether it was something is going to be funded or won't be and so on.

A: Right, right.

Q: When you came to the United States on that ship where you were seasick and so on and saw corn that people were eating in that dining room. Do you remember when you first saw land. Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

A: Yes. The ship stopped rocking from side to side for quite a while and my mother said Inge get dressed in your best dress. We're going to go upstairs to the deck. And I did and we went upstairs and it was crowded with people. I was like you could hear a pin drop. You would hear a

woman sobbing. Every once in a while. And it was lined, you know my mother pushed me to the front. And I couldn't understand what there was about this big stone lady that made people cry. Until I knew it was the Statue of Liberty.

Q: As far as you know were other people on that ship also Jewish refugees?

A: I don't know. I assume so but there were also Americans on the ship. It was a huge ocean liner called the Bremen.

Q: The Bremen.

A: Bremen, SS

Q: A German ship

A: Yes.

Q: And so that meant German personnel on the ship.

A: Yes. Now here's the amazing thing. Our room steward, you usually give them something. At the end of the voyage that day we were at the Statue of Liberty. He brought us a huge fruit basket. Yes. And we hadn't eaten anything in five days. Yeah, but yeah and I told this, when I've spoken at the schools. I've told the children they cannot imagine. They cannot imagine the

feeling that I had later on when I realized what that big stone lady meant. And of course they all knew. They said oh it's the Statue of Liberty. And I said yes, but it's more than just a statute. It has so much meaning. It means you have freedom. It means you know that no one is watching you, that no one is judging you on where you go to church or synagogue. Or you know what country you come from. It means that you are free, free American. And yeah, that moment will always stay with me.

Q: Did someone meet you at the pier?

A: Yes, my uncle. My uncle who originally –

Q: Ludwig.

A: Ludwig. Good memory. Ludwig met us at the pier, yes. And we were driving to his apartment and, through Times Square and I said what's wrong with these people. They're not pulling their shades down. They have all the lights on. Cause in Germany you had to pull the shades and keep it dark and I said I don't see anybody walking with a Star of David on their sleeve. And my uncle was trying to explain to me that they don't have to.

Q: Did you stay with him?

A: We stayed with him for about a week and then we got an apartment.

Q: Your own apartment.

A: Our own apartment. Now here's my mother ok. Most of her jewelry went to save my father, which was a very good cause. But I saw her putting a couple of things into a cotton cloth which she put into a teapot which she put the teapot into a big pot and the big pot into a bigger pot. We get to Manhattan and there are the customs agents. She got it out of Germany. She comes down. She says let me help. She starts carrying the linens up, pillows up, pots up. And the pot (*gestures, pointing with both hands*) and in the pot was there wasn't much left. If you have time at the end I'll show you the pin.

Q: I'd love to see it. Do you still have a piece of her jewelry?

A: Yes.

Q: Oh that's amazing.

A: Yes.

Q: That's amazing. Ok, we'd love to film it.

A: Yeah.

Q: So she brings up the pot in which –

A: The jewelry was. Yes. So she got it past the Germans and got it past the customs agent.

That's why I said she was, she was daring and she was brave and she was smart.

Q: And so she had enough money to at least start, at least rent the apartment.

A: Mm hmm

Q: At least be on her own rather than live in the corner of somebody else's place?

A: As far as I know because we lived on our own.

Q: And so you got all of that furniture that you didn't like so much, the baroque furniture with the curlicues that you'd have to dust –

A: Well one and a half rooms, but you know she had to buy beds and kitchen set and things like that. Yeah. But and I was amazed that we had just like five rooms. Where's the rest of the rooms? This is it.

Q: Five rooms, upper Manhattan. Not so bad.

A: No but you know.

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Q: You're used to a whole house. When your father came and the second day he's here he finds a job as a master baker. Tell me a little bit about how things developed for him. Did he eventually strike out on his own. Did he stay there?

A: He opened a bakery. He opened a bakery in the west Bronx and he was, you know the baker. My mother worked at the country. My sister and my brother in law and as a matter of fact, our best friends, Charlie and Thelma **Cartsteen**, her sister in law lived in New York and when I told her the story, she goes the Meyer bakery. We used to stand on line every Sunday to get in there. And I said yeah, yeah.

Q: They (inaudible). So he repeated his success.

A: He did, but he was older now and it was getting harder for him and there were little family squabbles you know. So eventually they closed the bakery. It was a huge success but my father made it a success, not just was he a master baker. His breads and rolls and you know were out of this world. They were light and fluffy and you know so it's not just cakes which were works of art. It was the whole thing.

Q: Did you help him in—

A: I did work there. Yes.

Q: What did you do?



A: I, I was behind the counter. I sliced rye bread on the slicer. Yeah I weighed the stuff and looked up on the chart how much it was.

Q: And did you talk to the customers in German or in English?

A: English. Oh no, I spoke only English. Yeah.

Q: When you started to grow up you said that that's when your dad already it was harder for him to see an equal sign between a girl and a boy. How did this start, this discussion of you wanting to go to college and him saying no.

A: Well my teachers told me at that time, City College New York was very hard to get into. It was very selective. You had to have, I can't remember if it was all A's and maybe a couple B's. But I had, I was an all A student. I got a B once in something, can't remember. It was probably art, cause I'm a lousy artist. Anyway, and they encouraged me to go. And they asked me what I wanted to do and I said, I wanted to be a scientist like Madame Curie. I wanted to find a cure for something. So they helped me you know fill out the forms to City College. I got accepted and like I said it was competitive. Right now all you need is a high school diploma to get in now. And but it costs money just like a state school and my father said I don't have the money and you're a woman and women don't need an education. And I said so why did you let me go to school. I mean we had big arguments. I said well why did we have all these discussions. You

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said you respected my opinion. But it didn't work so anyway, I got the job. I met Sam so it worked out.

(cut for a second)

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(file 2 – RG.50.030.0086.01.02; duration: 05:53)

Q: Just like this.

A: Wait a minute.

(arranging filming)

Q: Ok, so Ingeborg please tell me. What is this that you're holding.

A: This is a pin that was my mother's mother's in Germany.....It's set in a platinum metal and it's the only piece of jewelry I have left of my mother's.

Q: And it comes from there so it's the only piece left from what she brought over.

A: Yes. Yes. And she brought very little because she used it for a good cause.

Q: That's right, to free your father.

A: For my father.

Q: Thank you. Can you tell me what is this that you're holding.

A: This is my passport from Nazi Germany to the United States.

Q: And is it just your passport? Or also somebody else's?

A: It's my mother's and mine because I was a minor. I went on her passport.

Q: Can we turn the page and then see what we see there.

A: *(she turns page of passport)*

Q: Ah ha, and this front page what does that say there?

A: The red J *(points)* stands for Jude, Jew. And it gives names and the Reichstag which was the government then.

Q: Let's turn the page. And tell me what's there.

A: *(turns page and points)* This is a picture of my mother *(points to picture on left)* and me *(points to picture on right)* at the time when we came over, which was in January of 1939. And this just tells I'm written in here and in both our names they inserted the name Sara which we didn't have middle names.

Q: Let's turn the page.

A: *(turns page)*

Q: And up top on the left hand page, is that where it says Sara up there written

A: Yes. *(points)* on both that page and the previous page and again you have the eagle with the Swastika and the date that the passport was issued.

Q: Is there any other page that you can turn to, to show us any sort of official stamps.

A: No the rest, except in the back which is taped, the blank that if you'd like to see a picture of what was my parent's home.

Q: Yes, I'd like to see that very much so let's put the passport down.

A: *(Puts passport down and holds black and white photograph of house)* This was my parent's home. And –

Q: The whole building?

A: The whole building.

Q: That's huge.

A: Yes, it was like an urban castle and it was bombed by the British and then my husband and I went back to Germany. We saw an older man. This was 20 years ago and I asked him whether he knew a Jewish family named Meyer. And he walked with a cane and he picked up his cane and he pointed to this house and said they lived over there. The building was bombed by the British. But the city and the country rebuilt it to specification. And it's now an apartment building.

Q: Did you recognize it? when you saw it?

A: Yes. Immediately.

Q: Did you go inside it at all?

A: No, couldn't.

Q: Thank you and then let's take a look at the last photograph that you have there.

A: *(Holds another black and white photograph of people)* That's my mother and father and my husband and I, 20 some years ago.

Q: Oh that must be more than 20 years ago.

A: I mean I'm sorry, 60 years ago and I was just starting my pregnancy with my oldest son.

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Q: Ok so that would have been in the early –

A: In the 50s, early 50s. They were born in 54.

Q: OK and was this in Brooklyn? Or in Manhattan?

A: In Brooklyn.

Q: In Brooklyn, ok. So your father Max is standing. Your mother Rosa is next to him. Sam is on one knee and you are next to him.

A: Right.

Q: Ok.

*(more shots of house, passport and pages in passport) – no sound*

(end)