

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Ruth Greifer  
December 15, 1994  
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## PREFACE

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## **RUTH GREIFER**

### **December 15, 1994**

Gail Schwartz: The following is an interview with Ruth Dahl Greifer. The interview is being conducted on behalf of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on December 15, 1994 by Gail Schwartz. Could you give us your full name please.

Ruth Dahl Greifer: Ruth Dahl Greifer.

Q: And where were you born??

A: I was born in Geilenkirchen, Germany.

Q: And when were you born?

A: May 30, 1922.

Q: Who made up your family that you lived with?

A: My mother, my father, my brother, sister and myself.

Q: And what were your parents' names?

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A: My dad's name was is Isadore Dahl and my mother's name was Sophia Dahl but her maiden name was **Basemer**.

Q: And where did they come from?

A: Well mother was born in Holland and Dad was born in Germany.

Q: Where in Germany?

A: In **Geilenkirchen**.

Q: And what kind of work did he do?

A: Oh my father was a cattle dealer. I lived in a small town and most of the Jewish people were cattle dealers. There was a couple butchers and there was a painter. We had a wonderful synagogue. We had even a rabbi, Mr. **Fulman**. And he had a wife and children. And it was a very warm Jewish community.

Q: About how large was the town?

A: I don't remember.

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Q: Where was it?

A: It's in the Rhineland. It's near Aachen. And it was a small community and the Jewish community was small, but large enough to provide us with a wonderful synagogue. In fact the synagogue had a, an apartment for a caretaker and it was Orthodox. My father would go to minyan in the morning and my father would go to minyan in the evening. And we kept, mother kept a kosher home and I remember sitting upstairs with the women and the men were downstairs in our synagogue. And during the high holidays my father would go to synagogue with a top hat on. And I think I don't remember what, if he wore a tuxedo or not, but I remember the top hat.

Q: And how much religious training did you have?

A: Oh I went to Sunday school absolutely. I went to Sunday school on Sunday mornings and on Tuesday afternoons after school. And when I moved here I could read and write Hebrew which I was amazed that a lot of the women here did not.

Q: And what was the name of your siblings?

A: Oh my brother's name, he was the oldest one. He's 11 years older than I am. His name was Carl. And my sister's name was Edith.

Q: And was she younger or older?

A: No eight years older. I'm the baby in the family. Right.

Q: What kind of neighborhood did you live in?

A: Oh we had a beautiful home. We lived in a beautiful home. In fact at that time, when I could tell people that we had a car. I remember the car had to be cranked up in the morning. I remember we had a telephone. We had full time help in the house, living in all the time. And we had a coal heat that would heat up the whole house. So we lived in a lovely home.

Q: Was it in a Jewish neighborhood?

A: No. No, there was no such a thing as a Jewish neighborhood. Yes, we did have one Jewish family three doors over. And here again he was, he dealt with horses and he had a chicken farm. And lovely, just a lovely family, the **Lichtensteins**. And that family is no longer in fact, the little girl was eight years old when she was taken away and now they have named the school after her in this little **Joint**.

Q: So your neighbors were not Jewish?

A: Oh no, not, not.

Q: As a young child you played with non-Jewish children?

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A: All the time. I had a couple of Jewish friends that I played with. They were my close friends but I am the only one that has survived. None of my Jewish friends have survived.

Q: And tell me about your schooling. You began at which school.

A: I went to private school. My father was able to that we went to an Ursuline academy. And we went to a private school. Ursuline Academy. It was run by, by Catholic nuns but that was the best school in town and my father, my sister and myself who also went to it.

Q: And how did you feel as a young Jewish child going to a Catholic school.

A: Fine. I didn't feel any, any different than anybody else. When they had religious classes I would go and do something else. Help the, help the nuns, the photography or anything. I didn't stay in. it didn't bother me. I was raised among Catholics. It didn't bother me.

Q: So you never experienced any uncomfortable incidents as a child.

A: No, no. right absolutely.

Q: With the neighbors and with your school friends.

A: Oh yes, everything was very, very, very fine.

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Q: And do you remember if your father when you were young, if your father expressed any problems in business being a Jew?

A: No, no, no. he dealt, my father dealt mostly with either butchers or farmers. And no there was nothing. It was all very well.

Q: And you went to Ursuline academy until what age?

A: Until we moved to Holland.

Q: So that's where you stayed?

A: Right.

Q: And you said you came from an observant home?

A: Oh yes very. My mother was very kosher, absolutely.

Q: Did you have any hobbies as a young girl?

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A: Yes I played the piano. I played by ear, I played, I started playing when I was very young and I took piano lessons but, but after the war I have never gone back. I, I just wasn't in any mood. Bernie even bought me a piano but it was never materialized. I don't want to.

Q: Any other hobbies that you had as a child?

A: No.

Q: Were you interested in sports.

A: Well we did sports during Hitler time. There were, there were some of these young men that took the youths together and did sports with us. But otherwise no.

Q: Were you a member of any youth groups?

A: No, no. Our town was too small. I would have had to go to a different town. Aachen had youth, had youth groups but I was too young for that at the time.

Q: So you had a very pleasant childhood. Did you have extended family in town, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins.

A: I had yes. I had one aunt and uncle. The uncle was in business with my dad and that's about it.

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Q: So you had cousins that you would be with?

A: No they were all older than I was. They were more my sister's age. I was the youngest one. I'm pretty much the youngest one in our family.

Q: Do you remember holiday celebrations?

A: Oh absolutely. Hanukah, I remember Passover. I remember oh yes my mother was and dad were very observant and we, we celebrated wonderfully, absolutely. It was great.

Q: Did your mother work?

A: No, my mother never worked. My mother worked before she got married. My mother learned to be a modista. That means she had, she learned to make hats. And she went out of town to learn to make hats. And then she had a store on her own. And the, she would tell us stories about her store, in olden days when people would get married, they had a trousseau made of hats. And then when we were sick in bed, she would give us the cards that these brides would send her and thank her for all the beautiful stuff that she had made and she let us play with those cards.

Q: Were you a healthy child?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: So things went along quietly and calmly until 1933.

A: That's right. My father --

Q: What is the first change. The first change that you remember, that life was a little different.

A: It started out in 1933 and I think that when Hitler came to power and at that time I remember my mother had to go to the hospital. It was an appendectomy.

Q: You were 11 years old.

A: Yes, mm hm. And well things didn't go very fast in 33, nothing really happened. I was still going to school. My father still did his business. It was just in the later years it you know that they began to extinguish between the Jews and the non-Jews. And I remember going to school, even so they let me go to school with other kids that were not in my school would spit at me. Because I was a Jew and they would call me dirty Jew and they would spit at me. Well you don't do anything. You just keep on walking you know, you don't do very much.

Q: Do you remember being very frightened when that would happen?

A: No, I don't think so because you, you, you're you have to be strong and I was not a fighter. No, mm, mm, not at all. You just have to, you just go through as, like nothing happens.

Q: What language did you speak at home.

A: German yes.

Q: And what subjects did you study in school?

A: Oh everything. Languages, I remember in our first foreign language was French. And then a couple years later, English. And English was always much easier to me than the French language. It always came like a natural language. So I was very fortunate that way.

Q: All right now to get back. it was 1933 and you started to say when I asked you when did you first notice the changes. That your father had gone in for an appendectomy.

A: No that was my mother. My mother, but the first change. –

Q: Why do you remember that?

A: Because that was the time I think when Hitler came to power.

Q: But did she get good treatment?

A: Oh yes.

Q: So there wasn't a problem because she was Jewish.

A: No she went to Catholic hospital which was just a few doors down and the nuns were absolutely wonderful to my mother. In fact they always came to visit in our house. So they got along very well. When the first, one of the first things that we saw was when one morning my father had a plaque on the door with his name and his profession on there. It was shattered. And I think that might have been the time that they told us that he couldn't do his business any more. Well once you had are forbidden to have an income you have to look to go somewhere else. Well since my mother was born in Holland and my, her family still lived in h, in Maastricht, we were able to move to Holland.

Q: What year are we talking about?

A: 1938. Spring 1938.

Q: Let's do a little bit between 1933 and 1938 before you leave. Any other memories of that time? Do you know when your father's business was ended.

A: That was probably 1938 because we were able to –

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Q: So your father stayed

A: Well we all stayed.

Q: No I mean stayed in business until 1938

A: Oh yes, absolutely.

Q: And you went to school?

A: Mm hm.

Q: And you stayed at the Ursuline academy.

A: Right, right.

Q: Any other incidents that you remember besides children spitting at you?

A: No, not really.

Q: And the attitude of the nuns toward you did not change.

A: No, no they were absolutely wonderful.

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Q: So life for you went on until 1938.

A: Pretty much yes. Right.

Q: Did you ever hear your parents talking about Hitler.

A: No, not really. Maybe they were talking but I wasn't aware

Q: You weren't aware.

A: No, no.

Q: So now you're 16 years old. And it's 1938 and you said your father's business was

A: Taken away

Q: Taken away. do you remember what he said about that.

A: No, no.

Q: Tell you anything.

A: No, no. not at all. At least I don't remember that's --

Q: Do you remember being frightened when your father's business was taken.

A: No, no not at all. I mean everything went very smooth. We sold our house. We went ---

Q: Who did you sell your house to?

A: To the doctor across the street. He bought our house and we, the house was absolutely beautiful and we had we always had a gardener come in, two gardeners. One that shaped the trees and one that would do all the planting. We had vegetables in our yards, and we had every imaginable flowers and fruits. And my father would never let us pick the fruit because when he came home from work he wanted to go in the yard and just pick it right off the vine. And oh one thing I remember. My mother did a lot of canning, a lot of, lot of canning and fresh fruit and vegetables and we had all winter long we had fresh vegetables and fruit. And I remember potatoes for the whole winter in the basement. And something that I do remember and one doesn't have it here. you know you don't have the room, you don't have the space and.

Q: How big a house was it?

A: Oh it was big. We had the house was above the ground and we did have a garage and we had room for, for the cows in the wintertime. And we had a, a nut tree.

Q: Cows in the basement?

A: No cows on the side, next to the garage. No

Q: In a barn?

A: No it was, it was all made out of brick. It was quite sturdy.

Q: So your house was made out of brick?

A: Oh absolutely, absolutely. The, we walked up the stairs and then we went into the foyer and the foyer was made out of mosaic. And the kitchen floor was made out of mosaic. And I remember that I would walk on stilts and the maid had scrubbed it and it was so shiny and then I fell. We had a, a living room. Big kitchen with two tables. And we had another room where the seamstress was, used to come and sew. And we had one room where we never went in. only the piano and the real good furniture were there. And then upstairs we had, how many bedrooms. Probably 3 or 4 and then upstairs we had an attic and, and a room where the maid slept.

Q: So you were considered very upper class?

A: Pretty much, yeah, yeah. but very, very nice living. My mother after she got married she never worked.

Q: Ok your father's business was taken away and he sold the house and then what happened?

A: Then we moved to Holland. And –

Q: Because your mother's family was there?

A: Well we had an entrance because mother had been Dutch. It was easier for us to get in than –

Q: You said you had no problems getting papers to go into –

A: Probably cause mother had been Dutch and we rented a house.

Q: How did you get from one place to the other?

A: I think we just went to the, a furniture truck, I mean a moving van. And I remember it was small. It just kept going back and forth. I don't even know how we got all this furniture in that little house.

Q: Did you travel in the truck yourself?

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A: No.

Q: How did you get –

A: I guess my dad drove us. Yeah my dad.

Q: And there was no problem with papers.

A: No.

Q: And what town in Holland did you –

A: **Valkenburg.**

Q: And where is that?

A: That is it's a, it's a little summer resort town in, well it's near Maastricht and I tell you nobody ever hears about these little towns where I come from. Anyway it was also a small town, but my dad absolutely had to start business all over again, which was very hard because he wasn't that young any more. he had to start with new clients and new just can you imagine at his age. To have to start a new business. But you know when you have to do things, you're very strong. And where there's a will there's a way. But we had a Jewish neighbor there next door,

also a, you know lived two doors over. He also had come in from Germany and he also was a cattle dealer. But everybody did their own thing. They were not in business together.

Q: Let's back up a little bit. When you had to leave from your town, did you say goodbye to your friends?

A: No, not the, not the Catholic friends, no. The Jewish friends yes.

Q: Do you remember feeling upset that you had to leave?

A: How old was I?

Q: 16

A: 16. I guess. I mean look you had to go. There was no way that we could stay in Germany so I, I don't I don't really remember this. Yes, it was sad but –

Q: Were you frightened?

A: No. No because I was used to going to Holland because –

Q: Had you been there before?

A: My no, yes, my grandfather lived in Maastricht with my grandmother and two maiden aunts and we would go on weekends, like in a Sunday morning we would get in the car and visit with grandma and grandpa and my aunts. Stay there for dinner and come home. And that, that was natural for us. I mean we were used to going to Holland and when I was little I would go on vacation and stay with my grandparents and my two maiden aunts in Maastricht. And you know for me it was just nothing special.

Q: Did you tell the nuns you were leaving?

A: Yes.

Q: What did they say?

A: They would have liked to have gone with us. Because they felt just as unsafe as we did. And oh yes, they would have loved to have gone to Holland. But at that time to go to Holland it was like a haven. It was a safety, not knowing that they came after us, but at that time for us it was a haven. And for me, for us to go to Holland we were used to going to Holland.

Q: Were you a witness to any anti-Semitic incidents in Germany, not to yourself. You said you didn't even witness anything on the street.

A: No, mm, mm. No. No.

Q: Now you're in the town in Holland.

A: Right, it's another small town and –

Q: Where was your father's family at that point?

A: My father's family in 1938. All 11 of them, ok.

Q: Tell us a little bit about your father's family.

A: Ok, my father came of a family of eleven. Seven brothers, there were seven brothers and four sisters. And 19, one died, Robert died of a natural death. He just got sick, I don't remember what he died of. But he died in Germany of a natural death. The others were all still in Germany. My father always said I've never done anything. I'm an honest citizen. I he was in World War I, he was a soldier. I don't want to leave. He absolutely did not want to leave and none of them wanted to leave. They were all very, they were merchants. None of these people ever went to college or school. In fact my father only had a seventh grade education. He had to go to work because he was an orphan at that time, already. And very few left Germany because they said why should we leave. We haven't done anything and we'll just stay. There was only one aunt. She was a widow because her husband got killed in World War I. She and three of her children went to Brazil. And that is really one of the few families that stayed intact, because they left Germany.

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Q: So your father was now in this town and he had to start up a new business.

A: Right and

Q: What did he do?

A: Well I don't know if he ever conferred with us. He started to do business as a cattle dealer. I don't know if he had friends, if he went with somebody but he made a living.

Q: What month in 1938 did you leave?

A: Spring.

Q: Spring of 38.

A: Yes. And in the meantime my sister had gotten married. She stayed in Germany. My brother came to Holland and he lived with us part time and he lived with my maiden aunts at the time. and my sister got married just before we left Germany and she stayed in Germany with her husband. In Duren, D-U-R-E-N.

Q: Did you see any German soldiers on the street in Germany?

A: Not in 1938, I didn't see anybody. Well you saw the Hitler Youth and you say the SS and you saw the SR and I couldn't participate in anything. Absolutely. But –

Q: Did you have friends who were in the Hitler Youth?

A: Absolutely.

Q: And what were they like to you?

A: Well they wouldn't look at me anymore. They just would not look at me.

Q: These were people who had been friends of yours.

A: Yes that I used to play with.

Q: And how did you feel about that?

A: Well I was hurt but I couldn't, I mean if they tell you, you can't play with somebody you just don't go. We just don't play with anybody. I had my little Jewish friends to play with. and we were the first ones to leave because of my dad's business. And that's why none of these people left Germany and that's why none of these people survived. I'm the only one that survived.

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Q: So your father started up this business.

A: Business right.

Q: Did you go to school?

A: Yes, I did go to school.

Q: What kind of school did you go to?

A: Just the regular public school. And that was in 1938, Spring 1938. That was before Kristallnacht and

Q: Summer came.

A: The, well the summer came. I went to school and then on Kristallnacht it was when they took all the Jewish men in, in Germany. But they took my brother in law to Dachau. And my sister was all alone at that time. The only good thing was that my brother in law had blood relatives in America whom they had been in contact with. And they started to work on papers to get my brother in law and my sister out of Germany. My brother spoke English. And he and the family here in Brooklyn worked on the papers and got them ready just before the war broke out. This is one of the few cases where I've heard that the Germans let a person leave the concentration camp to come to America. And this happened to my brother in law. They let –

Q: What was his name?

A: Rudy Rose and they let him out of Dachau to come to the United States.

Q: How did you know about Kristallnacht?

A: Well the family kept in touch because we had all these brothers and sisters in Germany and –

Q: What did you feel like when you heard about it?

A: It was absolutely dreadful. One of my aunts lived in **Solvengin** and this is where my grandmother was at the time. They destroyed the SS or whoever came in the house, destroyed everything in the house. There was not a chair to sit on. there was not a cup to drink out of. They destroyed everything. But when they came to my grandmother's bedroom, they opened the door and saw this old lady and they closed the door and never touched her or touched that room. Something else dreadful. My grandmother was 93 years old and she had sugar diabetes for a long time. But that was old age which is not very bad. But in the meantime she developed gangrene in her toes, her foot whatever it was. And the family held a, got together on the phone and they decided that it was, this was not the time to have grandma operated on and have her sitting in a wheelchair so they decided to let it go. And let grandma die. She was 93 years old. One thing I

remember though coming back to grandma, before we left Germany we had a big, big party in Koln and celebrated grandma's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Q: What was her name?

A: Oh her name was Helen, Helena Dahl. And that, that's one time where I saw my whole family probably never to see again but this is when we went to Koln and celebrated Grandma's birthday.

Q: You were in Holland and you started school and it was a public school with non-Jews.

A: Yes.

Q: Any problem

A: No, no problem, no problems at all. It was very, very, well I had to start a new language.

Q: Did you know any Dutch?

A: Yeah I spoke it. I spoke it because I would go and visit with my grandmother and my grandfather. But

Q: And so what do you mean you started a new language?

A: Well I, I in school I had to learn to write it and, and don't forget whatever I did was verbal. And I had to start a new language. But

Q: And the neighborhood was mixed.

A: The neighborhood was absolutely mixed. We did have a little synagogue on the second floor of a store and again it was Orthodox with me sitting in front and the women sitting in the back. it was a very nice but a very small Jewish community. but enough to have a little synagogue and –

Q: Then Kristallnacht happened and you heard

A: That they had taken my brother in law away.

Q: And then what, what was the next change?

A: Let me think what happened to Kristallnacht to other people. Let me get my thought together. (pause)

Q: We were talking about what happened at Kristallnacht.

A: Well that was in Germany. Let me go back to Holland since we moved there. Everything went very smooth. I had my maiden aunts living in Maastricht which is another city close to where we lived in **Valkenburg**. And my brother lived with us and he spent time with my aunts because they were you know they were by themselves. Until May 10<sup>th</sup> 1940 that's one morning we woke up ---

Q: All of 1939

A: Nothing happened. I mean everything was fine.

Q: You led a normal –

A: Led a normal life.

Q: Did you have any contact with your friends back home in Germany.

A: We had contact with the family.

Q: But not with your friends.

A: No, no, no. We, we did have contact with the family . some that left Germany and everybody that left Germany came through Holland, came to our house and visited with us. our house was like a haven for people that went from one place to another. And –

Q: Did you feel bad not being in touch with friends? From Germany?

A: No, not, I don't know. not really, not really.

Q: Did you have any social life in Germany, any boyfriends?

A: No, no, no.

Q: So you weren't leaving any –

A: No, nobody mm, mm. no. If you were raised by a father like mine, you don't date til you're 18. I was not allowed to date til I was 18 years old. And I remember not being able, lived in Holland. There was a dance and my father wouldn't let me go, not even with my brother. I wasn't 18 years old. Very strict house.

Q: So 1939 was relatively quiet and your father was able to conduct business.

A: Right and I went to school.

Q: And you went to school?

A: Well until May 10<sup>th</sup> 1940 we got up very early in the morning, 5:00 in the morning and the sky was dark, dark with airplanes that had come. And the Germans were coming in and trying to overrun Holland which they did in five days. I remember the soldiers walking down our street.

Q: German soldiers?

A: German soldiers. My mother was in the hospital in Maastricht. She had a my mother had angina and she was there for a, for their own soldiers that got hurt.

Q: The Dutch soldiers?

A: The Dutch, the German soldiers.

Q: Oh the German soldiers.

A: German soldiers. I mean the German soldiers needed that room and set anybody that was able to leave the hospital so you had to come home. That made, that was devastating. I mean you had this poor woman that had a heart condition had to come home. We were scared. We knew what was going to be. We knew what was coming and here we just left Germany in 1938 to be overrun again in five days. And that was the most frightening and experiences. One of the most frightening experiences in my lifetime.

Q: Where did you stay during those five days?

A: Oh we stayed in our, oh no, no, no. We had catacombs across the street. and during sometimes during those attacks we stayed in the catacombs. That people, there were people that died in the catacombs. There were babies born in the catacombs but that was just across the street from our house. In the, there were small mountains. Holland doesn't have any mountains and the little town where I used to live, **Valkenburg**, had the biggest mountain there is in Holland. If you look it up in the dictionary it's called a culvert. It's, I mean you walk up, it's absolutely nothing to it. it but it's the biggest mountain Holland. And **Valkenburg** has catacombs and it's very damp in there.

Q: This was in the mountainside

A: In the mountain side absolutely.

Q: So you and your family went in.

A: Oh yes we –

Q: When there would be raids.

A: When there would be raids, we just went into the mountain.

Q: Did you take –

A: Take food and blankets and all that and when it was clear we just went out.

Q: And how long did you stay in –

A: Well Holland was overrun in five days so it didn't last very long.

Q: Did you stay the five days in there?

A: Not quite. In and out, in and out, in and out yes. Because we didn't have to stay there. It was just across the street. If we would have lived far away we probably would have stayed there for a while, but we stayed. Anyway we were very scared and –

Q: What did you do when you were scared. By this time you're 18 years old

A: Well I was, you know I could, I was out of school. And what did we do. I really, oh no, no, no. I started to learn to sew. I went and went to a seamstress and started to learn to sew, that's what I did. Everybody did this because one didn't know if you had to go into a different country. you couldn't speak the language. AT least you had an occupation that you could support yourself which I had to do when I came to this country. I was a seamstress. And that was, that

happened to most of my family. Some became cooks, some became bakers. The girls all became seamstresses because with the idea

Q: So now it's those five days and then what happened.

A: And well nothing happened immediately but we're here we are in 1940. But things became changed very, very rapidly. We had to go and sign up I guess.

Q: Register

A: Register. Who were Jews. And so they knew exactly who lived where and how many Jews there were in this little town. Then we had to give up our radios. We had to give up our bicycles.

Q: Were you angry?

A: Scared. Angry. Why me? Why am I different. I'm not different than anybody else. I think they took my dad's business away again. They gave us stars to wear.

Q: Where did you wear your star?

A: On my left side and we had to secure the star on every corner because if a wind would blow then the star would fall over and it had to be clear that it had to be secured on every corner, the star. All six points.

Q: Did you sew your own stars on.

A: No my mother did all that. I didn't' do anything. But my mother lined it so it would be more sturdy and then she put all the pins on. I was a spoiled child. I didn't do any of that.

Q: Were you upset to have to wear a star?

A: Yes, yes why would I be different than anybody else. I just didn't' want to be different. Why should I be different than anybody else. We had curfews. We could not be out in the dark. We could not leave town. We had to stay in town. We couldn't' move around. And it was absolutely frightening. You had no more liberty. You had no more way of earning a living. You were different than anybody else and scary. Very, very scary.

Q: Did you talk this over with your parents?

A: Yes we talked about it, but what could we do. There was nothing that we could do. In the meantime I got postcards from my girlfriends from Germany who had been taken to concentration camps. And what the postcard always said, it said only one or two sentences but the sentences were always the same. So we knew that there were, if they wanted to write, they

were forced to write the same thing. But we didn't know where they were. There was no address. There was nothing on it. I could never return their postcards. And we were very, very scared and frightened. A lot of my dad's family was taken to a concentration camp and never heard from again. But these were all older people already, people that didn't want to leave Germany. People that were of means. People that didn't have anywhere to go or may even try to go anywhere. Because they felt that this is where I live and I've never done anything wrong and I don't want to go anywhere. Well, here we are in 1941. And we have all these liberties taken away.

Q: Did you have enough food?

A: Yes, yes that we had. We always had enough food in the house.

Q: How did you get the food, your father wasn't working.

A: Imagine we had enough money to buy the food. I don't remember what happened to our car. I couldn't tell you that. But we were told to get ready and pack knapsacks. For I don't know how many days, clothing, food and everything so when the Germans come to our house that we were ready to be taken away. One -

Q: Who told you this?

A: The Germans did. One

Q: How?

A: I guess we got notices in the mail probably. It's not all very clear to me anymore. But I do remember one day in 1942, I think it was about June or July, 1942. There was a knock on our door and they would come and to get me. In the meantime, I was sick. I got sick. I don't know how lucky I was that the doctor that we had in Holland told them that I could not be moved. And I by a miracle they let me stay. I stayed in bed from months at a time, putting white powder on my face to tell people that I was sick. I had to be afraid of my neighbors because some of my Jewish neighbors were taken away and here I was as a young girl, 20. In bed. My mother did everything. She, I would not get out of bed. My mother took care of the house as sick as she was. And like I said it's a miracle that they didn't come after me at another time. But in the meantime my two maiden aunts were taken away in Maastricht. My brother said I'm not going to let these ladies go by themselves. They're very frail. They're old. They are absolutely the most wonderful people who never hurt a fly. They were ladies of means. My grandfather was an antique dealer. And I will go with them. He volunteered to go with them. Not knowing that he was never with them because I found out later through the Red Cross that as soon as they came to Auschwitz that they were killed immediately. And but my brother who went was young, he was 11 years older than I was. He was sent to work camp. And I don't know where he died but I know that he lived through I guess work camps, concentration camps, til the end. And he died either in **Badwamvorn** which I guess is a work camp or in Auschwitz. I am not sure. But he died of typhoid of probably two days before he was liberated. So that was our oldest one in the family.

Q: So here you are in bed with white powder ---

A: With white powder on my face. Another time they came to get my mother but you should hear the screaming and the carrying on and she was sick. And they did not take her either. I don't know what happened. They must have felt so sorry for us. That they let us stay. People were taken away and people disappeared. We did not know what happened. My father had a friend in another city. He also was a cattle dealer and he said, I don't know how they got together. He said how come that people are disappearing and he said if you go to the post office and there is a gentleman and you ask for his fictitious name, Mr. Jansen, he will tell him that you want to speak with him. We had been moved from our single house to a house that had a lot of stores and a lot of rooms and they put all of us Jewish people there together. So if they had another raid that they didn't have to go from house to house. That we were just all there. I don't know how they moved me. I don't remember anything but I remember having been moved to this house where all these storefronts were changed into places for us to live. Well my father went to Mr. Jansen and he told us that he could help us. that he would help us to go in hiding, if we were willing to and my father said anything, anything you can do for us he did. Well of course it was very difficult to find houses, to find places for us to go. He got in touch with us. It must have been before another transport came. And he had found one place for the three of us but we never wanted to be together because if we were found the whole family would have been destroyed. The man came to our house and at night and got some, I guess my mother had suitcases ready with a few little things for us to wear. I don't even remember what I wore, what I had. I, I can't tell you. I really don't remember. But I know that he came the night before or a couple nights

before and picked up a couple of suitcases and he said yes he had secured a place for us. We had to leave early in the morning. I don't remember. We had to go up the hill, but that was during a time that we were not allowed on the street. We had to wear our star. And we walked up the hill where he came with a car and took us away. You left everything, everything you owned. Everything you had you just left behind because all you had were what you wore and a few things I guess clothing that he took. I remember coming to this place and it was a coal miner where we, where he wanted us to stay. It was a very small townhouse and the person made sure to tell the neighbors that she was getting company for the weekend.

Q: This is 1942.

A: It's 1942 already.

Q: What month or what time of year?

A: This was 19, I don't know if this was already 19, the end of 1942, already 1943.

Q: So it was winter time.

A: Winter time. And well everybody was indoors so they just snuck us into this house but it was a very small house and this person was a coal miner. And my father had the hardest time. Having been an outdoor person all his life it was like you had a lion in a cage. My mother had a terrible time with him because he had to be quiet. He couldn't speak loud. I guess, I don't even

remember he was used to smoking. I guess he couldn't smoke. I don't remember. My mother really had an awful, awful time with him. But we stayed in this one house. He stayed, they stayed in this one house I guess just for a few days until they found somewhere else for them to go. My mother and dad. I never really saw them after that until after the war.

Q: What were your feelings when they had to leave?

A: Scared, frightened but –

Q: What did they say to you? When they had to leave.

A: Well we cried, we hugged each other but we had no other choice. You have, you are, you have no idea how hardened you are during that time. All you do is think about your safety, yourself, that you make it til the end if there is an end. And you just live from minute to minute and day to day. You don't know if you get caught while being transported. You don't know if you get caught. In the house. If the neighbors would hear something and they would go and squeal on you. You really lived in fright, you were frightened 24 hours a day at all times. But so were the people that you stayed with. Don't forget, if they would have found us, they would have killed me. They would have killed them. They would have killed the whole family. And

Q: Do you remember their names?

A: No, absolutely not. that's frightening about being old. I should have written it down which I did not. I neglected.

Q: They did give you the names at the time.

A: Oh absolutely. Oh yes, they knew my name. I knew their name. we lived a normal life. The only thing is I had to fit into this life. I wasn't used to eating rabbits which were free of ration. And I remember in that particular house she made rabbit. Just the thought of it, coming from a kosher home to eating rabbits. I wouldn't eat it. and lo and behold I didn't get anything else. I was hungry, just smelling this rabbit and looking at it I couldn't do it. But the next time when she served rabbit, I ate the rabbit because I was hungry. We did get rations from the underground. The underground did supply us with rations which was a big help. But this one man helped us during the time, all this time, all the time we were in hiding and if we needed help he would help us to find another place. And you know that this man never got paid, never he did it all on his own.

Q: This is Mr. Jansen?

A: Mr. Jansen. And he was, he had, he was a single person who lived with a, he had a lady that did his housework and she was in with this. because sometimes if you had to go, we knew where to go. We knew where to go overnight if we needed help so I tell you, you were so hardened. You had to live from minute to minute that you don't think. You absolutely don't think. but there was a time another girl came in.

Q: Your parents left and so you're still in that first ---

A: I'm still in that first house. Then he needed the room for somebody else.

Q: Your room, he needed your room or your parents.

A: No he needed to, I was there and then he brought another single girl in. He, you know sometimes you don't have places and so there were two of us. But the people didn't like this girl. She was not clean. She was not friendly. She just didn't fit and before we knew it they asked her to leave.

Q: A Jewish girl?

A: A Jewish girl from Amsterdam, absolutely. I stayed there for a while and it was hard. The air raids started to come in. And every time there was an air raid we had to be fully dressed, fully ready to leave the house, run out for two reasons. Number one the when the air raids were sometimes, airplanes would be shot down. There would be shot and the pilots and that were in those airplanes would try to hide and would sometimes people would give them hiding places. So if they were, there was an airplane that was down and the pilots were missing well we were surrounded and if they would have found us it was just I mean they would have killed us immediately. That went on for a while. But then the people got very nervous. They had me for a

while and they said enough of it already. You need to leave. Where did they send me? They sent me

Q: Before you left did you do anything specifically during the day, not during air raids but just generally. What did you do?

A: Just helped them in the house. But I had to be very careful that I could not be seen. And not be heard. That the toughest thing is they had to lead a regular life. Remember they were going for one day at a time. they were going to on a little vacation. Then I had to sit in the attic. I had my food in the attic and I had my little potty in the attic and that's where I stayed. I could not move. I sat in this in the attic until they were ready to come home. because if they would have heard noise then people would say well they're gone for the day, what is who is in that house. And by luck maybe they would have called the Germans. By luck they might have called somebody and said well let's go in there. you never know what other people's minds are. So if they were going, if they were going shopping, or they were going somewhere or doing anything up in the attic I went.

Q: Did friends come over to visit them?

A: No, they never had any friends come over. I think they did have some family come over but then they were aware of where I was and who I was. No. they never had any entertainment or, they were plain people.

Q: Then they came to you and said you have to leave.

A: You have to leave so they had to, they had to contact Mr. Jansen and they had to find a place for me.

Q: Were they getting paid?

A: Yes.

Q: From your father?

A: Yes.

Q: To protect you?

A: Yes. Nobody did anything for nothing. But look, it meant a whole lot of money for us. But for them, if you take the risk that these people took and the agony and the frightening you could not pay them enough. You wouldn't be able to pay me enough to do it. you could not pay them enough so this little bit of money really didn't mean anything as long as everything went well.

Q: You contacted Mr. Jansen?

A: I contacted, we, they contacted Mr. Jansen and I don't know if I went to this, let's say I don't know in order where I went. But I went one time I went to a doctor's house. It was a big house and they had a maid. They used to have two maids but the one maid just left so they needed a maid to be in the house. And well I wasn't used to doing maid's work. We always had help in the house until the last minute we had help in the house. Well they told me what to do. I had to go on my hands and knees to do the floors. And the other maid said to me and looked at my knees. She says you don't have maid's knees. I said what are maid's knees. She says you haven't crawled on the floor long enough to have flat knees. Well, I got scared. I told the owner of the house that I had to leave. Because I didn't have maid's knees so she probably could figure out that I wasn't used to doing this kind of work. I remember I needed to leave immediately. And this is one time that I walked over to Mr. Jansen's house. I knew approximately where he was.

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Q: You were talking about how you went over to Mr. Jansen's house.

RUTH GREIFER: Yes, that was like a little haven to be until the next house was available for us. I don't really remember who and how I got my clothing. It must have been that took charge of, arranged for all of this. Well, here he took us. He took me to a house where my parents had been and my parents had to leave because they were squealed on and the girl that squealed on them was killed by the underground. Anyway, can you believe that after this had died down, that

they were willing to take another human being, another Jewish person to be in their house. Well I came there.

Q: What were their names?

A: That was Mr. and Mrs. Robertson. And their only daughter Katie. The house was built on the outskirts between two small towns. We didn't have, we had only –

Q: Are we still talking about Valkenburg. Is that where you still --

A: No, I'm in. No the places that were, was in hiding is all in the vicinity of **Hallen, Hulsberg, Terblijt**. These are all small coal mining towns. And this is where Mr. Jansen was able to place us. Here, but I'm coming back to go to the Robertsons' house. The Robertson house was on a road that was between two, not cities, two small towns and they have never gotten together. Who's going to put in electricity. Who's going to put in water supply. We didn't have any water supply except for a well in the back yard. And there was no electricity. We only had kerosene and the only heating place in the house was the stove in the kitchen. It was very primitive but the people were absolutely wonderful. I stayed there and we had another lady German Jewish from Heidelberg. She was used to a lot of money. Her parents had a cigar factory. And she was, she had a hard time being, adjusting, being the person. Nobody. You are absolutely a nobody. You are at the mercy of people. If they're good to you then it's fine. If not, it's a hard time and a different way of life. Don't forget a little carafe of water had to last us for one week. I slept with Katie in a single bed. When she turned I had to turn. When I turned she

had to turn. Our linens was washed. The bed linens were washed every two months. Because they would hang the clothes out and people would probably watch how often you wash. So they were used to washing once a month so once a month this bed was being changed and the next month this bed was being changed. Our clothing wasn't changed for at least once a week. And like I said our water, we had a little carafe that had to last us one week. But look, you do anything to keep your life. I was asked once did you make plans. When you were in hiding and they were so amazed. I said no I didn't make any plans because I didn't know if I was going to live the next day or the next morning or the next minute. Because I didn't know where I was going to be. I didn't know what was going to happen to us if I ever survived. We couldn't tell. The people were very good to us. The food was ample. We ate probably potatoes three times a day which was fine.

Q: Do you remember the parents' first names?

A: No, no. I know that he was a coal miner and a farmer and the woman didn't work. And Katie delivered the newspapers. That's all I know.

Q: So you stayed inside the house?

A: Inside the house all the time. All the time.

Q: And what did you do there?

A: I knitted. I remember that they had knit sweaters and they would pull them out. And then I knit them bigger for somebody you know for somebody else. This kind of stuff. People asked me if I read. No. I never read. There was no reading material in those houses.

Q: What happened to your Jewish star that you had?

A: The Jewish star, I didn't have it with me. That was back in Valkenburg with somebody else. I never had it with me. I have it here but I don't have –

Q: You left it with somebody?

A: I left it with somebody.

Q: So you're with the Robertsons.

A: I'm with the Robertsons and yes, I remember one moment that was closer already when the, you know they were, the Germans were dug in, in front of the house. We Anna and I, Anna is the other lady. We were downstairs and what we were doing downstairs I don't know. Anyway the German soldiers come in the back entrance and coming into the house. And here we are. There's the kitchen and here is the French door. And here is a round table and we could not get out of that room to go upstairs. The poor soul asked these German soldiers in the kitchen entertained them, gave them coffee, gave whatever she had and she probably knew that we were in the adjacent room. The adjacent room had a round table and long table cloth. Under the table

in the next room. You don't know how frightened we were. You don't know how scared we were. If we had coughed, that would have been the end of us. They would have said who is in there. Let's go see. Because they're aware. They knew that people were in hiding and they knew exactly what was going on. You don't know the fright and how scared we were. I don't know. it probably lasted three days to us but it didn't last that long. I don't remember how long it lasted. But thank god we survived that particular incident. You had to live. They had to live a normal life. And just fill in because people knew exactly how they lived. Friday mornings she would go into town and buy her groceries. I mean everything had to be just so. The clothes that were hung out had to be just normal. Not more, not one piece more than another because people in small towns know exactly what the next person does. I really don't remember how long I stayed with them. Until I had to leave again. And I don't know if they got scared of us. You know there's just so much time that you can spend with a person that's a fugitive. I absolutely was a fugitive in that house.

Q: They were also getting paid.

A: Yes, everybody.

Q: Everybody. Did you have contact with the underground there?

A: The, I tell you what happened. Well we at certain times we ran out of money. So the underground would go back to Valkenburg where we had things and I don't know got in contact

with friends of ours. I don't know if they sold things or whatever happened. I really don't know. I never asked my father how did you get the money.

Q: This was the Dutch underground.

A: The Dutch underground.

Q: The Dutch Jewish underground just the Dutch underground.

A: No, there wasn't a Jew in sight. Mm, mm. Just the regular Dutch underground. And then I was transported pretty far away from **Hulsberg** to **Treebeek**. And I got into a house where I was upstairs. And now I didn't like it that much but I had no other choice. And in that house also was another girl. And this girl had problems. She had polyps. And I think that they were able to get a doctor in that house to help her. I don't know if he operated in that house. I don't know whatever happened. But I know that I didn't like it there but I had no other place to go. And this was already close towards the end of the war. I remember being at Katie's house. She had a radio and we listened to the invasion. And we followed that but we didn't know how long it would take before the liberation came if there ever was a liberation. One didn't know. But that I know we had in Katie's house.

Q: And that was June of 44.

A: Yes. Right. So here I am in **Treebeek** in this other house with more people and the bombing got heavier. And I remember being so scared. Here we are and it was we didn't know how soon the liberation came. And I remember I was so scared that I went down in the basement and there was a potato bin. And I crawled into the potato bin and I don't know how often I sat in that potato bin. And how long I sat in that potato bin. Because when the Americans came to liberate us the house was in front of a big coal pile. And the Germans would sit on this side and shoot over your house and Americans came across. It was a big field. I'll never forget the Americans came across with their tanks and infantry. And we were told to stay in the basement because we didn't know who was going to stay. Who was going to be pushed back. And I know that a, some of the American soldiers got hurt. But do you know that we were afraid to come out of the basement for days. We didn't know if they were going to stay. We didn't know if they were going to be thrown back and but we did get liberated, September 17<sup>th</sup> 1944. That was early but still scared. Absolutely frightened to death to even tell people well here I am. I'm Jewish. I'm, I'm liberated now. I'm free. For three days we did not come out. We were scared, absolutely scared, scared, scared. Then I got a call or we got a call from Mr. Jansen that my parents had gone back to Valkenburg.

Q: You were still in the house.

A: I was still in the house. They already had gone. Well we didn't have a place to go. We did not have anywhere because the house that was rented was not ours. We didn't –

Q: Let's talk a little bit about the liberation. What were your feelings?

A: What were our feelings. Oh god. You have no idea. I could have kissed every soldier that there was. I you know

Q: These are the first Americans.

A: First Americans. First Americans that I've , that I saw. And

Q: What kind of things did they say to you?

A: I don't even, I don't' even know that I told them that I was Jewish. I just was so, so happy to be free, afraid. Don't forget how long have I been afraid. How long have I been in underground. How long have I been living with people, scared For 24 hours all these months. There was not a wink that I could say I could smile. I could enjoy, I could live. It was will I ever be able to be free. Will I ever be able to live. It was I don't know. I guess I lived so intimidated that I was scared. And to be free. There were so many questions. What happened to my family. Oh god. What happened to my family. Ok. Mr. Jansen came and got me and brought me to my parents. Well we didn't' know where we were going to live we didn't' –

Q: This is back in Valkenburg.

A: Back in Valkenburg. There was a Jewish family that –

Q: When you first saw your parents.

A: Oh my goodness.

Q: What were your feelings?

A: I couldn't, didn't recognize my mother. My mother did not eat. She could not stand the thought of pork, bacon. She couldn't stand the smell in the house. She wouldn't eat. My mother weight about 80 some pounds when she came out of hiding. And she was absolutely what shall I say, devastated. Here we are. but she knew that my brother had left. Her two sisters had left. Another sister with a husband and son had left. And she didn't know what happened to them. She wouldn't eat. She just existed. And well my father, he, he was a different type of person. They spoke with the family that owned this big house. And they asked my parents to move in with them. That's funny. We did not have a chair to sit on. We did not have a bed to sleep on but what the Dutch government did, they went into the apartments that the Germans deserted, that the Germans left behind and gave us furniture and beds and chairs to sit on and beds to sleep in. And they gave us enough that we could live in this house. This young couple also was in hiding but the elder couple, the elderly couple had been taken away. Of course they never returned and let me tell you something, how people take things different than others. One day and I'm coming back to the people that we lived with. I went upstairs in an attic to hang up clothing. Here this young man who asked us to come and move in with them tried to hang himself. He tried to commit suicide because his parents did not return and he had an absolute nervous breakdown. Well we didn't have a telephone in our house. I went to the doctor and he was committed for a

while because he had a complete nervous breakdown. Anyway we stayed in this house. Let me think. We lived in this house. We didn't have any windows in the house. The windows were all broken from the bombs and there were all put together with wood. Let me think. Can you turn it off.

A: All right, the transports were coming in. And

Q: You're with your parents.

A: I'm living with my parents and the transports were coming in and my father still hoped that my mother was alive. He would stand at the

Q: Train station.

A: At the train station all day long. From morning til night and when he found out eventually he thought that my brother would never come home. My mother and I would go into town to Maastricht where she was born and where my family used to live and we would go, maybe we would go shopping. Or we would do something. And people would come and say aren't you the sister of the **Dahl Miss basements**. And she said they looked so much alike. And let me tell you it killed her. My mother died literally of heartbreak because her older son, her only son was killed in a concentration camp. Her two maiden aunts, sisters were killed. Her other sister and the husband and son were killed. My whole Dutch family is not there anymore. I'm the only survivor of my Dutch family. There is nobody left. The only ones that are left are at the cemetery. And my mother is buried in Maastricht. And my grandparents and my great

grandparents. But I am the only survivor. I didn't want to stay in Holland. I felt that as a Jewish girl I didn't have much of a chance. Even so, I had been begged to stay. They needed young girls to marry Jewish men so there would be a continuation of the Jewish people in Holland. And I said no I'm not going to do that. I am, my sister lived here and she was willing to send papers for me to come to America. I don't know one, sometimes I ask myself did I do the right thing to leave my parents. But having been through so much in my young life that I felt that I wanted to start a new life. Not really realizing how hard it is to start a new life. Because you turn a leaf over and you start all over again. I left my parents. And I came to America.

Q: How did you get here?

A: Literally on the boat. I came over on the New Amsterdam. And as soon as I got off the boat, the first word my sister said to me is speak only English. No other language is spoken in our house.

Q: What day did you arrive in the United States?

A: I don't remember. I have it all written down. 1948.

Q: In the spring

A: In the spring. And they she picked, she and my brother in law picked me up and we went to **Kittanning** Pennsylvania which is about 40 miles out of Pittsburgh. That's where they ended

up and I don't know how and why but that's it. I stayed with them for six months to learn the American way of life. I remember that their friends were absolutely wonderful to me. They, I spent time with them. They taught me the American way. They invited me to the country club. They had brothers that took me out on a date. It was absolutely wonderful frightening experience for me being in this country. I spoke English pretty well because we were liberated by the Americans and I went to, we went to services with the American soldiers. And

Q: Religious services?

A: Yes the Jewish soldiers came to our synagogue and brought, and they had their rabbi that brought everything. And then they came to our house for tea afterwards and this is how I learned to speak. Well I spoke English but I learned to speak much better. But anyway one day my sister said after having been there for six months, it's about time for you to go and get a job. So I took the bus into Pittsburgh and I applied, went to some stores. Department stores, ready to wear stores and the first time I didn't get anything. Well a couple weeks later you know there's a slow season in August. Things pick up in September. I went back in and I got a job. I got a job at Max **Asens** that was a store that only sold furs, coats and suits. And here this gentleman gave me a job. I was scared to death because really I hadn't done much sewing for a long, long time. But I had to have a place to stay.

Q: The three years that you were with your folks –

A: I just stayed home with them.

Q: You didn't work.

A: No

Q: Ok so now you have your first job.

A: And now I have my first job. And well I had to have a place to stay. Well my sister's friend had an aunt in Pittsburgh who lived, had an apartment over a restaurant and she was willing to take me in. I didn't have a room by myself. I had, I lived, I shared a bedroom with her. And I shared the apartment with her and it was difficult. I didn't have really the freedom that I wanted but I couldn't afford more. And she was happy to have me because she used this money to send, help send her son to law school. It was hard. it was hard, but then again I had help. My sister's friends sent somebody, sent young ladies over to pick me up and take me to Hadassah meetings. And this way I was introduced to Hadassah and a Jewish way of life. And know that there was a ride. And I wanted to take in everything. I went to the Y. I went swimming at the Y. I and through the Hadassah I made friends. I made girlfriends and it was hard. I was by myself. And I had to live on \$25 a week. I had to pay room and board and I had to eat and I had to dress myself. But I did it. I was very poor. I remember sometimes if I didn't have any money I ate M&Ms for dinner. And I remember I got paid on Monday morning and I would go into town just enough money to pay the car fare and I probably had a penny left. But that was fine. I mean I got used to that. I didn't want anything from anybody. I supported myself.

Q: Were you in contact with your parents at all at that time?

A: Yes. Absolutely. But my mother got very sick. And my mother died. That left my dad by himself. There was nobody that could take care of him except my aunt **Lisian** from London. She also was a widow but she had gone to London with her son. She did not live through the Holocaust. My Aunt **Lisian** came and stayed with my father. And took care of him. And but she also had to leave with her son, daughter in law and granddaughter to emigrate to Israel. So Dad was alone. But in the meantime the papers were ready and my sister and brother in law and again the family from his family from Brooklyn gave him the papers to come to America. And dad moved in with my sister. I was still working and living in Pittsburgh when let me think now. I can you turn off.

A: I started to take, I wanted to take everything in when I came to Pittsburgh. I went I saved enough money to go and see the Icecapades by myself. I took the cheapest ticket and I know that I was, I had the ticket that I couldn't see anything so I walked around. I stood all evening. I wanted to make up for all the years that I lost. I took myself to the theater by myself. I went, I sat in peanut heaven. All the way in the back just enough to see the shows that I had missed. I wanted to make up for all the time and my girlfriends say to me you go out on a Saturday night by yourself. If I don't have a date on Saturday night I don't even answer the phone. I said this doesn't make any difference to me. I want to go and make up and see everything and do everything that I've never been able to do. I didn't care if I had a date. I didn't care if I, I just wanted to see everything. But anyway here I was at the Y and everybody played bridge. My

sister played bridge. They all played bridge and lo and behold I was going to take bridge lessons at the Y. Signed up and here there are all of these young single men taking bridge lessons with me. Paul **Beder** wanted to date me and he said to Bernie I'm going to date this girl and Bernie says no I'm going to date this girl. I want her telephone number. So Bernie introduced Paul **Beder** to somebody else who eventually got married. And we started to date. I met Bernie playing bridge at the Y. Date, not hyphen, on and off. Well there was a national Hadassah convention in town and every eligible single woman, single men from all around Pittsburgh area, Ohio, came to this Hadassah convention. It was a very snowy night and my girlfriend and I we took a cab down to the William Penn Hotel. Get up to the top floor wherever this big thing was. And we walk around and walk around. And who do I run into but Bernie. We stayed together all night and he took me home. That night. And from then on that's when we started to date.

Q: When did you get married?

A: When I got married.

Q: What year?

A: 1951, April 8<sup>th</sup>.

Q: And then how long did you stay in Pittsburgh?

A: We stayed in Pittsburgh. Oh we got married in 1951. Then Bernie decided in April, after April that he wanted to go back to school for his advanced degree. And we went through that.

Q: What did he study?

A: Chemistry. And we moved here in 19, well that was 51. And what did I say. We got married in 51. And we moved here in 1957. So we stayed six years in Pittsburgh. It took him a while to get his advanced degree.

Q: Do you have any children?

A: Yes, I have three, the most wonderful, wonderful daughters. I wouldn't know what to do. They are my support. Between my husband and my three daughters, I have the most wonderful support that I need. Carla is the oldest one. And she was born in Pittsburgh. Helen already was born here in Alexandria and then Eve also. They are absolutely so dear to me that I wouldn't know what to do without them, because we don't have family. My sister who, who let me come over. She died at the age of 53 of cancer. Her husband was so dependent on her. He had nobody either. Because his family was also killed that he died within a year and left their daughter an orphan at the age of 19. I do have my niece but that's another story.

Q: And then your father came over and how long did he live?

A: Father came over wait a minute. When we got married.

Q: It was after you were married that he came.

A: He did come to the wedding. So he came over before we were married but he lived with my sister. And after we got married, he lived six months with us and six months with my sister. Well then we rented a house here in Alexandria and he loved it. But after we moved into this house, he said I'm not going back so he stayed with us at least ten years. So and he loved it here. He loved the children. He loved my husband. He was a happy person. He went to shul all the time. And when they needed a minyan they came and picked him up. They made him an honorary member of the synagogue and he died when, he got ill. He had heart failure. And he died at the age of 93.

Q: Can we talk a little bit now about your feelings and reflections after the war? How do you think the war.

A: Is it off.

Q: Yeah. What are your feelings today about how the war has influenced you?

A: The war has influenced me to the point that I am the person that said you should not hate Germans. You should forgive and forget. Well I am of the opposite end. When I hear somebody speak German, I get such fury in me, I cannot take it. Even so on my own side, my dad I had to speak German to. I have cousins in Brazil that when I write to them I have to think in German. I

write to them in German because their mother tongue now is Portuguese. My mother tongue is English. Yes, they speak English but not well enough to write letters. So when I write to my cousins in and we are in constant contact, I have to write in German. I want to forget Germany. I want to forget the German language. I want to forget the German country because it ruined, it has destroyed everything I had. There are some members of my family that are in very close contact with us but I am one of the youngest ones alive. And when we are gone, our whole big family is no more. But my feelings about Germany. I have, I have friends now, people that I went to school with that want to be friends with me. They invite me to come and visit. They want me to stay at their house. I don't know if I have

Q: Not Jewish, Germans.

A: Non Jewish Germans that I correspond with. Because they insisted I correspond with them. I don't, I would like to go back and the only reason that I would go back for would be to visit the graves. The graves of my grandparents in **Geilenkirchen**. I have grandparents, I think great grandparents probably over there. and the grave of my mother in Holland. With my grandparents and great grandparents in Holland. And I know when mother died that they had had the names of my brother and my aunts and family put in. So no I have no feeling for Germany. Absolutely not. Germany has ruined my, not my life. I have a beautiful life now. But as a child, my childhood, my education. The whole family, there is no more family.

Q: What kind of feelings do you have because of the war, about being Jewish? Has it changed?

A: No hasn't changed. I am proud of being a Jew. I will do anything for the Jewish people, for the Jewish religion. I am born, I am raised in that and that's what I die with. No I am perfectly happy to be a Jew and what it means to be a Jew, if I have to fight for it, I will fight for it and, and if I, I will always be a Jew.

Q: Did you ever talk about your war experiences before today?

A: Sometimes yes.

Q: Who did you share these with?

A: With schools. I shared it with I was asked to share it with schools.

Q: What about your children?

A: Not really, I haven't sat down with them. I really need to do that. They need to know. they know my background.

Q: Do you receive war reparations?

A: No. I do not get a red cent from Germany because I never worked in Germany. I never had a job in Germany. And no I do not get one red cent.

Q: Does the war still affect you in any way?

A: I don't think I can ever forget what happened to me. Why me? why was I, why did it happen to me. Why couldn't I lead a normal life? Why couldn't my family lead a normal life? Like everybody else. We had a very large warm family of the Dahl family and we still very much in contact with each other. We correspond with each other because we want to be still the family that we were.

Q: Is there anything else that you want to share that we've left out?

A: I appreciate the support I have from my husband.

Q: Thank you very much for doing this interview. This concludes the interview with Ruth Greifer. The Interviewer was Gail Schwartz. The interview took place on December 15, 1994 in Alexandria, Virginia. (end)