

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Margie Rosenthal
October 24, 1996
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PREFACE

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MARGIE ROSENTHAL

October 24, 1996

(file 1 – RG-50.106.0052.01.03 – duration: 01:03:34)

Nancy Alper: This is a taped interview for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. I'm interviewing Margie Rosenthal. My name is Nancy Alper. Today is October 24, 1996. And Margie I'd like you start by telling me your name at birth, your date of birth and your place of birth.

Margie Rosenthal: My name was **Margit Meli** Mijinski. I was born in the, in Germany, in Upper Silesia, in July 19, 1927.

Q: What was the name of the town that you were born in?

A: Gleiwitz.

Q: Why don't you tell me about the town that is what you remember of it and when you were a small child.

A: It was a rather small town. We had one synagogue and a small community. We went to the elementary school which was a Jewish school and I went there from first grade until fifth grade and that was in 1938. At, I was in the fifth grade. I had some very happy memories and let me

start with saying I also had a sister. She's born October 19 in 1932. That's the only sibling that I have. My parents and my, rather my father was born in Germany, in Katowice which later on became Poland. So when he was about 14 years old he left Poland because he didn't want to be under the Polish rule. His parents however remained there. My mother was born in a very small town and she had one sister and she lived with us in Gleiwitz. Now my grandparents on my father's, the parents of my father, they remained in Poland and they had 9 children but 2 of them died before and one was killed early. I don't remember exactly when, when that child was killed. I do however know that they were very orthodox and very, very religious and my grandmother would not light any lights on Shabbos. She would carry a handkerchief pinned to her dress and had a head piece which was like sort of a lace **bedekom** which is something that they wore. And she wouldn't even turn on the electricity or anything like that. And she had servants, but these servants were not even allowed to do that either. So they had to wait from sundown to sundown before they could eat warm food.

Q: Why don't you tell me the names of all the people that you just referred to. I don't think we have that down yet. You could perhaps start with the parents of your parents and work forward.

A: My grandmother's name was **Dirka** Mijinski and my grandfather was **Louis** Mijinski. They had a lot of children but I only knew about a couple of them. I remember one aunt. She had twins. Her name was **Erna** and I don't remember her last name. There were two boys, twins, boys. Then the other aunt was Anna and she had one child when I was in Germany and there was, this the one Anna lived in Germany. The one I just referred to with **Erna**, she lived in Poland, Katowice. Then there was a George, the brother of my dad who was a couple of years

older. He also was in Germany. He had one son. So that boy now lives in New York. The other people that I barely know but my grandmother, my maternal grandmother was born in Germany as I said. And her name was Anna **Zusman**. Her maiden name was **Hyman** and my her husband was the first Jewish locomotive engineer. And he worked his way up from being a coal boy but shoveling coal into the engines. And he just went higher and higher until he became an engineer. He loved trains that much that whenever he was on vacation he would stand at the trestle and watch all the trains go by. He just loved it. And my earliest recollection was of him. He had a stroke. I was 5 years old at that time. And he was paralyzed completely. And he could speak but nobody could understand by myself. He talked to me about all the trains that he was running and all that information which he just loved. And I had a very close relationship with him. And being the very first grandchild, I'd say my grandmother Anna spoiled me.

Q: I don't think you said the name of your maternal grandfather, the one who worked for the railroad.

A: His name was **Beno Zusman**.

Q: Why don't you tell me a little bit about your family life, what you remember because I know you were very young and how your parents lived their lives and what you and your sister were like.

A: My father was out of town a lot. As a matter of fact he was gone sometimes for weeks at a time. And my mother and her sister and my grandmother were very close and they would take

trips together with us children and by the way my aunt Ruth K, her name now was last name was **Karliner** but before that she was married to a **Banger** and they used to take us to the mountains and we had wonderful times. It was like a resort into the mountains which was resort was called **Reinerts**. And I don't really know what kind of mountains they were, but I do remember having a wonderful time up there with everyone. Climbing and, and using sticks where you put metals on them telling you what city you were in which I thought fascinating. And it usually was around my birthday. So they would have to kind of sneak the gifts into a suitcase so that they could surprise me when I woke up on my birthday that they would have a present for me. I surely didn't expect it because I mean we were so far away from home. But they did that for me. And going back again to, my sister she was born when I was five like I said. And she was born in our house. Our regular apartment. We didn't have a house in this case. But she was born and my cousin is the same age and she was born about 14 days prior to my sister. And she didn't tell her husband that she was going to have the baby that soon. So when he came home, that's my uncle, uncle Herbert was his name. It was aunt Ruth's husband. He came home and he said what are you doing in bed. And she said oh nothing. I didn't feel that good. She says, go look at the carriage, the doll carriage that Margie has. And he said what. I've seen that carriage and the dolls a million times before. And she says go take a look and go look at it again. Well finally to get him to do that, I urged him on. So I said uncle come look, come look, look at my Suzy. And he looked in there and there was this child. My doll's name was Suzy so he didn't know that it was a real child. But it was so funny because he couldn't get over it, that this little baby was in my carriage. And he had no idea what had happened. And then my sister came a few, exactly two weeks later. One was, my cousin was on the third of October, my sister was born on the 19th of October. But my dad was out of town as usual. And he did have an inkling that when he came

back there would be a child there. And sure enough. In those days you didn't go to a hospital. You had a midwife. And then I loved playing with the babies you might say because they were like my own doll. And I was able to hold them and play with them. So that kind of grew because when I was about six years old, my parents put me in charge, my mother put me in charge of taking care of my sister. And I would, I roll her up and down the streets. But then being a young kid, you know you kind of forget about what you're supposed to be doing. And a girlfriend of mine would say hey let's play hopscotch. So I did and the next thing I know my sister falls head over onto the cement, screaming, crying and I was so afraid to go back home. I thought oh my I'm going to really get it. I came home because my, they could hear. I guess the whole neighborhood could hear my sister. She was really upset and a little hurt but not really drastically. And I came home and she was still screaming and my mother says what happened what happened. And I said she fell kind of with the carriage on the cement. How could you. And my grandmother said what do you expect a child. She's still a child herself. You shouldn't punish her. So I got away with that one too. And later on we, where I was living they had always a fair once a year. And that was run by the gypsies and they were living in these house wagons lined up along the plaza there. It was like in the, on Fridays they would have a market there. and the rest of the time, at times they would have a fair. They would have carousels and big wheel and that was a big treat for us. And because my sister was too small, we couldn't take her and neither could we take our my cousin because she was the same age. And this was maybe when they were about three or four years old. And one night I remember very well, my aunt goes home. Her daughter was missing and she got a shock of her life. Where could the child have gone to. She was gone. We combed the neighborhood. Everybody was running around and finally we located her oh maybe a half a block away. Somebody had seen her walking as a little

kid in the middle of evening, dark already and they took her in and they said you wait til your mom will come. And sure enough she was sitting in the window looking out and when my aunt came by she said oh there's my mommy. And that was one of the things I really remember.

Very, very well. I went to the Jewish school and that, that was a wonderful place. When I first got there however, the very first year they asked us for a physical and they had this big hall and you went from one doctor to the next. One was a doctor for general. Then there was a doctor for looking in the eyes. There was a dentist that looked in your mouth. And of course they wanted us to be stripped to the waist because they wanted to take our I guess our vitals. Anyway, I wasn't about to do that. I was too ashamed to show my body. And they said it's ok, you can do that.

And I said no. I took my clothes and ran down the stairs and I didn't want to do it. So then the teacher came over to my mother and she said did you know that your daughter ran from school and my mother said no, why would she do that. And she said well she didn't want to undress.

And my mother said, well of course. She's very shameful of showing her body you know. And I never lived that one down. Ever since then, everybody is always laughing about it. The kids used to kind of snicker when they saw me. What are you ashamed of. You're not developed yet or anything like that. But it's I was only about six years old. And I mean to me my body was kind of precious and I wasn't about to show it off to anybody. And anyway, my sister, Eva, her name is Eva Renart. I don't know if I mentioned it prior to this. She went to kindergarten, also a Jewish kindergarten and she had a wonderful time as well. And as I think back, we, my parents well that is my mother and father if he was in town, and my aunt and her husband, they went to the temple every Saturday faithfully. Of course in those days you didn't hire any baby sitters, you used the older child. That was me. And I would have to play house and entertain the young ones. And that was kind of fun because we played house and I was always the mother and they

were the children. And of course they had to behave. Otherwise I would punish them and put them in a corner or something like that. And those are really very, very good memories for me because I enjoyed what I was doing. And then in see we lived in upper Silesia, so we were protected by the Versailles contract or however you want to call it. I'm not sure exactly the wording. But until 1935 Hitler could not touch us. But in 1935 Hitler then said no more Jews to leave out of the country. So my dad couldn't go anymore to the in his business to the Polish forests and to the Czechoslovakia Russia and so forth. So the Nazis took him for forced labor. And he was digging ditches and they were there was water accumulated over there. And he got quite ill. So in 1938 we did get, in the early part of 1938 we received an affidavit from our uncles. That is my grandmother's brothers who lived in Battle Creek, Michigan. They posted an affidavit but when my dad heard that there, you know he had, I don't know, he was very smart man. He had an inkling that things were going, not going to go so well for the Jews. So he decided rather than waiting in Germany we should go ahead and go to another country that's affiliated with the United States, wait there and then as soon as our visa became valid that they would give it to us, then we could go to America. That was the plan. However, that wasn't exactly what took place.

Q: Before we get to the to your leaving Germany, I want to go back a little bit so I don't forget. Why don't we talk a little bit about what you remember about where you lived, what your parents were like, what it was like when your grandparents moved into the house with you.

A: Well my grandparents moved in once my grandfather got the stroke. They could not, my grandmother wasn't able to take care of him. So we had moved into a place that had three

bedrooms. And one was occupied by my parents. One was occupied by we rented out one and the other one was my grandparents. And my grandmother and my grandfather had a beautiful room and we enjoyed going in there and talking to them. Oh let me tell you something else that happened. When I was about six years old, I think it was something like that. We had Passover and my father always wore the white **kitle** and he was a very, he came from a very orthodox family. So he wore the white **kitle** like I said and my grandfather who had a stroke couldn't get up. So he sat there and asked the children. Of course it was us children, so they were still kind of tiny and they were just sitting and like in a little not a playpen exactly but something where they could contain them because they were just crawling around at that point. And all of a sudden I said you know dad, you look like a beggar. Oh, my dad got so upset at me. How dare I say you look like a beggar and my grandfather, my father was so upset at me, my grandfather being he couldn't speak very well, start in his own way yelling. Well the women all were in the kitchen trying to bring the food out. When they heard my father yelling and my grandfather trying to yell and me crying they dumped all the dishes on the kitchen floor. That was my mother, my aunt and my grandmother. They came running. What in the world happened. And when we told them what happened, well it wasn't a big deal. But to me it was horrible that my dad would get so upset that I said that. Our neighborhood where I lived was mostly Catholic or Protestant. I think it was more like Catholic. So the girlfriends that I had in our very immediate neighborhood were all Christian kids. So but they never made a difference between my being Jewish and themselves. And they would call us and say come on and play with me. And I would go out and play with them. And until they very day that we left, I never knew that they would even, have a difference. So to me I was accepted as their equal. There was no discrimination. The schooling had to be in, I had to go to a Jewish school because I guess maybe the others wouldn't accept us. I really don't

know why. But I started the first grade and went all the way up to fifth. Like I said before. And that's the only way there was. But one of the memories I have that also that I loved to dance. And do gymnastics. So at a very early age, my mother enrolled me into a school for gymnastics and I wanted to become a gymnastics teacher. Or a ballerina. Anything that had to do with dance or whatever. And I was pretty flexible and I enjoyed it very much. And then we would put on plays, like little dances and so forth and with that we would then entertain our congregation. Or we would go to the old age home and perform over there. It was really a lot of fun and my mother made sure I had the most beautiful costumes. One of the ones that I really remember is that I was a butterfly and my girlfriend was the flower. So I could dance around a lot. And we, these are just wonderful memories and I had also of course a lot of Jewish girlfriends, that is when school would let out. I would go over there and play with them and one of the girls had a bicycle. Well I didn't have one. So she would let me ride the bicycle. Well the first time I got onto the bike, I headed right straight for the rose bushes. And I came out of there looking a mess, scratched up from head to toe. You might say. But I didn't care because I had fun. It didn't matter. I was learning how to ride the bicycle. I did it the hard way perhaps but I got it. And let's see what else. The, one of my girlfriends Hannah Weissenberg, she was my very best friend. And she didn't live all that far away but not in our immediate area, so only time I could play with her was either right after school or when my mother would take me over there and pick me up because we just didn't do that. And as I said before, there was another girl too that I only know now the last name, **Richar**, was her name. And they went to Israel as far as I know. But I couldn't be very sure. People left you know, some had left already. The moment in 1935 they would leave and go. But my two girlfriends that I you know I had really close ties with they were in Germany as long as I was. Now there was another girlfriend that I had. Her father was very

orthodox. Her name is **Miana Shy**. And she we found her again in the United States but that was a very strange situation. I didn't even know she would be here. So but let me go, get back to that later. While I was in school I learned English. However it was not the English that people in America talk or in the Philippines. It was Oxford English. The eithers and the neithers and the looking glass and all that sort of thing. Well when I left Germany and I went to another school, the kids all made fun of me. Because I didn't speak like any of them. And they would snicker and laugh and like ridicule me. And I felt really bad about that because that's the only English I did know. But anyway so in like, we can go back to the time we went and got the visa. My dad like I said kind of saw the writing on the wall and he said we're now leaving. So in Germany you hardly bought any dresses ready-made. Everything had to be made. By material and the dressmakers and the dressmakers were a few blocks away of course. And so my mother had started putting things into suitcase because she knew we had to leave in October and this was now around Rosh Hashanah. And during Rosh Hashanah somebody came in and told my parents you'd better get out now. They're going to be closing the border to France which is Strasbourg. So we rushed out of the temple, the middle of services, went home, started putting things into the suitcases and then we had to call the government official to put a seal on it. Once it was sealed you could not break the seal unless you were outside Germany. So I remember us rushing through and getting everything ready and which is what my parents did. Then the official came and then we had to leave with ten marks in our pocket.

Q: Margie, why don't we go back just a little bit and why don't you tell me if there was anything that was particularly Jewish about this Jewish German school that you were required to attend for first grade on.

A: Well the only thing is they did not teach Sunday school or Hebrew. So we had to go to the temple for the lessons from the rabbi and the cantor. And we learned the different, we learned all about the holidays and how to keep a kosher household and all that sort of thing. But basically all they really went into the math which is actually German, math and a little bit of geography of Germany. But and the English lessons that I had over there because I knew that eventually people were going to be you know going to different countries and they felt that we should learn English. We did however, my Hebrew wasn't all that great. So my dad said that I have to have private lessons and Mr. Kamm, K-A-M-M. I remember his name. He gave me private lessons in Hebrew. Well I became pretty good at it so when my dad would go out of town out of the country, I would have to do the Havdalah. And I must say it went very well because my mother said go ahead, do it, do it. And I enjoyed that. Because I was the focus point. I mean I was the head of the household at that point. And let's see what else. It's very hard to remember all the different things. But, oh yes. Hanukah. Was a wonderful time. And I had as I said before, a lot of Christian children around me and our house. Well I would go for Christmas always upstairs and see their tree and at midnight they would have all these candles and goodies on the tree. And I was like I said I was accepted and I would partake with their Christmas celebrations. Well I came down and talked to my mother and father and I said you know we don't have anything like that. Why don't we have a Hanukah bush or something like that. Well they didn't quite go along with that idea. However, my father surprised us as playing Hanukah man. Instead of Santa Claus he was Hanukah man. And he would knock on the door and of course I didn't know it was my father at that time. And this man would come in with a very stern voice and would say have you been good this time and of course both my sister and I said, trembling we said of course, yes,

yes, we've been good children. And he said well ok in that case I guess you deserve a gift. And he would have this pillowcase over his shoulder and that's how Santa Claus' way and he'd imitate the Santa Claus cause I was impressed by that. And so he was a Hanukah man so he had to imitate more or less the Catholics how they, the Christians how they handled things which was kind of cute. And I only found out after I was a practically a teenager that was my father cause he never was there and I couldn't figure out. I mean he was there a couple of minutes. I'd go where did he go. And then the bell rings and I didn't put two and two together. So it was really neat. I really enjoyed that. And I think that's I'm trying to remember. It is so, so much happened.

Q: Did you wonder why you had to go to a Jewish school and the other children, the Gentiles went to another school. Did your parents explain that to you?

A: The same teachers taught my mother. And so naturally where the mother was taught I had to go and that was how, I never questioned it. It just seemed a natural thing that Miss **Stantur** was my mother's teacher and she was, became my teacher. And of course she always compared me to my mother. My mother must have been, I was very timid though. I really didn't do things that most kids, I was very good. But sometimes you know maybe I was quite as good as my mother used to be. And she would tell my mother go to my mother and say, oh you know your daughter did this and this and this. And I mean really I was my own person. I couldn't change me to my mother. My mother was very lenient. My father on the other hand, he was very strict. I mean if you didn't throw the mark, I mean forget it. I mean he would, he was quick with the hand too. And my goodness whenever he hit, he had big hands. I mean the man was over 200 pounds and yeah, I was a little girl. You know and my mother would threaten us every time when he would

be out and she'd say I'm making notes. He will know all about what you're doing so when he comes you will get punishment. And that was about it.

Q: What was important to them? What do you think they wanted you to understand that their values were?

A: To be a good Jew. I mean (no sound)

Q: This is side two of the first tape of the interview with Margie Rosenthal. We were talking about your parents values.

A: My mother was very lenient and she would get upset with us and she would warn me especially because I was the oldest that if I was not going to behave she was going to make notes and when dad would come back, then I would be punished. And that scared me enough that from then on and I was a pretty good girl and we had a lot of fun. I mean I can't say that any of that was bad. But my grandmother spoiled me. I didn't like, like for example on Friday afternoons for midday was our big meal. And of course Shabbos was a big, big, big thing in our house so during the noon hours we would have like maybe rice and cinnamon or something, a very light meal. Well I didn't like that at all, so my grandmother would make me a soup, chicken soup and put some things in there so I would have something warm. And then came the evening. I didn't like the beef because I don't care for boiled beef. I never did, I don't know. Well maybe nowadays I might but not really. So she would always have like a little squab or I should make a something that I would like, special vegetables, special this, special that and my parents didn't

really approve of that because this is just spoiling her. And she said well she's my one and only and she, I love her. And my grandmother would, we were always doing things together. In fact our friends and relatives, everybody called us the bride and groom because we were always together. Like I said my grandma and I had a wonderful relationship and when I had to leave Germany and leave her behind, that was really one of the hardest things I had to do. I didn't care so much about my aunt and uncle that were there who I loved dearly too but my grandmother and I had a wonderful relationship. As a matter of fact, when my grandfather died, I moved into the room with her. So the two of us shared a room. And at night she would have some chocolate and of course I had to have it. And none of the others did but I got it. So when I would go like during vacation, during say Easter vacation, Passover vacation, I would go to a girlfriend in Boyden, Germany. That was oh not that far away but it was far enough. For me every distance was far actually. And I would stay there for a few weeks and I would have to buy her always the same chocolates that she loved which was a coffee liquor filled chocolate. And she loved those so whenever I went to Boyden, I had a little money saved up. I would buy that for her so I could bring it back to her. And she appreciated it so much. Well, that's the least I could do for her goodness to me all the time. And, and then my cousin oh she was a little, she would, she did things like let me tell you what she did. Like I told you, she ran away when we were always having a we didn't have baby sitters in those days, so my auntie put her to bed. But now let me tell you what happened at Passover. Just prior to Passover she was naughty so my aunt locked her into a little room I mean off the kitchen. I mean not for long. But all of a sudden she hears this crash bang and oh she's like what has she done now. So she opened up and my cousin Suzie had broken every egg that there was for Passover. She had just gotten so upset that

just kind of stomped on them or threw them about. I don't really know what she did. But she destroyed every egg. So my auntie had to start from scratch. And, oh go ahead.

Q: You said something at the beginning of the interview about things changing in the area where you lived in 1935 I think. As a child what filtered into your impressions of the changes that were happening and how did you see your parents dealing with it and your, I don't know if your grandfather was dead then, but your grandmother.

A: My well it didn't really, really come to my attention. However, my mother and my sister and I would go to Katowice to visit my great, my grandparents in Poland. And one time when she went and then came back she got a letter that you have to come to the police station, that you were carrying contraband. And I said what in the world. I wouldn't carry anything that wasn't legal. And apparently they had found a sausage that my mother had brought from Poland to Germany and that too wasn't allowed. And so they had a, I mean we were scared that they would take her to a concentration camp or something, that you know going to really punish her and thank the, thanks be to God. Nothing really happened. She was able to explain that it was a gift from my in-laws and that it was just a gift and that she hadn't even bought it. With German money or whatever. And that she didn't have any contraband. She had no money that belonged to Poland or anything. We knew better than that. So those are things that stuck in my mind that she was so upset and the whole family was upset when that happened. But my girlfriends, nobody we didn't we didn't really have that big a problem with the stores or anything like that. it was just the government took my father to work in the ditches and my dad was coming home

very, feeling not well. He was having pains. I guess kidney, already then problems. And for me, really nothing really, really happened that I could remember that was a difference.

Q: Do you remember anything about Nazi propaganda on the radios for example. Anything about book burnings say or newspapers and your parents talking about what was going on.

A: No I think they tried to shield us from all that. No, I, I don't' ever remember them saying much of anything and we still had our Jewish doctor that we went to. And until the time we left there was really no major problems. In fact one of my Christian girlfriends wanted to come to the depot the railway station and my parents said better not. That's how close we all were. Cause there was really, like I said, I myself did not feel it. And they kept it from us. They did not want to share because this was very disturbing and they didn't want to put us into that. My sister Eva, she was a very timid person. She was shy and but she loved to eat. Oh boy did she love to eat. And whenever we would go, we would go visiting people like friends of ours and they would put out the coffee and the cake. For the children special little goodies. She would say oh, she wouldn't ask right out you know. And before we left, my mother always gave us something to eat because she loved to eat. And I was a very poor eater as a matter of fact. And my, my food was they had to put it on a chair with a little stool and they would put a lot of butter on it because I didn't, I wasn't eating enough as far as they were concerned. So I hate the butter. So they didn't', they didn't give me a knife or anything So they always knew where I sat because I would take the butter off on the edge of the plate. And I would go around like that. so that's why I guess maybe my grandmother was spoiling me a little bit With the squab and all that stuff, veal cutlets and because I was a very poor eater. Now not my sister. We would go to these people

and she had the full tummy. And we would go there and she would just look at my mother and she said you know I haven't had that in a long time. And of course the people would feel so sorry for her and they would say oh poor Eva. Sure, help yourself, take something. It was so embarrassing for my mother. She would get so red in the face. She would say like I don't feed her anything, but it wasn't true at all. She just had a very good appetite. And I was, going back to when I was saying, playing house with them you know. My little cousin I told you is this little devious person. I mean she was just, I mean she was always into things. And all of a sudden my sister would start crying. I said why are you crying, Eva, what happened. Suzie. And I didn't see anything. She said but she did and my cousin was so sneaky, Suzie. She was so sneaky, she would either drop something on the ground on the floor or pretend that she's picking it up. At the same time she's pinching my foot or leg or something on my sister or behind my back. I think it was really something. Keeping those two apart was a major, major problem. When I walked with them, I had to keep one on the left and one on the right, I mean at arm's length. I couldn't even bring them together. But like I said my sister followed me everywhere. Well one time we were a bunch of kids were playing. Down in the we had meadows, very pretty meadows near, nearby and oh like across the street and we lived in the newer portion of Gleiwitz. It was a lovely place. And we stepped outside and then there was this big meadow on both sides. Beautiful. So kids are you know they take, I learned how to throw knife. Pocket knife. That's a boys' game but I played with everybody. Wasn't just girls, it was boys too. I was only maybe ten years old at that time. So I said to Eva I said why don't' you run and get me a knife so I can play also. So she runs up the hill and she comes back. While she's running down, she falls and she cuts herself. Oh my goodness. Here she is bleeding. I think that she's dying because she's crying like you know there's no tomorrow. And of course again I had to take her home and again my

grandmother said not her. I mean we should have covered in something so she wouldn't fall because she was carrying it and running. But she was trying to do me a favor, the, my little sister so like I said it was of her I was in trouble more than for my own sake. But hey, that's all right. I mean she was five years younger than I was. I mean after all I was a big sister you know. I had to really do whatever I was supposed to do. But sometimes I'd forget it and did what I, what any young kid would do. But it matured me. I'd say that much it did. And where, I don't know now where.

Q: I was going to ask you how your parents decided on where you were going to emigrate. You mentioned the family in Michigan in fact sponsoring you. But of course you didn't end up in Michigan. So why don't you tell me what you remember about the circumstances of the choice being made to go to the Philippines and how the other people around you, your family, the Jewish community reacted when you told them what you planned to do

A: My father as you know was in the lumber business. And when he asked, you know he asked around and nobody knew what to do. So when he went to the consulate, American Consulate he asked where could I go and practice my profession. They said well I don't know but why don't you try the Philippines. It's not a bad place. Why don't you go there and then from there you can come to the states. So with that in mind, jungles and all this when I heard jungles, oh boy my mind went wild. I thought oh boy I could play with the monkeys. I could play with the lions. I could play with all, I was animal lover from way back. As a matter of fact, I used to walk a dog just to, to be near a dog. I loved animals from way when I was a little girl. And the woman would be happy to give me her dog, the big German shepherd and I would play, but that was my

protection and nobody could come near me. So when they said jungle I was all enthused. I thought jungle, great. You know I'll be having the beach right there and then I walk a few feet and I'd be living on the outskirts of the jungle. And my dad would go into the jungle. Maybe he could bring me back a wild animal or something like that. Well it didn't quite turn out that way, but I didn't know that. We didn't even know where the Philippines was. All I knew was that you had to go over the ocean and that you had to take a ship and so my parents tried to I guess maybe make it nicer than it really would have been. And I don't think they really had much of an idea either. All, All my dad knew he might have a good job over there.

Q: Why don't you tell me. I don't think we discussed this. What kind of work exactly your father did. In the lumber industry.

A: My dad would go into the woods, into the forest and estimate the footage of the trees to be cut. He had a wonderful mind. He never used to calculate it for anything. He could just but he didn't need a calculator. His mind worked so well that all he looked at a tree and he estimated and my goodness and that was how it was. I mean he was, he had a fabulous mind. And he knew that if he went into the Philippines he would go into the jungle, would go in and cut some, tell them how to cut the trees and how much footage you'd get out of it. And with that in mind he decided we'll go to the Philippines and so there we would wait for our visa to the States and that would be wonderful. Didn't quite happen.

Q: Do you remember anything or do you have a strong memory of what it was like when your father lost his job with the lumber company. What did you understand about why that happened.

A: My parents wouldn't tell us. Didn't tell me at all. All they said, I guess they were afraid that if I made a remark to one of my Christian friends, they all had to somehow belong to the Nazi party or you know things like that, because in those days, when a boy reached a certain age, or a girl for that matter, they had to join the **Junge, Jungfrau** and, and it was like a Boy Scouts. However, you've seen them in the movies and they had to join. And it really could have been very, very hard on my parents if I said something so they really didn't want to confide in us too much because if I, if any of us would have said something wrong that when we mentioned the fact that we were going to the Philippines, everybody said you're crazy. Why the Philippines. Wait here til your visa comes. What's your rush. And my father said well I don't like the way things are going. Stores are already a little bit discriminating and I found that all out afterwards. Nothing was told to us at that point. But people all thought that he was out of his mind. So my aunt, my uncle, the whole family stayed behind. My grandmother didn't want to leave because she had a pension from her husband being a locomotive engineer. So she said why should I give up everything to go into a country that we know nothing about. I mean if yeah, could I would say I go straight to the United States that's one thing. But to go into a country. They did say tropics. They did say don't bring any warm clothing. Just get light clothing. So the dresses and all that was what we had was just light clothing. And they said that we could take a bicycle. But then we didn't know also what to pack. My mother had visions of maybe she couldn't get any soap so she brought boxes of the, like you have here Tide and all that sort of thing. And she took that along. And my dad was in those days we had a very musical family. My dad played the violin. My mother played the piano and my aunt Ruth sang. So we always had a trio but I didn't get to do any of that. So when we talked about leaving, it was oh why, why, what is your rush

you know. Stay, a little longer. And so my dad said no. And he booked passage on a French steamer. That meant we had to go through France and but when they told us remember when we were in the temple and told us that we had to leave right then and there. We had the suitcases sealed and we said our goodbyes and we took off.

Q: Was it the American embassy that suggested that you go to the Philippines as the sort of interim place to be on your way to the United States.

A: Yes it was because we went, we had an affidavit. However before we could even get the visa to the Philippines we had to put down like \$500. That was a lot of money in those days. And that should see us through whatever comes in the next year or so that we would not be a burden to anybody. No other government. And with that we were able to get the visa to go to the Philippines. And that was how we finally got that and then we left on a train and went over Strasbourg. And my mother started to cry and I thought you know that she's just upset because she left her family there. And which was very traumatic for her. Because her sister and her were just very close. They were just a couple of years apart. And so and my grandmother of course. So then we got past the as we get to Strasbourg, the German government, the officials come up and they said let's open your suitcases. We want to see what you have in there and so my mother opened up the suitcase. They broke the seal rather and then she opened up and they kind of went through it. And then they said everything is ok and close up again and go on. And this was the same train that left our home, town of Gleiwitz. It was going all the way to Paris. Well after we passed into France my mother was very hysterical by this time. So I asked her, I said if you're missing your sister so much, I can be your sister. I'm old enough. I'm 11 years old. And that

made her cry even more. But then she told me that while they were sealing and she had forgotten to take the money out for the dresses. And those German marks in the clothing. And if they had caught her, she would have been in jail and they would have thrown away the key. I mean that was going against every, everything so they just the customs was very strict in those days anyway. Especially the Germans. Only let you take ten marks. Well we're supposed to live with ten marks, that's 40 marks the four of us for this was in the early part of September and our ship didn't leave until about, I think almost like three weeks later. So we went, the first time we came into Paris when we got to Paris, the cab driver took us, we said yes take us to a hotel. He drove around and around and around. That was number one. Charged an exorbitant amount. Then he took us to this hotel. It was \$50, dollars, 50 marks, whatever the currency to francs a day. Well that depleted the money that we were able to take from Germany. Thank god for the few dollars. Well pretty soon that money ran out too. And we had to eat and of course we only stayed in the hotel one day. We went to another building that about 3 or 4 stories up. And they didn't even have a toilet up there. All you had to do in France. On each floor they had one, one of those things where you kind of squat on a hole. And the only toilet we had was on the ground floor. Well we had never seen anything like this or had even been close to something like that. So it was, that part was really very traumatic for us. How, not to have a toilet. I mean that was unheard of in Germany. Anyway so here we were now without money. And we didn't want to be burdened with the Jewish HIAS or whoever Joint, whoever was there. So my mother somehow made mention in a letter to my grandmother. So she said go to this insane asylum. There is the son of a friend of mine which, the mother always sends money to him. And he will give you the money and I in turn will give her the money in Germany. And that's what we did but let me tell you. Going to the insane asylum was a horrible feeling. All these people that were

either crying or singing and pretending to holding a baby and some came up to us and pulling us and didn't want us to go and it was just that part was really very bothersome. Then we talked to the man. He sounded as normal as anybody else. As you and I. well the reason he was in the insane asylum was because he had taken a dip in the river Seine and he was naked. It was evening and he didn't think anybody would see him. Well lo and behold, they got him and they said anybody that does that has to go to the insane asylum. So that was where we got our money. And then we were in Paris for about ten days I would say. And but we didn't go and eat all the time. I mean there was no way for us to go and eat. We couldn't afford it. so we'd buy the bread and get some cheese and we'd eat upstairs in the room or whatever we rented.

Q: Were you around other people, other Jews who were in the process of leaving Europe and how did your family find this rooming house. And were there other people staying there who were doing something similar to what you were doing.

A: No, these were French Jewish people that we met when we went to buy the bread. This happened to be a Jewish bakery or she just worked there. I really don't know. All I know is that my parents went to talk and she spoke German and so that kind of made a bond but the woman of course never offered us any money. And then we asked where could we have a good dinner or lunch or something but we'd like a kosher restaurant. So she told us where to go for a kosher restaurant. Other times we, it was a treat for us to go like a cafeteria type thing, where you helped yourself and you could take your milk or whatever and for us that was something new. We never had anything like that in Germany. SO we stood there like we didn't know what to do. So the French people came up to us and we didn't speak French of course which was another

hardship, so we had to find always somebody that might be able with motions and things like that and I do remember one time though we had gone on a subway. We were going to go someplace and my father said we're getting off at the next stop. Well I was the first one at the door and I jumped out and I look around. As I'm looking the doors are closing and my parents are on the subway still. Well here's this 11 year old kid, doesn't know any word of French. Doesn't know where she exactly is but I thought well if I go up the stairs and walk backwards, back over towards the other station but of course I didn't know which way but I kind of had a hunch. So I was pretty good with locations. So I started walking and I see my mother and my father. My mother was crying. Oh thank God we found you. Thank God we got you back. I said what's the big deal. I knew I had to walk towards the station. Yeah but how did you know. I said what, I don't know, I just knew it. But anyway so that was quite an ordeal for everybody because they thought they'd lost me and I thought I'd lost them. What would I do? but as it turned out it was fine. So you see, I'm a survivor. From way back. Go ahead.

Q: Which if your parents do you think you learned your survival skills from or your grandparents too I guess?

A: I think my dad. My dad had this he had really special qualities and whenever we would talk and we'd get a few times you know when he could sit down and talk to us, I think he was the most important influence on my maturing that quickly and also being having his ideas and things like that. But I don't know whether it was really all of him. It might be my grandparents too I would say. My grandmother was a very self-sufficient woman. And she did all the how shall I say she did all the planning and everything else. She was the matron. And she whatever she said

everybody did. She was a very wise woman also. But I'm sorry to say she wasn't wise enough to leave with us. Which I had hoped she might do. But anyways so here we are now in France and the time has come for us to go to Marseilles where the ship is. Well while we were in France there were no other refugees like ourselves that we had met or seen or anything. We couldn't even go like I said we, Yom Kippur. We spent Yom Kippur in Paris. But we couldn't even get to a temple for some reason. Then I don't know why. That part I don't remember. But anyway everything was kind of a new, new thing to me so we took the train and went to Marseilles. We checked into somebody must have told us which hotel to check into and we had to wait three days for our vessel, ship to come and was the President **Dorme**. While we were in Marseilles, we met this young, very young couple. They had just gotten married before they left Germany all by themselves. So this lady looked up to my mother as her mother. And she asked my mother a lot of questions. How do you do this and what do you do with this. So my mother has kind of reared her you might say because she was so lost the poor thing. She had, she didn't know anything and her name was Margot Friedlander. And his name was Heinrich Friedlander. Well anyway so we get finally, the ship arrives. And it was a great big passenger ship. Of course to us kids who had never seen a steamer, never seen anything. We come from a very small town, as I mentioned. And oh in Paris, I saw my first black people. I had never seen anybody but white people because there were, we were too far away from everything. But in Marseilles there were a number of other nationalities. And when we finally got on board the ship, we realized oh there are more children. There was one was Margot Kassel and **Biata Zuskind** and **Biata** was a smaller child. And my sister was going to have a birthday on that trip. It would have been October the 19th. All right. so my mother bought a cake for her at one of the bakeries in Marseille and very, didn't show it to my sister, cause it was only next port would be Port Said.

And her birthday was on the day of Port Said. That we arrived in Port Said. Well I think that's three days away, board the ship the 16th. And while going down the gangplank into Port Said, all these beggars

(end file 1)

(file 2 – RG-50.106.0052.02.03 – duration: 01:03:21)

Q: This is the taped interview made for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The interview is with Margie Rosenthal. I'm the interviewer Nancy Alper. It's October 24th 1996. This is the second tape, side A. Now Margie we were talking about your mother's attempts to have a birthday celebration on board the ship on the way to Hong Kong for your sister Eva.

A: Well my sister being very generous at all times, my mother presented her the cake on board and we were going to have it for dessert. Well we come across this beggar on the street. My sister turns around, runs back up onto board. We didn't know why she was running back and we called her and she was already up the gangplank and already gone, comes back with the cake. She's giving it to the beggar. And my mother just having fits. She just said this was your cake Eva, what are you giving away? That poor man has nothing to eat. So my mother, what did she do. She took some money. Gave the money to the beggar and took the cake back which we had after all. But that's how Eva is. She will take off her shirt and give it to you. Very, very soft hearted person. Anyway so on board ship we met a lot of other refugees. Like I said Margot **Kassel** was my sister's age and Bi, **Biata Zuskind** she was a younger, she was about maybe three years old at that time, two or three years old. And things were pretty good but I don't like, I didn't know any French food. And for me to start eating French food when I'm used to the regular kosher German kitchen, you know was quite a change. So I said and I did say something to my dad. I don't remember exactly what, but he said my reply was well I'm going to write to my grandmother because she will have to know how I am treated on here. You are treating me not well at all. I told my dad. Uh oh. That was the wrong thing to say, of course. So he said you

just dare do that. Make a heart more heavy than she already has. I mean the poor woman has just lost a daughter, her granddaughter, granddaughters and now you want to write a letter and tell her how miserable things are here. You better not. Well he was right. Of course, I didn't but needless to say I would never have hurt my grandmother in any, any kind of a way. so I had to adjust to the food. But you know I missed my tomatoes. Oh I love tomatoes and pickles and things like that. So there was one gentleman that was in the, working in the kitchen and I mentioned it to him. They all spoke some German. And I told him that I really missed having a fresh tomato. Guess what. At dinner he brought me a fresh tomato. That was the best meal I can remember. And every meal we had wine as well but of course children never drank the wine but the food was so different than what I had known that it took quite an adjustment and then we went from Port Said, we went over to **Porti**. Oh, Suez Canal. Let me not forget the Suez Canal which was a very exciting experience. You could see across the bank and you could see buildings. I mean buildings, I would say more like pyramids. And you see the Arabs and I mean it was so close. It was just a very thrilling experience and dad said you'd better remember this very well. This may be your last time you're going to go through Suez Canal. This is something that is very, very important for you to know. So we really stayed on board and looked at everything. And then we came to Djibouti and somebody wanted to buy my sister from my mother. They said oh she is so cute. My sister had blond hair, blue eyes and curly hair. I mean she was very adorable. And they, the woman wouldn't give up. She wanted to buy my sister. My sister said no, she's not for sale. And then so then we were afraid that she was going to take her so we were always around her. I mean it was like until we left, you know we had to watch her every second because we really thought that she might kidnap her or something. And then we went to Singapore. Singapore was just beautiful. It was absolutely lovely. But hot. It was so hot

and we just came from Germany and we are in autumn already in Europe. And we come over there and it was, I mean we were not used to the heat. Of course. But anyway we did take a walk and strolled in a little bit on the pier and then it was too much. And we had to turn back to the ship. So we never really got to see Singapore. And then from there my next recollection was getting to Saigon. Now Saigon my dad bought himself a beautiful one of those tropical helmet type things and he looked really chic and he wore that on deck all the time. But in Saigon we stayed there two days. We had French legionnaires on board. And these poor guys didn't have wine or anything so the men at our table took the wine from our table and took it over there to these guys. And they were so happy to have something that like wine for the French. You know how that, it is. So they were so happy. But before I even get that far. Let me say something else. For days, there were, the people, the officers on the ship said "Keep an eye on the back of the ship. We have a line out. We hope to catch a whale." Oh boy. With us kids, we were always checking the line that was hanging out of the back of the ship. And we'd see it trailing you know. But nothing is happening, nothing is happening. One day finally there was a big thing, intercom and attention, attention. We caught whale. I want most, everybody on board, children first. Let them see the whale. Before we cut the whale open. So oh boy. I mean we were in the lounge as a matter of fact, in the ladies lounge, washing our hands and everything else. And we run upstairs to the deck where the line was. And there was this long fish, dripping water still, black fish, very impressive, big huge thing. And they said well now all the girls, all the kids are here. There weren't that many children on board because this was a luxury liner really and was dropping off the legionnaires to Saigon. And so it was very, very exciting. So we all rushed up there and were standing with bated breath. Now they're going to cut the fish open, going to see what's inside the fish. And the captain come out and has this big knife and he cuts it open. And you know what

falls out. Candies. Oh it was, we had crossed I guess the dateline. I am not sure what exactly what happened. But it was so thrilling. All these candies fell out and they were green and different colors, mainly green that represent the eggs I guess in the whale or whatever. I don't know. But it was so funny. And, oh he said take all the candy you want. Of course, we kids, candy. We all grabbed hands full and then of course there were other passengers took it too. So this is one of my very memorable experiences we had on the ship. Other than that I mean that was really nothing much happening.

Q: I think you had told me that your parents had pre-paid for the entire trip while you were still in Germany. It was a kind of package. Why don't you tell me a little bit about that and how if you know anything, how they knew how to go about doing that. And another question was how many immigrants and refugees there were on the ship. From other countries besides France and doing something similar to what you were doing.

A: No the only people were from Germany and they were the only refugees. And like I said there was only this one young family. And this one family with the daughter Margot and the one with **Zuskind**. That was the other one. That I believe was all there was on the ship, as far as Jewish. And the other ones, I don't, there were French people going to Singapore, Saigon, really not a whole lot of people but we only knew about ours. And I did not mention this but the men slept separately from the women. So we had in our cabin was this young woman that was just married, my mother and my sister and I, four of us. And in dad's cabin there were also four men. So they had for some reason, I don't know. I guess they didn't have the facilities to accommodate us because we were the refugees but we did pay for the passage already in

Germany. And I believe the HIAS was helping us. But I'm not quite sure. I never did question them how, when and where and what. All I know is that we had the money that we had to put down in Breslau to the American consulate and vouch that we would never be a burden to any government.

Q: Also I wanted to ask you, did you have a German passport. Do you remember that? When you left Germany.

A: We did and it all over **Juden** ok. And by that time we were stateless. We did not have any more a home, so we were considered stateless. And in Singapore, my sister and were always on deck looking around and you know kids, there was nothing more for us to do really. There were no movies. If there were, they would have been in French. We would never have understood anyways, so us children kind of had to devise our own games and talk and do things like that. So I was looking into the hold of the ship, I see that our box that we had our furniture in, our furniture. I would say like bicycle and soap that my mother was bringing along and things like that. Oh, the few goblets of crystal. I mean painstakingly wrapped. It was a big wooden box, they called them lifts in those days. And that had broken open. And with all of those natives there, I was so afraid they were going to take it all and we wouldn't have anything left when we got to the Philippines. So I told my sister, I said you watch while I go run and find dad so he can get ahold of the captain to make sure that they get it covered up again. Or nail it together, whatever it takes. Cause I don't want to lose all our stuff. So she was standing on top there looking down. And I found my father pretty soon. And I said come quick, come quick. Look what's happened. So he ran and got the captain and they went down in the hold and they were

able to get our stuff together. But that is how we reached the Philippines. The soap had spilled out onto the bicycle. The bicycle had rusted away. So by that time we really didn't have a bicycle. We didn't have much of soap. I mean a lot of stuff was ruined regardless you know. But anyways so that was in Saigon. And on the way from Saigon to Hong Kong came the typhoon. Everybody was sick. Everybody was sick. We couldn't go to the dining room. And oh my dad's hat flew away that he just so painstakingly bought in Saigon. Went overboard and it was gone. He was more upset about that than I think anything else because it was such a nice helmet type thing that they wore in the Orient you know. Anyway so we were too sick to eat. But my dad was at the table, eating. I mean we could never understand how could you eat. We were so sick that the doctor had to give us medications because we couldn't hold food down and we couldn't eat. I mean it was horrible and I mean, all the passengers were sick. Except my dad and this young guy that had just gotten married. The two of them had the whole dining room to themselves. And they had all the food they wanted. And they had to put the plates into containers which were bolted to the tables. Otherwise they would be sliding this way and sliding that way. But we finally made it into Kowloon which is Hong Kong China. But we had to stay in Kowloon because that's where the ship docked. Now we needed shots in Kowloon because we didn't get the malaria and, and that, whatever the tropical diseases were. So we had to go to this Chinese doctor who had an office in this building. The staircase was so narrow and so dark that we could hardly see where we were going. Well my imagination was oh my god he's going to abduct us and we're not going to go get anywhere and we're going to be sold as slaves or something like that. Like I said I had a very vivid imagination. And we made it up the stairs. Got our shots, came back down and we were all kind of (sniffs) like this you know. We were kind of crying cause it was hurting. And my dad said all right, I had a, I couldn't take my big doll from

Germany but I was able to take the smaller version. And I loved that doll. Of course I had to name her Suzie also, naturally because I left my Suzie one in Germany so this was also Suzie. So he said how about we buy Suzie a dress. Well that was a big deal so I went with him to, with my parents into this beautiful store that had all embroidered things. And I said I showed them the doll and they said we've got the thing for you. They gave me this beautiful dress for my doll. Oh it was absolutely gorgeous. All kinds of embroidery and all it was so pretty. So now I had a dress. And we stayed in a very pretty hotel in Hong Kong and the food, I guess I had gotten used to eating almost anything because if you're hungry you'll have to eat. And so I did eat French. Now I was going to experience Chinese food. Which was again something different, but noodles I liked so that was ok. We ate a lot of noodles. And we did take a trip also over to Hong Kong which is by ferry boat which was kind of exciting for us as well. So we were a few days in, I can't remember exactly the how many days we were in Hong Kong. But then we were on our way to the Philippines on a not with a passenger ship which I thought we would have. No. We had to leave the ship and go on a freighter, a small freighter and there we were all in one cabin together. But my dad always liked to have the round window, the portholes opened because he liked it. So while dad was there and he had his mouth open one of us kids, I guess probably it was me, took a raisin and threw it in his mouth and he thought it was a fly. And he started coughing and screaming and yelling. I swallowed a fly, I swallowed a fly. But then we laughed and he says what happened. What did you guys do. And you know how kids do pranks like that. So we told him, it was only a raisin. Well the next day he was sleeping again, the window open again. This time a big wave came and he thought we're drowning. He's screaming we're drowning, we're drowning. Why don't we all jump. You know he thought for sure we were drowning. As it was, a wave had come into the cabin on top of him. And all he

could he was breathing. I mean he had been sleeping and all of a sudden he was like d, you know being drenched with this ocean water. And so that was another experience that we won't forget, because he thought for sure we were drowning. Well anyway we make it finally to Manila and we

Q: How long did the trip take all together?

A: Hmm. Mmm. Ok we left Marseilles around the, I would say the 16th yeah, 16th of October and we did not get the, between all that, we did not get to Manila til the 16th, no, 14th of November. I did forget to mention something and now it came at just now I had a loss of memory again but it'll get back to me, ok. And we were met at the docks by the Jewish committee and they took us to a hotel in the walled city. The walled city is called **Intramuros** and that is a very old. That was because of the Spaniards and the Spanish were occupying Manila. That was a fortress and so this time you know it was very exciting to be living in something like that and, but they warned us don't leave any food out. Because of the rats that go around these old buildings. Oh my gosh. Now we are afraid of rats as well. I mean I love animals, but I don't' think I'd like rats. So we would take food upstairs but have to wrap it in linen napkin, very well. And they still got to it. So we still all the food we brought upstairs was eaten you know nibbled on during the night by these stupid rats. And we only stayed there like 3 days. And then the Jewish committee said we'll give, tell you where you can go and rent something. So we rented the upstairs of a house. Downstairs was a Filipino dentist. And upstairs was for us refugees. My parents, other people I don't even remember their names very well but every room was occupied by a different family. And one, then we had a single bachelor and he had to sleep outside on the sofa because we just

ran out of room. And this man gets up the next morning and he says he yelled at us. He says you kids are playing tricks on me again. Apparently somebody played a trick on him on one of the ships where he came from. And we don't know which ship he came on because there were quite a few refugees at that time, already. Anyhow so he accused us of taking his pants and hiding them. Well we didn't do that. so everybody started looking for his pants because he said, how I can't even get out of bed you know. So finally somebody looked down. All the windows in the Philippines had bars by the way because a lot of robberies took place. So we looked down and sure enough on the ground were his pants. And so we kids went and got them. And how in the world did they do that. We asked the dentist downstairs. Oh he said easy. They are on a tree, which is a ways away but same level as your upstairs, up, apartment is and he said they just take a fishhook, fish line, hook the pants bring them out, take the money and leave the pants. That's exactly what they did. They took all of his money. They took his papers and everything else but they left his pants. So that was our one experience.

Q: You had mentioned being excited about going to the jungle. And I was wondering what your earliest impressions were of what the Philippines were like compared to what you had been thinking it was going to be like and how it compared to your experience in Germany.

A: A far cry from Germany, a very far cry. There were palm trees, all right with coconuts on them. And the Filipinos would climb up the tree and throw down the coconuts for us. And we could crack them open, but first they had a green hull around them which had to be stripped, but they all carried knives, bolos, you know. And so like hatchet, big hatchet things. Oh very vicious looking deals. And that's what they used to do. But I could not see any jungle. I mean these were

paved streets. These were houses. And I thought well maybe when we move further in, you know away from the city area, I might find the jungle. Well it didn't quite happen that way. We only stayed in there one month because that was no place for us, when they can hook something and take things out of there. That was not for us. So then again we have asked the Jewish committee, where we could go and where we could live. So they said well there is a house. I'll show you but you have to share it with another family. Well no problem, I mean, that's fine. So we met the **Kostenits** family, a husband, wife and one daughter. The daughter was just a couple of years older than I was. And so that was a beautiful complex. It was, it belonged to I think a mayor, **Resal**. His last name was **Resal**. I don't remember his first name. But there are a lot of **Resals** over there. There are lot, it's a very popular name. And this house was very beautiful. It had, downstairs was a hall. Cause it was like a dance hall. Oh it was huge. And then you went up the stairs and upstairs were the living quarters – the kitchen, three bedrooms. One was occupied by my parents. One was occupied by the girl, Eva. **Kostenits** parents. And the other room was for us three girls. And it also had a very long veranda out front. The length of the house. Of course, also it had bars. Downstairs, upstairs and so forth. The only bar that wasn't on was in the kitchen because they felt I guess there wasn't much to steal in the kitchen. So anyway so we moved in with what we had, not a whole lot because like I said the bicycle was already ruined from the ocean water and everything else so I don't know. My dad wasn't able to clean it up. There was just no way of rescuing it. My mother's soap became like soap suds. There was hardly anything left of that. But we did have a few clothes that we had brought along and we were able to use them. But since we knew that this was going to be temporary because it was for two people, we wanted something for ourselves and they wanted something for themselves as well. But what happened is which made us move even faster, was we were sleeping one night

and I was awoken by a man putting his arms around my neck and putting his face next to me. And I woke up and I yelled. A boy wants to kiss me. I like I said my imagination, I have very vivid imagination. At this time, by that time I was 12 years old. My birthday was in July and you know time passes on. so this was July and I was 12. And but back to this robber. He was taking a check on what I was wearing and he had been already to somebody else. I don't remember now. It was my sister or the other gal. both were named Eva so I didn't know. And so this lady next door in the bedroom said oh go to sleep you had a, you had a dream. You just, go back to sleep, go back to sleep. I said no he's creeping out now. He's leaving. He's leaving. Catch him, somebody stop him. You know. And so my parents, by my voice could tell immediately that something was wrong. So my mom got up and of course she saw the window to the kitchen wide open. The door to the, from the kitchen going down was wide open, things scattered all over the place. And my dad had a very bad habit, of taking his rings off at night. Wedding ring and all. Well that was gone. The wedding ring was gone. The watch was gone and that he was very upset about. And then we had some eau de cologne that we had brought from Germany. It had a gold cap on it, sort of gold metal thing. They took that. They thought that was the real thing. So what over a period of time, I mean this is how we lost some things. You know robberies. So he took quite a few things with him. He took we had brought coral necklaces, my sister and I. Those he took. Oh a few odds and ends, I mean. At this time I don't even remember what all the man did take, but he was so deft at it that he had gone to this one, and nobody, he was in my parents' room and they didn't even feel his presence or hear him or that is so very quiet. If he hadn't touched me I might not have woke up. But he made the mistake of touching me. With that I woke up. And they said had he had I worn earrings he would have probably been able to take them out. I would not have felt it. And the necklace the same thing. He, they do it in one, one

grab, feeling for necklace and earrings. And being I'm a light sleeper, that he was able to take it. Not, I mean not get to it. Then we called, I guess I didn't call, we didn't call the police. We had no phone of course. Somebody heard us and commotion and so the people next door that lived there came over and asked what went on and we told them. And so I see this Filipino man coming up the stairs and I'm yelling. I said "that's him, that's him". At night it you know this is night time we're talking about. He had on white t-shirt and white shorts. So did this man that was creeping out of the room that had touched me and he too had. So I said "that's him, that's him". And they kept saying "no, no, no. No, he's our houseboy." I said "that's the man, I saw him." But of course it wasn't him. But I was so hysterical at that point that, and then of course I was afraid to sleep. They had to look under the beds, they had to look everywhere before I would even go to bed. I mean I was just so afraid of everything. By then and to this day, I am still. I mean this wasn't the only robbery. I'll get to that later. But to this very day I don't trust anybody. When I had a dog in America, I was fine. We lost our dog. Now I have ADT which is a security system installed. And my husband can't understand it. He's from Shanghai. But me, I am from the Philippines. And we had so many robberies that I am paranoid about things like that. Anyway, so that was one of the experiences with the robbery. The very first one. Then these people moved out and they moved across to the next house. And then we took another family in because nobody could afford to pay that kind of rent and my dad still didn't have a job. So they kept saying "you'll find one. Don't worry, you'll find one." But I went, enrolled as we had to go to school of course. I mean we can't do without school. So my parents enrolled us into a parochial school run by the German nuns. They figured because German nuns would be helpful in learning, then we could learn to speak English better than we did. So they put me into fourth grade and my sister was very young so she went into first grade. Well, after a while they realized

that I'm not, I'm too far ahead because I you know I had already been in the fifth grade in Germany. So they put me into fourth first and then they put me into fifth. So that's what it was. Into fourth grade first and then into the fifth. Then before I knew it we were kicked out of school. My mother was called. Come to school. We want to talk to all the parents were called one by one. And the head, the Mother Superior said to my family, my mother, sorry you have to take your children out. My mother said, why. Well because you're Jewish. My mother said because we're Jewish. We just left Germany because we were Jewish. Well, we're being persecuted here too. Why?

Q: This is side 2, Side B of the second tape, the interview with Margie Rosenthal for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, by Nancy Alper. The date is October 24, 1996. And Margie you and I before I turned the machine on were just talking about your hearing on board ship, on your way to Manila, about the happening of **Kristallnacht** in Germany.

A: We heard that the temples had been burned and that there was a big closings of the stores of the Jewish merchants and that must have come in over the radio to the operator on board ship. And he passed it along to the refugees that were on board. So we knew how close my dad had gotten to not even getting us out of Germany. And that was a very fortunate thing for us that we made it out before all this took place. Oh, they were arresting all the Jewish people but the men especially the men. And taking them to concentration camps. And my uncle, my aunt Ruth's husband, Herbert **Binger** was one of the first that they took to the concentration camp, **Dachau**. And he was there so that's how we had heard only through letters, that were in Manila by the time we reached Manila. And I also forgot to mention the fact that when we got off the ship in

Manila, there was a girl that had a cousin waiting on her at the pier or the docks in Manila. And she said to her cousin, she said “Hey” she said “who’s that Chinese lady that, that Chinese girl that’s there with you that came off the ship. She is Chinese.” And my girlfriend said “Oh no, she’s one of us.” And I was so devastated when I heard that, I had never forgotten that ever since. It’s been bothering me and I told her about that, the last day that we were here together at the reunion but I’m getting ahead of myself. Now back to our moving around to the Santa **Escolastica** school and going to classes over there. And the boy that had, we had to leave the school because this little boy that was in kindergarten, he apparently had either stomped on the picture of Jesus or spit on it or both. I’m not exactly sure. But the Mother Superior told my mother that she has to take us out of school because we cannot expect, she said “we cannot expect Jewish children to come and study at the Catholic school. We wouldn’t go to your school.” So my mother said “well we don’t have a school. There are just a handful of Jewish children here.” She said, “Well then it’s time you opened one up.” And with that my mother was so upset that she said “yes, ok”. So all of the kids that were in that school. There weren’t all that many. But there were a number of the refugees that were there and we had to leave. But while I was in classes over there, the children all made fun of my English because my English was the Oxford English and if I said something like looking glass or either or neither, they just would laugh and that would really embarrass me. And then another thing that happened is there are so many cats over there and somehow, I didn’t know yet. I learned later on that you had to be very careful where you stepped because if you stepped into some cat do, you would get that horrible smell on you and the whole class would smell badly. And somebody would say “hm, I smell something horrible. Margie, did you step into something.” And you know what, I really was the one that did it. So they’d send me out of the class. I had to clean my shoes off. The

bottom and wherever I stepped into it and then I could return to the class. But I still had a few very ugly experiences over in Santa **Escolastica**. So when they told us we had to leave I really wasn't all that sorry. To me, that was kind of a new page in my life. I was going on from this bad experience with the German sisters. So we moved, this was **Pasay** where we were living in that big house and that where we shared with so many people.

Q: You weren't in **Intramuros** anymore. Is **Pasay** a suburb of Manila.

A: Yeah, by the way yeah, **Pasay** is a suburb of Manila. And **Pasay** had also the Jewish committee. I think they were located either very close to it or I'm not sure exactly where. But they told my dad that he should use his money up first and not to worry about a job. It'll come, it'll come and my dad said "yeah but I don't want to use everything up. We'll have nothing to live on anymore." And they said "oh, it's all right. You'll find work. You'll find." So it was over a year later that my dad finally did. But not until we moved to **Ermita**. But I do want to say one more thing what happened to me while we were living in **Pasay**. We had this one lady that had a baby and her husband, they were living with us at that time in the big house. And she asked my mother if I could go and get her some sanitary napkins. So my mother said yeah she should go. So she gave me some one and she said "why don't you go to the market, over" which was not all that far away. And she said "go and get me a box of sanitary napkins". And I went ahead and I was about 12 years old at the time. And I went over there and I said "I want a box of sanitary napkins". And this Chinese merchant said to me, he says do you know what they are. And I says "Of course," I said "it's a napkin that you wipe your mouth with when you are done". Well they all were laughing like crazy and I couldn't understand why they are laughing.

To me it was a very serious matter. So when I went home I told my mother, I said “you know they were laughing but when I, they asked me if I knew what a sanitary napkin was and I didn’t know. All I said is well it’s something that you have to use when you eat your lunch or dinner and you wipe your mouth and to be you know. Etiquette, it reminds you to have a napkin. And they roared, they absolutely roared.” And she said “oh my goodness”. She said you don’t know really, do you?” I said “what should I know”. And she said “Well that’s when you get your period.” Well I was so embarrassed. From that moment on, when I had to go to the market I went across the street. I passed them so I wouldn’t have to look at them or go near them. It was the most embarrassing moment of my life, I think at that point. It was horrible. Anyway, from like I said from **Pasay** we did finally move to **Ermita** because first of all there were no jobs to be had over where we were living in **Pasay** and there was a nice school with American nuns and I think really that was the main reason that my parents moved to **Ermita**. There were many other suburbs they could have gone to, suburbs of Manila that they could have gone to. But that so we went over to meet the sisters of Maryknoll. And they were so wonderful. They opened their arms, took us in. We had to pay which we did too at Santa **Escolastica**. Nothing is for free. We even had to buy uniforms at Santa **Escolastica**. And now we had to buy uniforms again in Maryknoll, at or college. But Maryknoll college uniform was very pretty. It was a wine red full skirt with bib like. And underneath you had a beige blouse, short sleeves and it had a wine red ribbon around the collar which was very pretty. It was kind of a pleated top and down to the waist and then again pleat from the waist down. And we really loved the sisters. It was so wonderful. And being we were Jewish we were not required to take religious lessons as we had to do in Santa **Escolastica**. We had to attend all the lessons, but over there they gave me the freedom. If I wanted to, I could sit in the back of the class and just listen. Well I thought that

was very interesting for me was the history so I just sat there and listened to all the teachings of Jesus Christ and the parables and all the things that happened and saints and what have. And then it came. Oh before I go on, I was put into the sixth grade right then and there because I was in fifth grade at Santa **Escolastica**. And they thought that I would fit very well into the sixth grade. So I was in the sixth grade. And they had a test, an examination at the end of the school year and they said would you like to take the examination on, on the religious part of it. I said sure. What have I to lose. I mean after all you know I'm not supposed to be here but I'll take it. And believe it or not I was on the honor roll, the second person on the honor, I did better than the Catholics did. And the sisters told it all over the school. Can you imagine. We have a Jewish girl and she got a 98% whereas you kids don't even get anything. You are barely passing. And so I was really thrilled. And then came the seventh grade. And again I was on the honor roll and again I was on the top in fact this time I was on the first on the honor roll. I was number one which made me very happy. And it pleased them immensely. Then we graduated from the seventh grade. Well that is a big deal. The archbishop has to come in and he has to bless the children and you had to have special uniforms. White dress and I, well my mother really couldn't afford to buy a white dress so one of the classmates of mine said oh her sister already graduated and I could fit into her dress. And that's what happened and I had to go forward and kiss the ring. I pretended to kiss it. I didn't really kiss, I didn't think it was sanitary enough to kiss the ring, but I did and from then on I went to high school. And in the first year of high school, I learned Latin and that was a very difficult language. And then the war broke out. And that was the end of it for my school of that time.

Q: Where did you go to high school?

A: The very same place. Maryknoll College. They also had a high school. And at that point I was, let's see 14 years old, 14 years old. It was 1941 and I'm trying to get the figures in my head. Anyhow, anyway I didn't not even complete the high school, the first year of high school because the war did break out in December.

Q: Before we get to that part of what you went through because it was so different and involving, what was your experience with the Jewish community or your association with the Jewish community in Manila between your arrival at the end of 1938 and say the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December of 1941.

A: We had by that time, we had joined the congregation. The Temple Emil and we had a wonderful person that was I think he wasn't really a rabbi. He was the father of Rebecca **Konigsberg** because her father was very well educated in the Jewish religion. And he knew all the customs so he was leading the congregation there for a number of years. And we went to Sunday School. We took Hebrew lessons. We, we learned a lot in that time. And even through all the war years, we still were going to that temple until the very end of the occupation. But let me not get ahead of it. We moved to **Ermita** and we had to share again a lower flat like. It had several bedrooms and we rented it in the beginning, we rented it to American businessmen. Then they left. Then we rented it to an American woman with a child and the man was in the military. And then they were evacuated because they knew that something was going to happen. People had an inkling that war was not far away but nobody really talked about it, that this was in 1940 I would say. And then white Russians moved in. After they all had left, so we had quite

a turn over, over there, but we always were able to rent it. And before all this, I do want to say something really cute. We had a black cat. And this cat was like a little dog. It would know exactly when we would come from school, at lunch time and would sit at the gate waiting for us. And it was adorable. That cat was just like a, like a little, it was like, but like a cat, it wasn't, wasn't a cat. It was like a dog I want to say. And then my mother saw a black cat one day out while she was shopping for groceries. And she said "my goodness, that looks like our cat Peter". So she was feeding this cat Peter all the way to the home and guess what. There was our cat in the window sitting and looking. So she had fed this strange black cat who was very happy to receive the food. That was one of the funny experiences we had during that time. Anyway.

Q: I forgot to ask you. Do you remember approximately when your father got the job with the Ford motor company and what that did to your life.

A: My dad got the job after one year, which was 1939. He did get a job with Ford Motors as a purchasing agent. And he had to drive the car around and pick up parts and things like that and he really loved the job. It was very nice and he really enjoyed it. And we were very happy to finally have you know some extra money. And in the meanwhile, we got a word that in Manila, in, I'm sorry in Shanghai an uncle who had been coming over Manila and we couldn't keep him there, had gone on to Shanghai. Had pneumonia and passed away and left my aunt with a six year old daughter. That was in 1939. The same age as my sister. So it was a very trying experience for her so we were able to send her money so she would have something to live on. And then came the news that my grandmother was still in Germany and had to get out. So again

we had to send some money and to, into Shanghai and my grandmother got the very last train out of Germany, over Siberia to go to Shanghai.

Q: Now when you say your grandmother you're talking about Anna **Zusman**.

A: Yes, yes it was Anna **Zusman** that was my grandmother that was left behind. The other ones I, like I said I don't even know you know. I knew they were in **Katowice**. That's the last, we had said our goodbyes over there. And my grandmother in Germany, she by that time everybody had to wear the Star of David on their, the yellow star of David, or an arm band. They had to be identified as Jews. And when friends that she had before wouldn't even talk to her. That they ran across the street or just to get out of the way so they wouldn't have to greet her. And so

Q: this is probably a good time for me to ask you. You mentioned there were letters waiting for you when you got to Manila. And although you knew about Kristallnacht from on board the ship, I assume you learned more things from the correspondence that you had waiting for you in Manila. I wanted to ask you about that correspondence and whether you were able to continue receiving mail after that.

A: Yes we did letters, get letters from my aunt and my grandmothers stating the fact that my uncle now was in a concentration camp and he has to get out. Out of Germany because that's the only way he could get out of the concentration camp. Now my uncle had already years ago had TV. He was so he had weak lungs. So when he went into we tried to keep him Manila by the way. We tried everything. We went to the HIAS, we went to the Jewish committee. We tried

every which way and there was absolutely no way they could, we could keep them over there which was very disturbing to us because we had hoped that they could stay with us. And as fate would have it. they went to Shanghai and that's the only place my grandmother, Anna Zusman could go. So perhaps this was the way fate played it on us, that she was saved that way. And she died in Shanghai at, of old age but my aunt said that also she had stomach cancer and nobody wanted to really talk about it. And thinking now about the going back to the beginning. I'm trying to remember in sequence how things were going. In Ermita, when we found out that the war was coming. My dad of course was still working on the pier. And then the Japanese started bombing us very, very heavily. And there was no difference between military objects or private people. It just didn't matter. And we could always tell when you saw them in morning, early high up above at around 8:00, that would mean they would bomb us. If they weren't there at 8:00 that day they would not bomb. SO this was from December the eighth until oh, into I think it was like February when they finally decided to invade us. And my dad was working like I say on the docks and they're bombing all the time. And then the Americans had to set fire to all of the ships' cargo and everything that was on the docks. They didn't want to leave anything to the Japanese of course. So the people were told, take whatever you can carry. The ships are open to you. The factories are open to you. Grab whatever you can. Make as many trips as you can and get all the food or whatever you feel like you're going to grab and if you can make several trips go for it. So people would pass our house with, carrying things like clothing and just materials so my mother bought a couple of materials from these people and we bought potatoes because potatoes did not grow in Manila. They had to be imported. So and we were used to eating potatoes. So then my dad got a bicycle from the company and they said take whatever you can take. So he just took the bicycle and a few odds and ends. But no, not a whole lot. We're

not, he wasn't the kind of person to just take. But we did get a few things from the people that were dragging it and then they could go back and get more. This way they had money and at the same time were able to get some groceries or foods, I mean clothing and whatever else we could possibly use. One thing we heard about and that was kind of a strange situation. These people, there were four of them. And they were carrying this, they saw this huge heavy box. And they figured there must be something wonderful in that box. So the four, four people are carrying it. And they took it all the way down to, into our area and along the beach. It was called Dewey Boulevard, it was a beautiful, it wasn't a beach. First it was a street and then there was a beach. That this was Dewey Boulevard with a street that they were walking on and dragging things and pulling and whatever they could do. And finally got far enough from the fire and opened it up and inside was a coffin with a dead person who was on his way to wherever they were going next to be buried. Well needless to say that was the end of that, never got to go to his resting place. And then the fire was going a lot. I mean it was all around. They were trying to burn as much as they could. But they did not burn homes or anything like that. it was just at the pier. And then pretty soon the Japanese started marching in and the Americans had already left for Bataan and I think Corregidor and they went kind of away from Manila. And only people left were the civilians. Us. And we were declared open city, a long time ago but the Japanese just didn't care. they bombed us anyway. And that is how some people did get killed, injured et cetera. We were safe. We were very, very fortunate that we did not get killed. And my dad being, working with the at the docks for so long, it was a miracle that he wasn't hit by something or other. And

Q: Before we go on to the Japanese occupation, I didn't want to forget to ask you about whether

the Filipinos treated you any differently because you were Jewish. Whether the Jewish community there was treated any worse than any other part of the white immigrant or refugee community.

A: No, they treated us very well. I mean they to them Judaism didn't mean anything different. We believed in God. They believed in God. The majority of the people there were anyway Catholics and there was, they were very strict Catholics. They would go to Mass and they really respected everybody. And therefore they believed in the Ten Commandments. Honor thy parents, love thy neighbors. And they really believed in that.

Q: Also during that period of time, before the Japanese occupation you were going to, you were still in school. At the Maryknoll college. And I assume you were still going to Sunday school at the temple. So before the Japanese came, what was your life like within the Jewish community.

A: We had a very life. We had our get together. We had, made a lot of friends with other Jewish refugees and we children enjoyed going to Sunday school. We met our peers and we just enjoyed it and during the high holidays it was always a wonderful time for us because everybody was there, regardless of whether they were very religious or not and a lot of the people that, there were some, I shouldn't say a lot. There were some people that came from Shanghai that friends, I made friends with the **Helmans**. There was Rosie **Helman**, Siggy **Helman** and Gloria **Helman**. Those were the children. And Mr. and Mrs. **Helman**. I don't remember their first names at this moment. They had a boarding house right on Dewey Boulevard overlooking the ocean. And that was a very favorite place for everybody and Rosie and I became very dear friends because she

went to the Sunday school and we just all had a very pretty good life considering you know we weren't rich or anything like that. We couldn't take things out of their country so we were, had to start fresh, completely fresh as I've said before. There was not a whole lot left that we could rescue or salvage. We did keep that wooden box that all our stuff came in. And my mother had packed away a couple of things, including some crystal because we only lived in one room, the four of us were in one room and rented all out to the other people so we could pay for this flat. Like I say we had a hard time because they had to give money for the visa for my grandmother and already mentioned for us to be able to buy a popsicle, ice cream. I mean there, the food thing on a popsicle. Oh that was quite a big deal. We never were able to buy a Coke because those were expensive. Even five centavos we couldn't have. We had to save every penny to send to Shanghai. And for the visa for my grandmother. So we were really considered quite poor in those days. So when the war, I mean when the Japanese came in, we had taken, we had gotten a few furnitures of course, and all the people, the Americans had left. Now the Japanese were marching in. We heard them coming in during the night. And it was an awful feeling to hear marching. It reminded us of the Nazis in Germany. And we were so afraid that they were going to come into our homes. And, and just kill us all. We had heard horrible stories of what Japanese can do from people in different areas. They were very sadistic. And the first troops in were mostly Koreans. They had taken them as the foot soldiers and the officers were Japanese and these people, the Koreans and the low, low Japanese their uniforms smelled so horrible that you could actually smell them through the windows into the house. And had a terrible stench about them. I don't know whether they were able to wash it there or what you know. Because they were in the war. I mean they were just waiting and they had to land someplace. But it was very, very hard for us to all of a sudden for the Americans to the Japanese. We didn't know what awaited us. How they

were going to treat us, being Jewish and of course our nuns were still at the Maryknoll college but we were not able to go to school because we were afraid to go out into the streets and so forth. And of course they were, later we learned they were right away interned in Saint Thomas which as an internment camp for Americans, for white Russians and people that they suspected of being pro-American. So but also then we were afraid we were going to be bombed by the Americans and so in a way that is also sort of what happened, but not right away. Not, they were still gathering themselves together and trying to get all the forces that were left because they, a lot of them were in Bataan and they didn't have a lot of communications with them because the Japanese intercepted everything that went out of the country.

Q: I had asked you what your diet and life style was

(file 3 – RG-50.106.0052.03.03 – duration: 01:01:04)

Q: This is continuation of an interview for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. I'm interviewing Margie Rosenthal and my name is Nancy Alper. It's the 24th of October 1996. This is the third tape of this interview, the first side. And Margie and I were just talking about their life style, the family's life style before the Japanese took over and afterwards.

A: Before the Japanese took over, we could go to the market and buy beef and you know better things. However no the potatoes before the war were still there because they were imported. Once the Japanese moved in we did not have any fresh food. We did not have any regular potatoes. We ate yams or yellow potatoes, the sweet potatoes, I should say. And we didn't have much money. In fact money was like going always up, up, up. It was like inflation. Money wasn't worth a thing and so we ate rice. One meal would be the rice soup. Another meal would be the rice. Another meal would be the potato peels, the sweet potato peel and another one would be the regular sweet potato. But my mother became inventive. She would take for example she would take the potato which was an awful sweet potato and she would put vinegar on it and would put salt on it and it kind of deadened the sweetness. And it was a little bit like a potato salad, were trying to imitate that. Then to make, in those days we still had electricity and so forth. So my mother would get some coconuts and with (rust?) with the coconut and then squeeze out the cream and from that she would make ice cream and put that into like cubes, into cube trays in the freezer. And we would have ice cream. I mean you had to be very inventive. You could take flowers and make a jelly and jam out of it. And later on in the things, I mean flour disappeared. We had then we made, we bought bread made of rice flour. We bought bread

out of just about anything that you could imagine and the matzo. We had no matzo of course so we used sour flour for matzo. Things were really pretty rotten. And the beef came to an end as well because the caribous were, you know there were more no more caribous and the Japanese confiscated a lot of the stuff. So all of a sudden we were having horse meat. But we didn't know it was. It tasted different. Our Dad finally told us because he was in Russia before the war if you remember. He would say it tastes sweet and that is horse meat. Well then we didn't want to eat that any more either. So we stuck to a diet of fish and chicken but chicken was really a delicacy. We couldn't hardly afford to buy a chicken so we decided we're going to raise our own and well where do you keep a chicken, right. There was no, you can't leave it outside. It might get stolen so we put chickens in one of the little rooms like a closet and had a bar across it and they would roost right on top of the bars. But then the rats would come and would like to eat those poor chickens. You had, you know making a lot of fluttering and screaming and screeching. And we would jump out of bed and we tried to chase the rats away from the where we had the chickens because like I said they liked to eat chickens too. Then during the winter season we lived in a place where we were downstairs and across the street from us was the house of Japanese where they were torturing Filipinos. Whoever they thought was a group that was against them. And they would do the most horrible things to them. And we would see walking by. It was just awful. They would have men hanging upside down and would make them smoke and they would have them close their nose and mouth and they would have to inhale the smoke. And they would just absolutely and they'd blow up like they would swell up. It was just awful. Or they would pull fingernails out and toenails and the water torture. They did everything and anything to get some information out of them. And that they didn't do, they couldn't do. And my dad at that time, there was no more. In the beginning my dad and I were selling automobile parts, in the very

beginning of the Japanese occupation because we needed to get some money. So we would buy parts from one place and take it and sell it to another place. One of our, my good customers was the cigar company. **Hamber**, I think it was called cigar company. And they would give me what they wanted. They needed say X number of piston rings, X number of spark plugs. X number of fan belts. I mean things like that or even batteries. So I would go and find where I could find some and then bring it to them and sell them. Now I was having a better time of sales than my dad, I guess because I was a girl. Anyway, and that way I was able to support my family some money somehow. And in the meantime, of course the Americans were bombing us.

Q: Were you still **Ermita** then or had you moved to a different location and where did you get the auto parts?

A: Well we still were in Ermita and the auto parts, people tipped us off who might be wanting to sell. Well you had no gasoline. You only had cars there so you dismantled them and sold part by part because nobody could drive a car at that point anyway. Gasoline was out of the question so you had to do what you had to do and this is how I found out well these people had this and that and so I went and procured it and sold it to them. And we'd separate, my dad and I. He'd go one direction and I'd go someplace else and sometimes we'd meet for lunch or whatever, downtown. But between the bombings, the Americans were flying way up there. And we wanted to say hooray, hooray, hooray but we didn't dare show any kind of an emotion because that would have been the end. But then that stopped too. And so then my dad used to go to the market, get some **linguises**, they called them. That's a sausage and other things that he thought people would need and took it into the provinces, way into the interior of Manila, in that bundle into Philippines,

interior of the suburbs and further out. Well twice, my poor father was caught. The first time they thought he was a guerrilla but he talked his way out of it. The second time he wasn't so lucky. He, they had him, they hand bound him. They were going to shoot him. I mean they already had a position to sue. And he said I can show you that I'm a Jewish person. I had the bris, and they said that doesn't mean anything. We do too. We had the same operation. Don't work, that stuff. So he said I can recite the **Shema**. He said how do we know that that is your prayer. We don't know Hebrew. So he was there for hours. They were keep, questioning him. And he kept saying I am not a, I am not a spy for the Japanese. I am not. I am pro-American. We

Q: Now if I understand this they were rebel guerrillas. These were not Japanese soldiers but these were the Filipinos who were fighting the Japanese.

A: That is correct. They were in the outskirts hiding underground so to speak. Yes, and they, when they see a white man or what's he doing in the province, find out he's German on top of that. Well, that means enemy. And so they really wanted to kill him. And so he said "look, if you're going to kill me, do it now. Don't prolong this anymore. I've had enough." He was saying the Shema over and over and over again. And nothing they said, he said or did. He says I have a family. I have two children. I have a, my wife is there. He said please you know this was in the **Pasay**. This, in the meanwhile we had to move **Ermita**, because **Ermita** was getting very expensive, so we went back to **Pasay**. And we rented a downstairs. It was like a basement type thing, level to the ground. And that, from there we were making our trips into the city and you didn't have much. As transportation you mostly had to walk and it was pretty hard. And anyway so my dad, this finally somebody else, the big, big **macher** came from the group. And he said, "I

believe this man. Let him go.” So they said ok, let him go. He was so sure they were going to shoot him in the back. And he took his bicycle and started walking. He didn’t dare get on a bicycle because he was so weak by that time. He was so exhausted from the interrogations and from the, the whole way they held him, hand cuffed behind his back and all that. I mean he was just a broken man. Well, they let him go. But the man that told him you can go, said, “I will watch you. I will make sure that you are telling the truth. And if you’re not, you’re a dead man.” So he told him where he, where we lived so he says “I’m going to come and check up on you.” My dad came home walking. He never rode the bicycle all the way, miles and miles and miles, kilometers over there. And he came home and he always was an old man. He was so broken up about this that we said you’re not going back into that again ever, ever. You cannot do it. And so my poor father, that night, sure enough we spied, we saw somebody outside our window. We thought it was somebody going to break in again. And no, it was one of the people that had said they’re going to check up on him were outside our window, looking in. But barely. You had to just kind of look in through the slats. But they were there checking up on us. That was the last time he went into the country. We would not let him. I said we’d rather starve. Now we, like I said, we were at the floor level. In the back was swamp. And they had fish so we would go out there and try to catch some fish for food. And we had those two chickens. But you know we didn’t have heart. We did not have the heart to kill them so we gave them to a neighbor and says here. You take them. We don’t want to eat them. And they’re getting older. You better just use them. Of course they didn’t give us any share at all, but the Japanese kept up their atrocities something awful. And many people didn’t make it back. I mean even some of our Jewish people were taken. They found a short wave radio or sometimes they didn’t find anything. They just didn’t like the way you answered them and that was it.

Q: With the Japanese patrolling on a daily basis around all the neighborhoods sort of like a police force.

A: Not really patrolling. They had houses. Little like a, it was like you see in England. You know those little guard houses. They had that that set up all over and when you walked by you had to bend down as low as you could because if you didn't they just slap you left and right. And so we learned to do it. But later on we get to the idea, hey wait a minute. We are German. They don't know the difference so we said **Allemande, Allemande**. German. **Deutsch, Deutsch**. And you know it worked. We didn't have to do it anymore. They bowed to us. But they were like I said pretty viscous. And again things became, the water kept rising in that place. Whenever it rained. It was rainy season, the piles came loose. And we, whenever we put our feet out or a hand out, it would touch water. So we know the water had risen to our bed. And the beds were way up there. High up. Everything was up high. And that's how so we could open the, we had window open. The water was as high outside as it was inside. So we saw fish floating by and we tried to catch those fish. So once in a while we were lucky and we were able to catch the fish. So between vegetables that were growing out back and fish we didn't need a whole lot of money.

Q: I think you talked about the fact that the Japanese placed their munitions near some, in suburban neighborhoods. And I'm wondering if that was true in **Pasay** as well as **Ermita**. If that was just a general practice of the Japanese.

A: It certainly was. From **Pasay**, we moved back to **Ermita**. We just things were getting pretty bad. We couldn't stay in that, in a place where the water was coming up all the time. We lost a

lot of things due to that. The shoes molded away, the blankets and everything else. So that didn't last. So then we went to **Ermita** now. It was almost 1945, very close to 1945 when we moved back to **Ermita**. I would say that was probably in the very beginning of 45. And the bombings of the Americans increased. Then came shelling. They had, they dropped leaflets and were telling us that they had already come to the outskirts of Manila by dropping leaflets. So we knew the end was near. We could just hold out a little bit longer. And we had ok, also we, up until that time we were able to go to the temple. And we were able to go every week to services. But when the shell, the bombings got worse and worse, it really was very dangerous to be outside. And there was no place to really hide because there were no air raid shelters in Manila because it was too low. It was water underneath, not far down, we had water. So we couldn't build any air shelters. So you had to hope for the best. That was about it. So then we were again back in **Ermita** and then the Japanese had been storing ammunition in between the civilians because they knew that the, if the Americans knew civilians lived there, they would not bomb the civilians. So they very smartly put gasoline, ammunition, anything that was flammable to put in between the civilians, like maybe two houses of civilian. The third one would have that. Or five houses of civilians and a big bloc of Japanese. So they were all over the place. And we knew more or less where they were. So we but we, where else can you run. I mean you can't keep running so we were at one place. It used to be a dressmaker's place. That was our very last stand. We were so tired of moving and running away and no matter where we went we were getting bombed or getting shelled. It really didn't make any difference.

Q: I know you told me that you also sold pies. And I'm wondering where that fit in and in this time period we're discussing and if you reached a point where there simply wasn't anything you could do anymore to earn money.

A: Well the pies came at a very late date also because like I said food was running out. So this one lady was baking pies and I took it to the hospital where they still had some doctors and nurses. And also the people that were discharged from the prisons were there. And there was one Jewish man that I, basically that was the one I really, really remembered. Because I had known him. His name was **Moser**. And he was laying on the bed, white. His legs were saw raw that he couldn't even put his legs together and he was so thin that there was nothing left and he looked almost like what you see nowadays with the concentration camp victims. Exactly that's what he looked like. They starved him, they beat him. They did everything you can possibly imagine. He could barely talk to us. And I brought a pie over to him and I fed him because I felt that was the only thing I could do. I would explain what happened to that pie later on to the lady that made them, but he had to have some nourishment and I started feeding him small little pieces and he ate it and his eyes became big and cause he couldn't really show much emotion at that point. He was just too, too tired of living, too tired of everything. And the pies like I said you know I sold as long as I could. And that stopped as well because the bombing got more severe and more severe and by that time, the Americans were already in **Intramuros**, in that area we heard. So it was time to just put an end to this. And so we were in this building that we had taken over from the dressmaker. And across the street from us were this red light house, the red light district house. And I was standing in the doorway of our place where we were. And all of a sudden this Japanese soldier comes in, grabs me and was trying to drag me up the stairs. I am

crying, I am yelling and my mother is holding me. My sister is holding my mother and my father is holding my, my sister. My mother. Well anyway, one after the other. And I am trying to hold onto the bannister and he's pulling me, he's much stronger than I am. By this time I had amoebic dysentery. And I was very weak and so this, finally dad let go and he says I'm running outside and see if I find a, an officer. Lucky, he found an officer. Do you speak English? Do you speak German? English. Help us, help me. My daughter. She's not one of those. So he came in and he, I was already on the top of the stairs. And all of a sudden the officer arrived. And yelled something in Japanese and the, this soldier froze. And I was, I was hysterical by this time. I mean I was completely, I was so bad, I couldn't even walk downstairs. They carried me down the stairs. And I was there and the officer called him to come down. The guy came down, this soldier. He took him and he beat him up. I mean I, after a while I actually felt sorry for this guy. Not only did he beat him. He knocked him to the ground and then he kicked him. And he was still apologizing. This, this police, I mean this soldier was apologizing to this, to this officer. Anyway it was very lucky for me. It was really it was very, one of the fortunate instances. Well then this all was coming to an end. The Japanese were making, going from house to house interrogating or taking people. My dad said goodbye already. My mother said goodbye to us too. And said that your aunt is in Shanghai and I want you to go there after the war because if we are not around, you have to be the, you have to be in charge. And he said, again he started saying the **Shema** and dad said this is it. I'm sorry, you girls will have to fend for yourself. The Americans are not far away. So you know be calm and do what they say. So guess what. They were next door, avoided our house, went to the next one and you could hear people screaming and crying. And the truck was loading up all these people. And we were scared and next day in the morning

they brought some of the women back, not the men. We never saw the men again. And then that night, all of a sudden we hear bombing, shelling and fire starting in our immediate area.

Q: These people who were the victims of the house to house search, were these Filipinos, Americans, refugees.

A: Only Filipinos. There were no more white people around. We were just living among Filipinos.

Q: Do you think that they in these two instances helped you in the instance of the soldier who was dragging you up the steps and spared you in the instance you just described because you were Germans.

A: We think that might have happened because how else I mean we had the same place. I mean we were side by side we'd go from one to the next to the next. I mean you know how, we assumed that maybe this officer when somehow word must have spread. Say don't go there, those are Germans. I don't know. Maybe the hand of God was over us. What, we don't know. We just don't know. We only know that we were spared. And then that night we had to leave that place and we thought we'll never come back again. And we hid in about a block away where still no flames. And we went there. In the morning we heard that that street had not burned yet so we cautiously made our way back there and sure it was not burned yet. So my father said now I they next time the flames are going to get closer. We better grab what we're going to take if we can carry it.

Q: When you say flames, you're talking about flames from what the bombs had set on fire in the area, what was burning as a result of the bombing?

A: Shelling, the shelling, not the bombing at this point. It was mainly the heavy, heavy shelling. By the Americans. And they just shot into it because the Japanese were intermingled with us and the ammunition and the gasoline and daddy, my father said we don't want to go up in flames and be thrown to smithereens. We just might as well leave while we still can. So that morning we gathered all our meager, one photo album, the address for my aunt and the visa, affidavits for America. I, my dad told me to take the electric plate over my neck and that was heavy. And the dog and the leash. We had a dog. And my sister couldn't carry anything. She was too, I was 17 at the time. and so my sister she was, what 12. So I don't know. Maybe they gave her something to carry also. And on top of that we had again bought some chickens. Raw, live chickens. And they were making such a racket. So we gave it to somebody. And said we don't want to be, we can't kill them anyway. Just take them, just go. So we gave them to somebody who I don't even know who they were. And we went to this apartment house that was down the street and in that apartment house we went to that apartment building that was standing. That was a very high rise building for those days. And in the bottom, or as you walked in from off the street were sandbags. Well apparently a bomb, a shell had come into there and had not exploded. A great big thing and one bomb was also in the shaft, elevator shaft. And we figured well let's lay down there. I mean we've got to get out of the house. At least it's far enough, even though that explodes it'll give us some protection with these bags around the building. Well we didn't expect a shell to come right, explode, come right into the, it was like a carport almost. Open on all the sides you see.

And it came right in and exploded and it was phosphorous now. And the explosion of it, threw me under a very low table. It was like maybe 5 inches, 6 inches off the floor. It pushed me underneath that and my mother got hit with shrapnel. Our dog ran away at that time and we were looking for the dog afterwards but it was just as well because where we were before had taken our dog was barking at all the Japanese. We didn't know how to keep her quiet. So when this explosion happened, she took off which was probably a blessing. Anyway so we I thought I said I think I'm dying. I couldn't breathe because of the phosphor in my lungs, you know. And my mother was bleeding from her shrapnel wounds. So we got out of there and went to a maybe a block away to a garage that had burned I mean the garage. A house that had already burned out. All those left were the bottom with hot, hot coals like tiles and things. But where else can we go. We stayed there for just a little bit, maybe one night. That didn't work very well. So then we went to the school which was **Atenao**, a parochial school for boys. The building was already occupied by a lot of refugees so there was no more room in the building. So the other people that were outside were sitting in ditches that had been placed around the whole parameter of the school. Well that's where we were when the shots kept coming over our heads. And my mother still had that shrapnel in her but what could we do. There were no doctors, medics, nothing. So all we did was we put some bandage on her and that was all we could do. And then we, shell, a big shrapnel fell between my mother and myself. If we had been closer it would have killed one of us. Well we figured out that wasn't a place to stay again. So again we started moving around. So then we spied this, oh that was several blocks away because we knew that this was going to go up and sure enough that night, our house, our place, that whole block went up. In explosion because a shell had hit there as well and it hit our apartment where we were hiding. It also was

hitting already close to that place where we were living before. So we had to go further. So we walked and we w

Q: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum with Margie Rosenthal. Nancy Alper, October the 26th 1996. This is the second side of the third tape of the interview. And we were talking about what I assume was part of the battle of Manila, at the very end of the war in the Pacific against the Japanese, or close to the end.

A: The, we had finally come upon this garage that had a roof like I said, three sides but the front was all open. We were in like sardines. We tried to get out of the outside as much as possible. But we barely made it in because a lot of people there already. And there was one Jewish lady. She had her maid there. She had her cushions there. She had everything that it could possibly could think of. She would not move an inch. So we all were trying to help each other, trying to get in as many people as we could. Well we couldn't lie down. I mean it was you just laid to the side of yourself. Anyway, and then we were across the street was a whole contingent of Japanese. The whole house was occupied by Japanese soldiers. And pretty soon these Japanese came over, wanted the girls. And being that I was very undernourished, underweight, didn't have much on me, they didn't see me. They thought I was just a kid. But there were some girls there that were well endowed. They lined them all up and they said you, you, you, you. Come. Well one of them was the daughter of optometrist that we knew. And he went up to this soldier who said you, you, you. He said watch, my daughter. And so he understood. He let the girl go. And he gave him his gold watch. Then he asked for the men to come out. So all the men including my father of course. He was lining them up and we thought oh my god, he's going to shoot them

all now. I mean what. So my dad, said German, German. That saved him. So he sent him back to us. But the other ones they took along. They didn't shoot them right in front of our faces. They just took them. So that gave us a little bit more room in the garage which is a sad thing to say you know. But that's when the moment you say German that was it. So then we had no food, no water and at this time we were pretty worn out by running around from one area to another area and nothing to eat but we had had with us a little bit of drink. My dad had saved some whiskey in a bottle. And he said we were going to use this when we are liberated. Well this was an emergency. And we had no more water. So when, they, I looked across the ruins and I saw a bunch of people. I said looks to me like they're going for water. I saw them lowering a can on a string. I said that looks to me like that might have been a house. I'm going. So my dad said, no I'm going. I said no you're not. Because you are man. You might get killed. You are staying. I said I'm going to take my sister, Eva. So she and I had this flask that was used to probably wine in there. It was kind of a maybe a five gallon jug, empty. So I said I'm going to go because whatever, we had nothing else. I mean we found it along the way somewhere. I that's not what we carried because we had nothing, except what we had on our body, the photo album and a stamp album and electric plate. And when you throw yourself down, by that time I'd lost the electric plate also already. I didn't have that anymore because that was at least it was heavy and how could you fall on top of that. It was impossible. So I left it some time ago. So then I said, let's go Eva. So we walked over there to the place where I saw those women and they were fighting over the water. I mean there were so , maybe 60 and I had no way of even getting close to it. So I just stood there and what next. How am I going to obtain water. We needed water. All of a sudden shelling started, whizzing right over our heads. Well the Filipinos, these were all Filipinos that we are talking about, all lay down flat on the ground. So that they wouldn't be hit.

And I said Eva lay down too. And I said look. She says come on lay down, lay down. I said no I can't. I have got to get the water while I can. I'm going to do that. So that's exactly what I did. I took the can that was standing. I lowered it, brought up this filthy looking water. Threw it into the jug. I got a few cans because the bombing, the shelling goes on for a while. I mean once one hits, then there are several. And I was standing up. I said to my sister, I said if it hits me, you take the water and you carry it home, carry it to the garage. So I was standing there. And I, everything's fate in my eyes. And that's what happened. I got the water. The shelling stopped. We didn't get a whole lot but we got enough to tide us over. So I said come on. Grab the one end of it. I grabbed the other end. We stumbled over all the ruins and the burned out things and no, nothing was standing anymore. Everything was just flattened. But you know stones and, and glass whatever have you. So we made it right back to the garage and my dad took the whiskey and put some into the, into the water we had and that we were survived and had water. And then the next day we were, I had to go, we had no toilet. I had to go to the bathroom. I'm outside and all of a sudden, this soldier comes up to me and I thought it was a Japanese and I'm already going like this with my head down and my hands over my head and, and just cowering down. He said "get up, get up. We are here, we are here." I jumped up. I said "an Americans, you're Americans. And he said "yes" cause they were camouflaged with mud on their faces and they had things over their head. The helmets and regular invasion forces. And he said "where's the rest of your people." And I said "over there in that garage". He says "ok, I didn't know there were more civilians" he said. I said "yes, but be careful." I said "There are sentries in the house over there. They see you, they're going to kill you." So he called over to where my parents were and other people. Had them crawl out. I never went back again. I just showed him where they were. I stayed, he said "don't you go back. Stay right here. I'm coming for you." And that's

what happened and he brought the civilians out, calling and then running. And he says “you run as fast as you can over all these dead people,” over the corpses that had already started to smell and I mean stink horrible and the ants and the worms. Oh it’s just horrible and that’s what we saw. And we passed that and by the time. We reached, we reached the, the American lines, they put us on a truck and took us to Santa Ana cabaret where 2000 people were already there. And anyway, 2000 people were there. And we stayed there for that night and about two nights. And we were famished. And they had a soup kitchen is that what it was. And we ate the soup that they served us and that was the best thing that we ever ate. I mean we were so hungry that anything and everything would have been just wonderful. Of course, I did not even have a period because all the excitement, no nourishment. Nothing. I mean so I didn’t have to worry about that at that point. And so we were laying there with thousands. Like I said it was a dancing hall before and they called it Santa Ana cabaret. And we met some other people but they came, not all, too many of our people. And then we went and said, we walked along someplace else to see if we could find shelter elsewhere. And we came to this one man. And he said come upstairs and you know it’ll be ok. And I said “no, I have to get my parents”. He said “bring your parents. I don’t care”. So I brought my parents and we stayed there for a night or so and I said, and then my mother and dad said “no we can’t take his hospitality. He doesn’t have enough himself.” So we started walking and we saw a house, a vacant house. Oh maybe a couple or three blocks away and we went towards that and we took shelter in there. Well that night it started again. The shelling and the firing and a bullet came in through the window, hit the, the iron bars and then fell on top of me. It burned me but did not penetrate. And it was on my breast and I threw it off you know. And I thought I was going to, I thought I was shot. I mean very honestly I thought I was shot, but it was just a hot bullet that had expanded its force. So the next morning, we knew

we couldn't stay there because there was a Japanese sen, a guy that used to be a sentry. He had still hold out up there and he was shooting down at the Americans. The Americans didn't even know he was there until I showed them the bullet. I said I got shot. And they said let me see the bullet. And they said that's a Japanese bullet or German. What do I know and they said I will, I'd like to have it. I said if you give it back to me. That's got to be my souvenir. I never saw it again. So then where do we go from here. Well we didn't really know. So then my sister and I walked. I said well while we are still in that house because we had nowhere else to go. They were trying to shoot him and we were in the, in the fire line ok. But finally the, the shooting stopped. I said Eva, you and I. Let's go and I'll get, I hear there's a well not far away. Let's go wash our hair. I can't stand it anymore. we are full of mud. And everything else and dust and what have you. So we walked to the shelter over there. I mean to the well over there. Got, washed our hair. On the way back we run into a GI. And he says "a white girl. Out here, white kids. What happened. I didn't think any white people were here." And I said "yeah, yeah we have white people here. Well this is my sister and our name is **Mijinski**, Margot **Mijinski**. He said you Jewish? I said "yes". I said "yeah so are my parents. I want you to meet them". So we went back where the house was you know. And he said "you guys can't stay here. Come with me." And it turned out he was Jewish too. He was 33 years old. He was invasion forces, armed forces 37 Division. And he was the one that gave me my very first book, reading material. And then he somehow, he managed to take us and other people to Caisson City where they will put us into an old school house that we, they converted for refugees. So I don't know how many, again a hundred people or more were in this very small school house. And we, they divided, the partitions were like sheets. Families were like that. And that's then I got myself a job from my girlfriend. She saw me.

Q: Was this Ernest **Benesch**?

A: Yes it was. That was Ernest **Benesch**. Our savior. He was, he brought us fruits, he brought us food, at, ever he could get from the commissary over there and from the mess hall. And he gave us some food and K, K rations. I mean he was the very first one to give us something like that. And even some chocolate. I mean he was just wonderful.

Q: How long did you stay in that shelter and how did either the army or some other organization help you to settle into a more livable situation.

A: We were in that school house for a long time. We then around the corner we found that somebody had an empty almost like a shack. It was horrible, no rugs, we had cement floors. But there were a couple of beds in there so we were there. And from there we, we waited until our visa, then they con, everybody contacted us. The Red Cross was around of course. They gave us clothing. We had nothing as you know They gave us clothing. They even gave me my first sanitary napkin. And they fed us. I mean we just kind of survived and we couldn't leave until 1948 and we were in that very, around the corner from that school house. We were staying there.

Q: You were getting ready to tell me how you got a job and maybe you could tell me just the process of getting yourself in a position to get to the United States.

A: Ok. I had after liberation, when we are still in that school house I had to go downtown. I wasn't going to just wait for something to happen. And I was walking and all of a sudden somebody said Margot, Margot. And I'm looking around. Who is, who is calling me and it was my girlfriend Rosie **Helman**. And Siggy **Helman**. Come up here, come up here. I said my goodness. I said you are alive. Oh they were, we just hugged and kissed and cried. I mean that was such a wonderful reunion. You have no idea. And, oh I went upstairs to the **Helmans** and they had food and they sent some food home with me to that place. And I was able to give my parents, my sister, some sausage and a few other things. And they told me that they are opening an officers billets and they'd like me to come work for them and that's what exactly happened. They opened the officers billets. I went to work there as a receptionist. And I was really so innocent and so ignorant of everything. I saw balloons laying there. I thought and I was asking the boy the houseboy to give me them for my sister. And he says no, I'm not going to give you that. I said why not. My sister is only 12 years old. I said I want to give her something that she hasn't had in years. And I said I don't even know if she ever knows what a balloon looks like. He says no I can't give you that. I was so upset. When I went upstairs to see the **Helmans**. I slept over there by the way. I only went back home on weekends cause the distance was very far and I had to walk. There was no transportation. There was nothing. And so I told the **Helmans** what had happened. That these beautiful new balloons were laying there. They wouldn't even give me one for my sister. And they said no you don't want that. That's those rubbers that the officers use when they bring in girls and then it dawned on me what it actually was. But that's how, to show you how innocent and how ignorant I was. And then, from then on in, I was able to bring food to my parents and I met a lot of officers up there, GIs and they took us to dances and Rosie and I and Siggy they took us to all these dances. But you know every time there was

backfire from a truck, I thought it was an explosion. I dove under the under anything and everything I could find for protection. And they would just stand there and laugh. I said look it's a very sad experience for me. Don't laugh. Because to me I feel like I'm being shot at. And it took me a long time to get over this backfire. I always thought that I was being shot. And so we went over there and then the rabbi, the chaplain, we had a Passover at one of the commissaries or whatever. He was able to locate a place; that was our very first Passover. And we, in fact I still have their Passover books, the **Hagadah** in a bound, what the GIs would carry with them. And that rabbi **Felden** was the very first chaplain that was in 1946, we had our very first Passover. And I was so nervous. I was so upset about everything. That I, well I was nervous to go to a dance. I would break out in hives. I mean completely from top to bottom. And I was itching and I was, and then I found out I was allergic to the shellfish that I was eating at the **Helmans**. I didn't know what I was supposed to eat. Besides that, I wanted to go back just one more time. My mother had pleurisy before we were liberated. And we talked to this a rabbi like person. Maybe it was Mr. **Konigsberg**. At this point I don't even know who told us. It's ok to eat pork. You got to get meat, you got to eat meat. Otherwise, you'll never get over this pleurisy. And my mother didn't want to. He said look you'll making, doing a sin more so by not eating than you would be by trying to survive. The thing is now survival. And that's when finally she would eat. We would try to buy some meat for her, not us, for her but she shared with us of course. We'd buy just the, the like the hoofs or the head or something because we had to cook that up for her and it was the hardest thing for her to do, to eat that. And then finally we got visas and it was in 1948, in February. And we boarded upon an army transport and women in one section, men in another section lined up for the mess hall to eat. We went over Shanghai because we didn't have, we didn't have any warm clothes so in Shanghai we got some clothes. And

then we made it to our San Francisco where our relatives and aunt Ruth. She in the meantime after her husband had passed away, Mr. Binger, she married Ernest Karliner who also adopted my cousin. And they were waiting for us. They had an apartment just across from them. And so we were, we were taken in over there. And I met my husband in the Golden Gate Park. He was seeing a friend of his. We were walking very first week we arrived. We were walking in the Golden Gate Park and my husband saw this friend of his that came from Shanghai. And he came up to me, up to the where we were and he says oh how about you. I haven't seen you since Shanghai. He's telling his friend. And the friend said oh let me introduce to you Ernie and Margie **Mijinski** and he said to my husband. Now my husband said to me, you know you look like somebody I know. You look somebody like, somebody I know. I said "sure I've heard that line before." He said "no I mean it. You look like a Mrs. Karliner. I says Karliner, that's my aunt." And he says my goodness, they've been telling me about you for years, that if you ever come to the states, I must meet you. And slowly we got together and about, this was in 1948 when we came. And in 1949 I got married.

Q: Margie, because you had people who could sponsor you in the United States, which I assume you still needed even though you had a visa that was supposed to get you to the United States from 1938. Why did it take so long?

A: Well because it took so long because my mother had German quota. My dad was Polish quota. Even though he never really lived in Poland but he was now **Katowice**, it was Polish. And the Polish had a very small quota. And so he said you guys go ahead and we would leave him. In fact, in Germany they offered the children to be taken to England and we refused. I said

I'm not going without you mom and dad and my sister. I'm not leaving. Oh no you take your little sister with you. I said no way, I'm not. And that's we stayed together and when we got to San Francisco, my dad got a job as a janitor. I worked, I was trying to sell advertising which I had in my middle I was, after the war I was selling movie slides advertising. And that's how I was helping to support my parents. And that's, and then my husband, he had a bakery in Oakland. So after we got married, I worked in the bakery. So.

Q: What were the hardest things for you and your family to adjust to when you got to the United States?

A: Well we had to get started. We had nothing. Just what the Red Cross had given us. And so we had to get a life again. But we stayed up in the, with furnished apartment where my aunt lived on side. We lived on the other same floor. It was very beautiful apartment. And like I said I went looking for a job right away. I got a job through an agency in an insurance company. I worked there. They promised me they would promote me, promote me but every time three months were up they put me into another and wouldn't give me a raise. And after the second time I said forget it. I'm out of here and I left and I had another job and then we got married and I moved to Oakland and we are now in the United States already since 1948.

Q: Was it important to you that Ernie had been through a similar experience. Did that have anything to do with your choice of him as your husband?

A: It certainly did. I wanted to marry another Jewish man of my background and he was somebody that I really liked. A very gentle, generous caring person. And we've been married 47 years.

Q: Let me ask you one more question. I know we need to stop. How do you think all of this has affected the way that you view your life and the way you have lived your life since all of this happened to you and your family and it was such an unusual experience in so many ways. And the last thing I was going to ask you is how did you find out about the fate of the rest of your family that had stayed in Germany?

A: Never really did. We had to assume. We tried to contact them then through the **Aufbau**, through all the different Jewish organizations and there was absolutely no trace of anybody alive, nobody. So we had to assume that they all perished because there is nobody, nobody ever responded. The Jewish committee, the HIAS, the Joint. Nobody was able to locate anybody. And as far as it having affected me personally. As I have been getting older, it's been harder and I'm now in therapy. Under a psychologist because things are, they're really getting to me. And I'm a very nervous person and the therapist feels that this all dates back to my young days when I was growing up. Not enough food. Leaving my grandmother leaving that I think was the hardest part of my whole exodus of Germany, having to leave my grandmother, my aunt, my uncle, but my grandmother was the number one. And then I never got to see her again. So that's about it.

Q: This concludes the interview with Margie Rosenthal.

(End)