

Christine Cohen

File 1 of 3

January 5, 1997

RG-50.106*0057.01.03

Abstract

This tape starts out with Christine Cohen being named Rita Grabiner when she was born on April 27, 1940 in the Warsaw Ghetto in Poland. Her entire family was forced to live there. She lived in the Ghetto until she and her mother escaped in 1942, leaving the rest of the family in the Ghetto to perish. Her mother dressed as a peasant with Christine hidden under her scarf and made her way to their business partner who gave her some money. First Christine and her mother lived with one farm family where the wife and children abused her and later lived with another farm family, poorer but very loving to her. Her mother had to support them by working in the field and selling products on the train. After the War, Christine and her mother moved to an apartment where she was cared by a maid while her mother worked. Her mother remarried and later gave birth to a son. Christine and her family moved to Israel when she was 17 and later to the US. Her mother was always over protective of her as gave her little attention during her childhood and Christine felt the world owed her the lost attention. She traveled to San Antonio to visit a remaining cousin and met her future husband. Her mother died there a year and a half ago.

This tape starts out with Christine Cohen discussing the anti-Semitism she experienced in Poland after the War. This made her feel less as a person so she desired to become Catholic until she moved to Israel when she was 17. That was the only country that Poland permitted the family to emigrate to but after five years they left for France where they secured a visa for the US which was their original goal. They settled in NY where her mother remained but Christine married and moved to San Antonio. Her mother was overly protective of her so she tried to be less protective of her two children. Since the War, Christine has been sensitive to noise and dark rooms. She and her family have visited Israel, Poland, Germany, France and England or sometimes traveling alone with other Travel Agents or to visit a friend. Christine has a friend of German descent and is now suspicious that her friend's mother's wealth came from Jews and when she visited the mother in Germany, she wondered if anyone in the street was her father's murderer. Recently she feels more deeply of the loss of her childhood and the loss of her relatives at age two. Her younger brother is very sensitive and feels her losses. Since her mother's death, Christine has nightmares of getting lost in a city. She believes her tenseness causes her migraines and tries to act happy around others so they will wish to be in her company.

This final tape reviews Christine's desire to read or see movies about the War though they upset her. It also discusses her lack of feeling of Jewish symbols as she is drawn to those of the church which she was acquainted with as a child. It compares her beliefs with those of her husband who is orthodox and her children who are conservative.

Summary

- 00:00 **Tape 1, Side A.** Christine Cohen was named Rita Grabiner when she was born on April 27, 1940 in the Warsaw Ghetto, in Poland. Her entire family including her parents, grandparents, aunt, uncle and their spouses and their children (the four cousins) came from different parts of Warsaw and were forced to live in the Ghetto. Christine was born in the Jewish Hospital of the Ghetto and lived in the Ghetto for two years until she and her mother escaped in 1942. The Ghetto was sealed at the time of their escape. Her father's business assets had been signed over to his partner and close friend as Jews were not allowed to own anything. Every day her father was taken out of the Ghetto to perform hard labor. He succeeded in making contact to get forged papers for Christine and her mother stating they were not Jewish. Though the Ghetto residents were being deported, Christine's mother did not want to leave her family. She did not know about the concentration camps but thought if they remained together, they could survive. Christine's grandfather was a jeweler and purchased precious jewelry so they could use diamonds to get a loaf of bread or enter a hospital; thus using bribes for survival. Her mother was 22 years old and was a capable person and her father felt she could survive outside the Ghetto. Her father thought of giving her to the Germans as others received a sum of money for their babies.
- 05:00 By 1942 everyone knew that the Germans killed the babies right in front of the parents. To prepare for the escape, a doctor in the Ghetto gave Christine a tranquilizer to sleep and her mother dressed as a peasant and placed Christine inside her large scarf. Her mother was blue-eyed and blond but Christine had dark curly hair and dark eyes so could be identified as Jewish. Outside of the Ghetto walls was a courthouse. Her mother carried a summons with a 1938 date but, luckily, the Germans could not read Polish. Christine's mother went up to the guard and said (perhaps in German) that she was from a village and received a summons to court and she got lost and wants to know how to get out. The guard pointed to the gate and she responded that she might get lost again so he walked her out. Her mother realized that she was wearing a Jewish star around her neck so flushed it down a toilet. She was fearful that Christine might cry and that if she was stopped with no papers, she could get shot. Her mother went to her husband's partner who held their assets.
- 10:00 He lived on the 12th floor of a building and she asked for her money. Though they had previously been close friends and he had been a guest for dinner many times, he claimed that he did not know her. Then her mother went to the window and said she was going to jump with the baby. He then gave her money because if she had jumped, he would be shot harboring a Jew. Christine's mother would have jumped rather than return to the Ghetto. She had never done any meaningful work previously. Then they met with the forger and obtained papers and went to the small village of Goroschgof (?). Her mother picked a place with farmers near a forest where partisans might be hiding. She saw a

woman with three children, ages around 8, 10 and 12 and asked if she could pay them to allow them to live with their family. Christine's mother claimed her husband and been in the Polish Army and was taken prisoner so she left Warsaw. She thought to go to a farm as her family was well-known in Warsaw and would have been reported as Jewish. For the first time, her mother had to work to support them. She sold liquor and cigarettes on trains and worked in the field and used the money to pay the farmers to care for Christine.

15:00 Christine believes that the woman who cared for her and, also, her children hit her and abused her but the woman's husband did not do so. She has a photo of a German soldier on horseback who loved her and gave her presents which made the children jealous. She was younger than the children in the family and was afraid of them. She lived with them from age two to age four. Christine believes that the woman might not have known that they were Jewish since they had baptismal certificates. The village people asked the woman how much money she received for taking the Jews. Christine's mother was nervous that they would take Christine to the Gestapo while she worked. Her mother was always affected by this experience until the day she died. Her mother could not go to sleep unless Christine was in bed. Her mother was married at age 22. When Christine was 9, her mother told her that she was Jewish. An elderly German soldier missed his granddaughter who was Christine's age and gave her gifts. He would warn Christine's mother when they were searching for partisans in the middle of the night. The Germans came one night and banged the door and requested her mother to drink vodka with them. Her mother choked on the vodka and the woman said she drank like a Jew so her mother drank it all up.

20:00 The woman's husband was nice and watered down the vodka for her. Other times, the elderly German soldier warned her mother that they were going to do a search and she should go to stay with a friend. He was transferred to the Russian front. Those in the underground were not sympathetic to Jews. One woman in the underground was of nobility and had a castle in their village. The German soldier must have known that Christine's mother was Jewish as he told the woman to help her and she did so several times. Searches were made and Christine's mother was not found. The German soldier did not reveal to Christine's mother that he knew that she was Jewish as thought she might run away. When her mother was selling cigarettes on the train, they would stop the train and ask everyone to show their papers. One time everyone got off the train and an 18 year old Jewish girl did not have papers so the Germans decided to bury her alive. Everyone was forced to dig her grave. She had on a red coat and held a red purse. The Polish people on the train begged the Germans to shoot her first as it would be less traumatic than being buried alive. Nevertheless, the Germans buried her and placed her coat and purse on top of the grave. Christine's mother witnessed this event. Another time her mother was forced to cook for big police dogs who had the ability to smell out Jews.

- 25:00 The dogs loved her mother and she fed them. Another job that Christine's mother had was digging up potatoes in the field. Near the end of the War, they lived in another village with poor farmers. They had two teenage daughters and were a wonderful family. Christine called the husband and wife, "grandpa and grandma." The parents and the daughters were all good to her. The girls acted liked she was their little sister. One day when they were about 14 and 16, they went to buy bread. They passed a carnival where Christine saw a doll that she wanted and they used the bread money to buy her the doll. Their parents were not upset as they loved her. Christine's mother was like a stranger to her as she went to work and they never saw each other. Her mother never got a day off but was home at night. When the poor family did not have money, they all lived off Christine's mother's earnings. For awhile, her mother lost her vision and the farmer supported them.
- 30:00 When the War ended, Christine's mother wanted to go to Warsaw to see if there were any relatives alive and Christine was left with the adopted family. Her mother found Warsaw in ruins and found no close relatives. Later, in a small town, she found a relative of her sister's husband. Her sister and her twins had perished. The relative lived in a town close to the German border in southern Poland so they went to live there. Christine's mother found a job in Warsaw and Christine did not want to leave her adopted family. Christine was five years old and her mother had left her for two months. Her mother rented an apartment and hired a maid to care for Christine. The maid was an older woman and became her grandma so they had a semblance of a family. There were three sisters who had children her age and the family from the village visited them so Christine was happier. They continued keeping in touch with the poor farmers and helped them. **Tape 1, Side B.** The maid was Polish of German descent as sometimes that part of Poland belonged to Germany. Many people of German descent had lived in the area for generations. The maid, Irene, had lived in Poland all her life and her married sister lived in Germany. Her brother-in-law was in the German Army and Willy who was Christine's age was now an orphan.
- 35:00 Irene was single and lived with her nephew, Willy. They hid the fact that they were German and told Willy not to tell anyone as Germans were hated. Willy lived with Christine and her mother and he played board games with Christine. The two were inseparable. One day when her mother was at work, Christine and Willy were playing a board game and she asked Willy if he was German and he responded, "no." She made up a word and he said that it's not a word and she said the Germans killed her daddy and she will kill him. She got a kitchen knife and chased him. The maid was next door visiting. Her mother came home and saw what was happening and let the maid go. Christine was bossy and Willy did whatever she wanted. She was selfish after the War and wanted attention. Her mother would undress her and put her to bed. Christine felt that she wanted all the attention as she was abused during the War.

- 40:00 Willy knew he had to defer to her. She was small and he was the same size or bigger at the same age. Her mother always gave in to her until the day she died. A brother was born after the War. Christine's mother tried to make up for the earlier lack of attention. Her mother remarried after the War and obtained a Polish maid. At age six, Christine started school in the city of Walbrzych. She did not know that she was Jewish and disliked the Jews as much as the children in the village did. The children said that Jews were pigs with tails so they believed that Jews were sub-humans. They lived near Majdanek or Treblinka. Women in the first village would say that the smoke shows that the Jews are burning and they deserve to be burning because they are sinners and did not go to church on Sunday. As Christine was growing up, she knew that Jews were sub-human although she did not know any Jews. Anti-Semitism was strong in Poland though the Communists would put you in jail if you said anything anti-Semitic. Her mother married Leon, a Jew from Krakow in '46 and told her that she was Jewish.
- 45:00 All his family had died except for a sister. He worked in a coal mine in Russia and was an electrical engineer and spoke seven languages. He lost part of a pinky in the coal mine. He moved to Israel where he was in charge of the Negev mines. Her mother remarried to give Christine a father. Christine loved him as he also spoiled her. Before the marriage, her mother left her for a week with Leon to see if he could handle her. Christine felt that the world had to make up for what she had lost. Leon took her skating and the ice broke and they fell in. He was athletic and skied and rescued people. He tried to teach her how to swim by throwing her in the pool and her mother screamed to save her. Christine was not scared as she trusted him.
- 50:00 When Christine's mother returned after the week away, she told her mother all the details of their time together. She was special to her stepfather and he helped her study at night though he had to work the next morning. He desired to adopt her but her mother would not permit her to change her name. Christine had to go to church every Sunday as was brought up Catholic during the War. After the War, she did not go to church anymore and missed it. She did not talk about it so went alone across the street to the church at age eight. It gave her a sense of feeling secure, a sense of belonging. She missed church as it was familiar. When she was ten, the children told her that she did not belong there as she was Jewish and she was crushed to be sub-human. Her stepfather told her that she was Jewish and she did not accept it. Her mother explained and she did not want to be Jewish and hid the fact that she was Jewish. She did not admit it until age 17 when she moved to Israel. Neither parent came from a religious family. When they returned to Warsaw, there were no synagogues there and they were not observant. Every Christmas she had a tree and presents until the year her parents told her that she was Jewish.
- 55:00 Christine was a demanding child. Until she got married and had her own children, she did not understand that she had to come home early or that her mother listened to her telephone conversation or read her letters. She did not understand why she lost her

privacy. Her mother was over-protective; even if Christine sneezed, she got worried. Her mother was less over-protective towards her brother. Her brother was permitted to go away to college but she was not allowed to live alone. Her mother died one and ½ years ago in a San Antonio Nursing Home. At the end, she had no short-term memory, early Alzheimer's, congestive heart failure and would relive the War. Her mother would tell her to change her plans and take a different route home as worried about her. Christine's mother had lived in New York after she was married. When Christine got married over 30 years ago, her mother would visit her in San Antonio while remaining in New York to give Christine some independence. Christine learned that her natural father died on his way to Treblinka. A cousin's sister was in the same transport so knew what happened to the entire family.

60:00 Two aunts and a cousin survived. One aunt lives in Mexico and another who had a 13 year old daughter and they were in a concentration camp was found in Paris. The father and three sons had died. Christine started writing to them and when they moved to San Antonio, Christine visited them and met her husband there. She felt suffocated from her mother's behavior. After marriage, she asked her mother about her Holocaust experiences. Her mother had never mentioned what she did for her but Christine knows that she left the Ghetto for her. Even before the War, Christine's mother knew that it was not safe for Jews.

65:00 An uncle wanted to leave Poland but the grandfather did not want to leave his wealth. He thought that he could survive on his diamonds and the children did not want to leave their parents. After September '39, Christine's mother was pregnant and decided to leave her parents and paid the Russians to cross the border. The Russians took the money and turned them over to the Gestapo. They were put in a barn and returned to Warsaw. Her family was not as important to her as a teenager as now. She felt that she lost out as did not know aunts, uncles, and grandparents. Christine's mother could not take photographs from the Ghetto. A few years ago she obtained photos from her family in Israel. She has a photo of her natural father from her San Antonio cousin. Christine took her mother from New York to Seattle. She got boxes of photos and figured out who they were and made some copies for her brother. Now she has some link to the past and wants to know more. She is sorry that did not ask more questions as her mother was the link to the past. She always thought she had time to ask more details about relatives but time has run out.

68:00

Christine Cohen

File 2 of 3

January 5, 1997

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Summary

- 00:00 **Tape 2, Side A** Christine explains that just like some children at church, some children at school also called her "Christ killer." She was unaffected as she had a circle of friends at school who never discussed the fact that she was Jewish. They were not Jewish and she was the only Jew at school as there were few Jews left in Warsaw. Christine does not remember how the teachers treated her but she was a straight A student and never had a problem. They must have thought about her being Jewish, the same as the children. She was popular and those she dated did not act anti-Semitic. Most of the children and teenagers were anti-Semitic like their parents and it hurt her. When they were older, they were more subtle in their behavior. Christine did not talk to her parents about the anti-Semitism as she knew that Poland was anti-Semitic and nothing could be done about it. She did not want to be Jewish as felt "less," as had less rights as a person. Until she left Poland in 1957, Christine wanted to be Catholic. At age 17 the family immigrated to Israel and then she felt that she could be Jewish. Since 1945, the family tried to leave Poland but her father was an electrical engineer in government projects and could not obtain permission to leave. She, her mother and her brother were able to obtain visas but would not depart without the father.
- 05:00 In 1957 they were told that Israel was the only place that they would be allowed to move to so instead of going to the US, their first choice, they went to Israel. They lived in Israel for five years and she felt the same as everyone else. Previously, she felt unworthy. When Christine left Israel, she felt deprived of her childhood and her family. Her mother was overprotective and very intense. Christine felt that her mother died because of these feelings, she did not take good care of herself and suffered from hypertension and congestive heart failure. Her mother lost her hearing in the 50s, probably due to the War. Hearing aids helped a little. Christine says she tries not to be overprotective of her children, like her mother. She feels intense and never relaxed even when having fun. It is as if she is looking at herself having fun from the outside. Christine loves dogs as she identifies with them as helpless creatures that are used as property. When things are going well, Christine is afraid something is going to happen.
- 10:00 She is a travel agent and loves traveling and dancing but is always looking at herself having fun and fearful that something bad will happen. When her husband was late to their wedding, she imagined him dead. When her children were late, she thought them dead. Christine did not work when her children were young, but now works part-time. She describes her son as a leader. When he was young, he would go off and play by himself at parties or at play groups. She would push him to play with others and her friend told her not to push him. She was always there when the children played on the street which made her children a laughing stock. Her mother loved the grandchildren and

was over-protective of them. When they were two and three years old and she did not see them, she would go into a panic. Christine's brother was married at a lake in Maine. She was walking with her 18-year-old daughter and her mother was with the brother and got upset when she could not find the sister. Christine's husband is Jewish and balances out her over-protectiveness. She does not feel a bond with events of today.

15:00 Everyone knew that the Jews were being killed in Europe and did nothing so she does not feel concerned of others which makes her feel guilty. She believes the Jews were betrayed and makes her feel bitter. She keeps a photo in her bedroom of her family who perished and feels they were taken away. Christine feels that her grief is worse than others. As a teenager, she did not have these feelings of her family. Since she was married, her closest friend was a German neighbor, Brunhilde, who is married to an American GI and came here in 1963. They met in '64 when Brunhilde's baby was just a few months old and Christine had no children. They were both trying to learn English. The fact that her friend was German did not bother her but they did not discuss the War. She saw a photo of her friend's father in an SS uniform and knew her mother and sister. Christine's children called the mother, "grandma." Brunhilde said her father was mean and she was happy when he died. She recalled that at dinner if a child asked for the salt, they were slapped, as he treated the family like the SS so she hated him. The mother was a housewife but now she is wealthy with property and a restaurant.

20:00 Her husband probably abused her. Now Christine wonders if the wealth is from the Jews. She is still close to her friend and the friend's mother but recently feels this barrier. Her friend was divorced and Christine does not like the man she remarried so sees her less often. She loves her friend's daughters. Her mother loved her friend who would visit her when she was in the nursing home. After Christine's mother died, her brother who is a poet wrote about the Holocaust for the unveiling. Her German friend cried as she never understood about the Holocaust before. Christine still feels strong toward her friend. When Christine's children were 11 and 13, they went to Germany after visiting Israel. They went with Brunhilde who was visiting her mother and enjoyed the bowling alley and restaurants. Brunhilde's husband had served there with the Army and knew his way around. The people were friendly and the town was clean but Christine kept wondering if any of them was the one who killed her father. She decided not to return to Germany again.

25:00 Once she was on a cruise with her children and they visited Poland for the day and another time went for eight days as a travel agent with 22 other travel agents of Polish descent. They went to Warsaw and she visited the home where she lived after the War. She visited a rebuilt synagogue with a Jewish travel agent who understood her feelings. She saw the hospital where she was born in the former Ghetto. Then they went to Krakow, her father's home town. She loved being in Poland as it is her birthplace and she is fluent in Polish. Her visit was during the time when Poland was changing. They

toured Auschwitz and she knew it would be tough to see it though her family was in Treblinka. It was a very emotionally draining experience for her; she felt as if she had worked in the mines for 20 hours. One travel agent said it was so depressing because of the rain but, for Christina, it would have been depressing without the rain. When they got to the crematorium, the agents started joking. A non-Jewish young man from Philadelphia told the others that they were not being sensitive when viewing the ovens and they stopped joking. As they drove by an apartment, she saw graffiti on the wall with a hangman's noose which read, "Hang all the Jews" so she did not want to return.

30:00 One travel agent said the Jews died because they were political prisoners but Christie said they died only because they were Jews. She would return to Poland but if she saw someone 70 or older, she would wonder if they had killed her father or grandfather. She enjoyed returning to Israel. Christine did not want to leave Israel at the time they immigrated to the US but it was her parents' desire to do so. First they had to move to Paris to await a visa for the US. Christine was glad that her children learned about their heritage in Israel but she does not want to move back now. She felt that Israel liberated her and she did not have to change. It took her many years to become confident. Christine always felt comfortable with men as she felt attractive. People would talk about a simple topic like a movie and she did not feel confident to take part but now she talks in public. She gets migraines and uses biofeedback to calm herself. Christine used to wait for others to initiate conversation but now she starts conversations. She found France an easy place to live as everyone is equal.

35:00 Once Christine left Poland, she felt as good as or better than others but she does not have peace or enjoys the moment. **Tape 2, Side B.** Christine first asked her mother about the War after she got married. She started thinking about what her mother went through. Her mother lost her aunts, uncles and parents and she felt sorry for her. Now that her mother is gone, Christine thinks about herself. When she was young, Christine felt obligated to do what her mother wanted. If her mother wanted her to be home at 10 though her friends stayed out later, she was home at 10. A tape was made of her mother's reunion with a cousin after 44 years. Christine was protective of her mother although she was capable of taking care of herself. Christine's father died in '77 and her mother's hearing was bad but she had to cope. Christine tried to get her mother to move to San Antonio but she did not drive and did not want to depend on anyone. Her mother could be independent in New York but would have to depend on Christine to drive her around in San Antonio. Christine could not do anything to help her mother but grew more independent and could take care of herself.

40:00 Her mother could read six languages but could not hear people speak, especially in groups. Sometimes her mother felt persecuted as though people were talking about her when she could not hear them. She felt threatened when she could not hear on the phone. Christine said she got very upset when her mother was in the nursing home and relived

the War. Her mother thought the Germans were coming to get her. Since her mother died, Christine feels more intense and robbed of her family. She got close to the cousin that reunited with her mother but does not feel as close to her relatives in San Antonio who are from her father's side. Her father seems like a mythical figure as she never knew him. She was close to Leon's sister who recently was in an accident and died. Leon was real as acted as her father. She is also close to her mother's family.

- 45:00 She influenced her children to feel that family is important so they miss not having an extended family. Her son feels worse about it than her daughter. Her children were with her in the audience in Hollywood when the tape was made. Her son is with the Holocaust Museum. If she's asked, she tells people about her Holocaust experience. Christine feels she makes it more real for those who did not experience it and believes they should know about it. Her brother was born in '48, is a writer and is very sensitive and intuitive and feels the experiences that she and her parents went through as if they were his own. He never had grandparents and feels the loss. Her brother is eight years younger than her and lived with their parents in New York until he left for school. As a teenager, he asked more questions than she did. The Holocaust affected him as greatly as it did her. He wrote poems and several short stories about her family before, during and after the War.
- 50:00 As each day passes, Christine lives through the Holocaust more and more though she has a good husband, children, friends, lives in a city she likes but is never completely happy. She is afraid that something will happen or feels in pain about something that already happened. Since her mother died, Christine has nightmares that she is lost in a city and cannot find her way back to her hotel. It will be two years in March since her mother died and her husband feels that she needs grief counseling but she is trying to get better by herself. Three or four times a week she has the same nightmare. She is always in a different city with the same theme and wakes up. Sometimes Christine is afraid to fall asleep as the next nightmare might be people with guns. Her mother saved her from danger and she is now gone so who will save her now. She does not like loud noises and dark rooms.
- 55:00 Ambulance and police sirens frightened her even before her mother died. She keeps the examining room door open when in the doctor's office. Her house is all glass as she likes light. Sirens scare her worse than the dark. She thinks there was a siren warning them to go into the cellar. She did not like loud noises when the children were growing up and does not like arguments. Christine believes that she was abused when young as she was hit and now is petrified by physical violence. She admits to spanking her children a bit. Her parents never punished her but spoiled her as just gave her warnings. She tried not to do the same to her own children. It was hard to take away her children's privileges but she did so. She was never disciplined but tried to discipline her own children.

60:00 When she took piano lessons, she would skip out with her boy friend although the teacher was paid. Later her mother met the boy friend and accepted him. Christine feels she always got what she wanted. Her mother always allowed her to do anything she wanted so she did not have confidence. Christine never resolved the loss of her relatives at age two and now feels she never will. She tells herself that she lost more than most people but now she has more than most people. She works as a travel agent because she enjoys it, has friends, can travel whenever she likes, has good children but can never enjoy her riches. She believes her migraines are due to this feeling. Her mother also had migraines. When her children were little, Christine could not stand the light and her German neighbor would help her.

65:00 Now her headaches are prevented by treatment from a headache clinic. She believes she gets headaches from being tense; especially her neck is always tense. She does not like driving so suggests others drive when possible as is afraid that something will happen. She is not afraid to fly but worries about whoever is home alone. When the children were younger, she would worry about them. Now when she is away, she worries about her husband or her two dogs. Christine feels that everything is a result of what happened and she has to live with it. She is reluctant to go for counseling as cannot get her childhood or her family back. She knows that she is not coping well while others think she is fine. At a baby shower someone said if you are pregnant and tense, it will affect the baby and she feels the same for herself but others do not believe it. She hides her feelings so others won't know. She is leading a double life as she is miserable and others think that she is fine. She is afraid that others won't want to be around her if they knew how she feels. If she is upset about something specific, her friends are helpful. Others want her to be happy so she acts happy.

70:00 Sometimes she does not want to be around herself so goes on trips. She loves going alone as it shows her independence and adventurousness. She can do things and is not worried when alone. Her husband is a CPA so after January 15 does not go away so she is going alone to visit a close friend in Paris and to London. Christine feels she can be herself with this friend. Her friend is not Jewish and they spend Christmas and the Jewish holidays together either in Europe or she comes here. Her friend who is 40 years old with an 8-year-old, cheers her up. Her friend had a hard life as was married before but has a positive outlook. Her friend is like Pollyanna as sees every situation has something wonderful and every person has a redeeming quality. She is very devoted to her friends and family. Christine is drawn to people like that as would like to be like her.

74:00

Christine Cohen

File 3 of 3

January 5, 1997

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Summary

- 00:00 **Tape 2, Side A** Christine reviews her explanation of her videotape regarding the affect of war movies on her. She tries to read or see movies about the War as feels compelled to do so and relates them to hers own experiences. If she sees someone in a concentration camp, she feels it could be her family. Such stories and movies make her feel bad. She is drawn to them and her husband tells her not to watch as they upset her. Christine believes that if she learns more, she will be healed. She talks to her cousin in San Antonio who is also a survivor but finds it difficult to talk to her about the War as her cousin lives in the past. Christine tries to live in the present and the future. Her cousin acts like she was the only one with such experiences. There is an annual ceremony at the time of Yom Shoah in San Antonio where about 25 survivors light candles. They are mostly of her mother's generation so she does not know them well. She is not observant but is traditional. Her husband was brought up orthodox and when they joined the reform synagogue, Christine fit in but her husband did not like it. Her children like conservative services. Her son was Bar Mitzvah but not her daughter.
- 05:00 Now they belong to an orthodox synagogue but she only attends the High Holidays for the sake of her husband as symbols are meaningless tor her as she did not grow up with it. It is very important to her son but not to her daughter. Her son only attends synagogue once or twice a year but demonstrates his feeling toward Judaism as a counselor at Camp Young Judea and in other ways. She is somewhat observant for the children and for her husband as he was brought up orthodox and it is expected of him. Judaism means everything to her but symbols do not bring back her family so are meaningless to her. Christine wants her children to have the opportunity to have symbols despite her own bitterness so she lights the candles for them. She believes it is ridiculous that the women sit separately from the men in the orthodox synagogue. Her husband wants her to feel something in the synagogue but she does not although she likes the Rabbi. He is flexible and they can talk. Even reform Jews belong because they like the Rabbi. Sometimes she wishes that she was not born Jewish so she would not have had to go through such experiences. When she goes to a wedding in a church, she finds the symbols more meaningful to her.
- 10:00 One synagogue had an organ so her husband would not belong as felt it was like a church but to her the organ made her feel more comfortable.