United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Jutta Levy
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Esther Finder, Volunteer Interviewer
Summarized by Rachel Benjamin

Tape 1 Side A

She was born Lieselotte Jutta Salzburg on September 28, 1926 in Hamburg, Germany. Her parents came from Pabianice, Poland. Her father had left Poland to evade the Russian/Polish army. He came to Hamburg to establish a business and make a living. In 1924, he married her mother in Danzig, which at the time was a free port and did not belong to any country. They settled Hamburg, Germany.

Growing up, she had a pleasant life. Her father was a fairly successful businessman. Her parents had household help and her father had office help. It was a comfortable middle to upper-middle class life. Her mother was very cultured and did not work. Her mother had studied music in her youth and played piano beautifully, filling the house with music. Her parents loved going out, including to opera and concerts. They had many friends. Her father played cards and her mother enjoyed cooking. Her mother took a nap every afternoon, so she and her sister had to be quiet if they were home then. Her mother's maiden name was Rose Kleinherdt. Her father was named Isaac Salzberg. She has a younger sister, Ruth Horowitz.

As children, she and her sister went to the theater, the circus, and concerts. She had many friends in the Bar Kochba gymnastic club and went to birthday parties. She went to Poland every summer with her mother and sister. Her father could not go. She had grandparents and a large family. Her grandfather would rent a place in the country. In the summers, she also went to camp in Germany.

Her father was in the drygoods business and was also a manufacturer's representative. He sold suspenders, garters, children's clothing, and other drygoods. In Poland, her relatives included her mother's parents, Sacca and Marcus Kleinherdt. Her grandfather was a dentist who ran his practice out of his large home. Her father's father had died early, but her Grandmother Salzberg was still alive. She loved going to her paternal grandmother's house. This grandmother was more religious than her mother's parents. Her father's widowed sister lived there with her daughter. She especially loved going to her paternal grandmother's house on Shabbat. The house would smell of fresh challah and chicken soup. Her Aunt Henya was the funniest person she had ever met.

In her home, she spoke German. She also spoke German with her Polish relatives. Her parents' secret language was Polish. Her father's mother spoke Yiddish, which she did not always understand. Her aunt translated. She could pick out some Polish.

She did not think much of differences between Polish and German life. She liked the city of Pabianice, Poland, which was smaller than Hamburg. Her father's mother lived a simpler life in a different section of Pabianice. When she was very young, her Grandmother Salzberg had facilities on the outside, but she always visited in the summer so it was bearable. Her father could not come to Poland because he had left Poland to avoid serving in the army. He was rendered stateless by the German government because he was Jewish. He never became a German citizen.

Growing up, her family observed all Jewish holidays, including Shabbat. She would later raise her own children in the same way. Her family had a traditional Shabbat with prayers, wine, challah, and candles, but did not follow all of the traditional rules. Her mother was raised in the same manner. Her father was raised more religiously. The Hamburg Jewish community was

very large, which she did not realize until she visited Hamburg after the war. There were synagogues and much Jewish activity.

Before the Nazis, the Jews and non-Jews got along well. Some of her early good friends were non-Jewish. Her father was in a mostly non-Jewish card game. He was the ultimate businessman and he associated with people he liked and did business with. She experienced anti-Semitism soon after Nazis came, but was not aware of any before.

She started out in public school in 1931-32 when she was 5 1/2 years old. She learned and had fun. This did not last long because the Nazis came in 1933. She first became very aware of their presence in public school. She went to school one day and was called out of class into the school office, where she had a conversation with a "nice" lady. She was questioned about her whole family, who her parents associated with, who their and her friends were, where they were, and what they did as far back as she could remember. Her maternal grandmother's father was still living. She dug back in her mind as far as she could remember. When she got home, she told parents, who became furious and put her in a private school for Jewish girls. She was not welcome in public schools anymore. The German term for the interview was "rasim into zutim," meaning "race research." Her father said he was angry because he felt the Germans must have had a lot of nerve to grab a young person and dig into that child's background. At the time of the interview, she was curious about why she was picked. She knew that not everyone had this experience and the other children knew she had had the interview but not all of them had had one. The experience was worse for her father than for her.

Both she and her father enjoyed listening to the radio. Hitler would come on and yell and she was unable to understand what he was saying, though she spoke German well. She spoke High German, or Heuchdeutsch, a dialect that is not around anymore. She also wrote in a different script. She could not understand why her parents and their friends were so upset about Hitler's speeches. They would ask each other what he was saying and why he was saying all these things about an Aryan race. Her father explained to her that though he said he would improve things economically, Hitler's real goal was to improve the economy at expense of-- who knew what?

Hitler's swearing in as Chancellor was on the radio and talked about in school; she was still in public school then. She thinks they talked about it because pictures went up on the wall of the school with his salute. She did not understand. She once saw him on a field trip her class took to downtown Hamburg. She saw him from a distance. She was a small child and could barely see him. She felt uncomfortable giving the salute but did not know why; it was probably because of what she had heard at home. She did not understand him then either. She had an idea from the radio and her parents. In public school, she had to give heil Hitler salute every morning, like the pledge of allegiance. She soon left public school.

When she was young, she had two really good friends, a girl named Ingaborg and a boy who lived in her building. She was a bit of a tomboy. The boy and his friends joined Hitler Youth early on, and she then became an outcast. He threw stones, cursed, and tripped her and disappeared a few years later. Ingaborg was an early female friend who did not live nearby. Their parents were also friends and their last name was Vall. The families stopped their friendship abruptly and she never saw her friend again.

She began experiencing anti-Semitism soon after Hitler came to power. She did not always know the people who made fun of her. They were mainly young people. She became nervous when she saw non-Jews because they teased her, made fun of her, and called her bad names. These young people's behaviors were accepted. She had to use public transportation to get to her private school. She felt lucky if she was not picked on, tugged on, pulled at, or tripped. She fought back and hit back. Her parents did not speak of the harassment though they all knew what was going on. The harassment was not constant, but it was not infrequent either. At first it was tolerable,

but it became intolerable while living under the regime for over six years. "You experience many things, you learn to deal with some, be angered by others, fight back a little bit if you could, and it made for a little bit of a tough life." The anti-Semitism was not what she was used to. Some of it was gradual; not everyone pounced at once. There were rest periods, but the last two years were intolerable.

She still went to Poland and did not notice anti-Semitism there, but during those visits she was isolated. She heard conversations, and her grandparents said Hitler was not friendly towards Jews. Her grandfather was a professional man, and as a dentist, people were grateful that he took care of them. He also had some education in medicine and people came to him for non-dental ailments. About 60% of his patients were not Jewish. She used to sit there and watch him work.

Right after Hitler came, she does not remember the big events, just life slowly starting to change. She mainly heard of the situation through her father, who paid attention to the politics of the day. She was not much aware of the anti-Jewish situation in general, just personal incidents. Her father was a victim of the boycotts of Jewish businesses, but took a while to have an effect. He lost customers; people at first said, "We don't need anything this trip around," when he traveled. It did not affect his livelihood until business totally stopped for the last year he was in business. As a manufacturer's representative, he had to leave the company, but the company did write him a reference.

She saw some of the book burning. Most of it was done at synagogues, including her family's. At first, as a young child, no matter how much it is explained, you do not understand it-- why burn books? Her parents explained that the regime believed in burning books that taught humanitarian things which did not match regime's beliefs, but still, as a ten year old it was hard to understand. She once saw a small book burning from the balcony of her home. A lot of frenzied Nazis got books from somewhere. These young Hitler Youth Nazis lit up books and went nuts, something like a rock concert.

Tape 1 Side B

She remembers when President Hindenburg died and the great amount of publicity surrounding his death. She thinks there was a certain amount of sadness in Germany, but she is not sure.

Anti-Semitic posters were numerous and storefronts were marked Jude from early on. Even before Hitler, a certain type of person was predisposed to be anti-Semitic and engage in the desecration of synagogues and name-calling. These activities did not all begin with Hitler, but intensified when he came to power. Posters of Hitler doing the salute, pictures of SS, and posters extolling *Mein Kampf* were up and around the minute he was sworn in throughout the city and in public school, theaters, and restaurants. She saw some anti-Semitic posters and vividly remembers her father showing her a newspaper called *Der Spiegal* (The Mirror) which depicted Jewish people with hooked, pock-marked noses in paper and in posters.

As a child, she did not know what the impact of the Nuremberg laws would be, but she became aware quickly. Converts were still considered Jewish and not clean. Jews were blamed for all bad things, and since they were not of pure Aryan race, they needed to be exterminated. In 1933, she was aware of the early concentration camp Dachau because her father told her about it, but the media was not as perceptive as it is now. They thought it was a prison camp and did not understand it or know the horrors that went on. She thinks her family would have tried to leave Germany earlier if they had been aware.

She remembers the Anschluss as something that was going on where the Germans marched defiantly into Austria. Her family saw it like everything else; they felt apprehension, but thought it was just one thing and that it would pass. The media saw it as a wonderful victory. She heard that Germans felt Austria was one with Germany. Her mother and her mother's brother had had some education in Austria and they saw Austria as a land of culture. Her mother was sad that Austria would not be as she had known it. The impact was smaller for her because of her youth.

The Jewish community in Hamburg was going on as normally as possible, with many people making plans to leave, others denying or saying this will pass, people starting to talk about leaving, and some leaving as early as 1934. Her father's younger brother left in 1936. People were afraid, but it is a tremendous undertaking to pick up a family and life to leave, especially when there are children. Her aunt and uncle had no children. At that time, people left countries for political reasons and moving was not easy. Her father began to think about leaving as time went on.

She heard only a few things about the Evian Conference. Her school did not go into detail. Her personal reaction was fear, which she picked up from others, especially her father, not just from the conference but from everyday life. Just going out was frightening. She had to sneak to school on Sunday because Germany had six school days a week including Saturday, but Jewish school was not open on Shabbat. She carried a dress bag instead of a book bag and snuck to school. There was no recess on Sunday. She never knew how she would be tormented on the way to school. The SS would come to school and take children out. She lived in fear because she knew there were people out there out there who could hurt her.

In 1936, her father was offered a chance to leave because he had a brother in America, but at the time he thought the danger would pass. Around then, her uncle in America said her father should come by himself and send for the family later, but her father did not want to leave his family. When the first offer came, her mother did not want to leave her grandmother in Poland, and people in general were in a state of disbelief. Her uncle left in 1936 or 1937, and her father realized he had made a mistake. He had no livelihood, the Gestapo started bothering them, people they knew were disappearing, and children were being taken from school, at first quietly and then not so nicely. She lived in nice apartment and heard midnight knocks on doors and screams as people were taken away. She heard from her father and her friends of people disappearing and being sent to "no man's land" in wintertime on a train. They were chased off the train into no man's land and shot if they tried to come home or pleaded. Others froze to death, and some got away. She was a pre-teen now and was beginning to understand the situation. Her father had no job and no income. He had been released from representation and his own business became non-existent. There was constant harassment by the Gestapo, threats, people disappearing for good, and others making plans to leave. Germany was in a state of frenzy to get rid of Jews. Before her uncle Max Salzberg and his wife Alice left, her family already knew they had to leave. That was when her father was given a chance to come alone, but he refused to split up the family. She never knew her father's financial situation; he was neither rich nor poor and he may have done some business and dissolving and getting rid of stock. He had almost no income 2 years before they left, but he maintained the apartment and help. He was cut from the company in 1936 or 1937. Before he was let go, people stopped buying from him, so he did not earn commissions.

Her father got an affidavit from her uncle Isaac Gotthelf in Patterson, New Jersey. He needed permission to leave Germany. All of her family except her mother, who had a Polish passport, was stateless. They put plans into motion to leave. This involved a lot of work and persistence, bribing Germans, lying, and pulling all possible tricks. Her uncle's affidavit came and permission from Germany came, but the family did not have US visas and the Americans did not want to give them any. Her family had booked passage for March of 1939, changed to the Aquitania for

December of 1938, and then booked November 1938 lacking proper papers. She went with her mother and sister on a harrowing journey to Poland to say goodbye in October 1938. When they came home, her father said they were definitely leaving within two weeks of their return from Poland. Her mother said she was not ready but her father said they had to get out. The Saturday before they left, they still did not have visas. Her father had pleaded, but could not bribe the Americans. He went every day, but was told there were quotas and he could not go to America. One day, he took his family with him. He was told no one could see him, but he said some one would have to see him. A man finally let them in. Her family was told that the papers were not ready and could not get visas. They were on the fifth or sixth floor, and her father eventually said, "I'll tell you something-- with what's going on, we are leaving and if we are not leaving Germany, we are going out that window." He pulled his family to the window, for he knew their time in Germany was over. So far, her family had not been threatened but neighbors, friends, and classmates were. The man, Mr. Davis, knew father was not bluffing and gave him the visas.

The family left a few days later and got to Cologne. They left the apartment full of furniture. Her mother had sent some things away in anticipation of departure. They left their housekeeper Frau Kleug with the bedding, furniture, and her parakeet. The morning after they left, her father called Frau Kleug and his face drained of color. The family had left on a train at midnight, and 6am the following morning the Gestapo had come to take the family away. They had been furious at Frau Kleug because the family had left. They trashed apartment and bayoneted the parakeet. Frau Kleug was a non-Jewish housekeeper with nowhere to go, so the family had left her with the apartment, but Gestapo did not believe her and beat her. The family was very grateful to be where they were, but they were still in Germany.

She took with her only a doll, her autograph book, her diary, some pictures, and whatever her mother had packed. The autograph book and the diary were the most important to her. The next step in their journey was a train ride to Paris. When they came to the border in Aachen, the Germans took her father off the train and checked his papers. Many others on the train were escaping, some with no luggage. They did not dare move for fear of the Nazis outside with bayonets. Outside with the Nazis, her father was talking and very animated. While her father was still talking to the Germans, the train began to move. Her father finished talking and then ran and jumped onto the end of the train. Her father was 40 years old and had high blood pressure. The Germans had said he had too much money and he told them to take it, but they said they were honest and would not take money. Her father then said he would send the money to his housekeeper in Hamburg. At first, the Germans said no, but they finally agreed. The amount of money was in fact not all the much. When the train crossed the German border and entered Holland, the passengers opened up. The family had left Hamburg November 6 going to 7 in 1938 on one of the last legal trains out.

Tape 2 Side A

September 15, 1998 continuation of September 8 interview

Her last trip to Poland was taken at the insistence of her mother, who wanted to say a last goodbye to her relatives. To get to Poland from Hamburg, they had to take a train across "free" no man's land and across borders. At each border stop, officials boarded the train. In late 1938 it was the Nazis who came on board and searched and questioned everyone on the train. A bit over twelve years old, she did not know what a strip search was. A matronly German woman strip-searched female passengers. For the young Jewish girl, the strip-search by the angry German official was unpleasant and impersonal. This is one of the most unpleasant experiences she has

ever had. The Nazis let her and her mother and sister go but made it unpleasant, difficult, and frightening. On the way to Poland, she was already dreading the trip back home. On the return trip, the officials were thorough about checking people and luggage but did not repeat the strip search. Her family was lucky not knowing what atrocities had already been committed. In Hamburg, people were disappearing, especially the eastern European Jews. Mr. and Mrs. Max Steiner disappeared, and she learned later that they had been rounded up and put on a train to no man's land with hundreds of other people. It was the dead of winter, and when they reached no man's land they were just chased off the train. Those who did not move quickly enough were shot. In the end, some escaped, others froze, and others were shot. Her family could have been sent off the train on the way to Poland. It was heart-wrenching being with relatives in Poland, but not due to fear for the future. Her maternal grandfather was an intelligent and far-sighted man but he did not foresee the future tragedies in Poland. He lived in a different world from Germany and felt it would pass, though he did understand that her family had to leave due to the lack of a living, extreme anti-Semitism, and violence. The experience was the most heart-wrenching for her mother. She loved her grandparents and was very sad to leave them. She was also sad that her father could never go back to see his mother, and realized her relatives would probably never see him again. The trip was short and very sad. In Poland, she did not notice anti-Semitism, but while there she was not exposed to non-Jews very much. Her maternal grandmother had help in the house and her grandfather's practice was still doing well. Anti-Semitism was likely always there but she did not feel it much because she was a visitor. Her cousins asked her about life in Germany, particularly about school. They also talked about what was happening to her friends in Germany, a lot of whom had emigrated or had been taken away, without anyone knowing their fate. Her cousins thought this would never happen to them.

When she, her mother, and her sister were out of Nazi territory, there was an unbelievable feeling. They realized that they could speak without fear. Life in Germany had become full of fear. When she was young, fear gave her a nervous stomach that still bothers her. Her father developed hypertension and eventually died from it, but she now has hypertension too so that could be mainly genetic. She still fears uniforms. When her father had a business in Washington, D.C. he made friends with the police, but he froze whenever he saw a uniform, be it for the army, the navy, or the police. She too momentarily froze even though she had friends in the service. She had some nightmares before they left. She used to hear footsteps at night from unknown boots on the marble floor hear followed by loud conversations. When she was awakened, she had trouble falling back asleep. It was a fearful time in her life where she did not know everything, but did know enough to be afraid.

The train out of Germany went by way of Aachen, after which the train entered Belgium. The train stopped again and this time Belgian uniformed officials boarded the train, speaking French. They were official and to the point. She afraid though there was nothing to fear. Many of the other passengers were also escaping Germany. Some of them had no luggage. Once they crossed the German boarder, they could talk without fear of arrest. People shared how they had smuggled various items out of Germany. One woman had buttons the size of half-dollars, in which she hid diamonds. The people were finally free to talk about hating the Nazis. She remains impressed to this day, and never takes for granted freedom of speech. The rest of the trip was relatively uneventful. They stayed in Paris, where her mother had a brother, while waiting for the boat to America. While in Paris, a young Jewish man named Greenspan killed an attaché from the German embassy in Paris. This led to a huge upheaval in Germany, which resulted in Kristallnacht. Mini-Kristallnachts took place in Germany throughout that year, especially in fall and early winter. In Germany, they had heard glass storefronts broken and heard of and saw book burnings. It was a miracle that they escaped from Germany when they did because Kristallnacht was a culmination, and getting out legally became impossible after that night. Hitler was done with the German Jews. He soon moved into Poland.

Her father was appalled by the news in Paris. He had a strong influence on her. He, her uncle, and other relatives talked about the incident with regret that it had happened because it had placed so many lives in jeopardy and some relief that they were out. If they had not left exactly when they did, they would not have escaped. That the man had chosen that day and that week to shoot the German was very fortunate for her family. She had been sad to leave her friends and life in Germany, but after what was going on was explained to her and the papers and radios full of news of the situation, she was happy to be out. She did not know what would happen in her new life, but the Nazis were the greater fear. She was only a little over twelve years old at the time, so her reactions came through her parents and other relatives. Her father had a cousin living outside of Paris, an artist named Sam (Zamush) Gotthelft. He had son, Guy, who was fifteen or sixteen years old and very good looking. She developed a crush on him. He wrote a beautiful poem in her autograph book and drew a pretty picture of a forlorn seashore because she was leaving. She found out many years later that Guy had ended up joining the French Resistance and was shot, as was his father. She was very saddened, for he was her first real crush.

They left for Cherbourg from Paris late at night. Her family got on a tender. Everything was dark, and suddenly, a huge monster appeared in the water. It was Queen Mary, a huge ship. She was scared to death. In mid-November, when the seas are rough, she started the voyage. A couple from Germany had escaped as her family had. They had very young children and were going to an unknown situation. She made no lasting friendships, only acquaintances, on the ship. She later found out that a schoolmate of hers who had boarded at Southampton was on the same ship, though they never ran across each other.

Arriving in America was incredible. She got on the deck around 7am as the ship was coming into New York City. It was misty, cold, and grey as she had expected it to be, for her life felt grey and sad. The Statue of Liberty was pointed out. She had heard about it but did not know its significance, but soon she learned from hearing people talking about its meaning. People were speaking in German, and it was an incredible moment. Upon getting off the ship, her father got on his hands and knees and kissed the concrete. She next saw a stevedore who was black. She had only seen one black person before, a diplomat in robes. At first, she did not see her relatives, whom she had never met. Her father pointed out his two brothers, one who was the one who had left a few years before them and one who had been in America for a long time. Her family went to the home of the uncle who had signed affidavit. She was then separated from her parents, which was very traumatic.

At first, she had a great deal of difficulty adjusting to life in America. Getting used to a new country and a new language were hard enough. In addition, her parents and sister moved to Detroit Michigan where her father's two brothers were, while she was sent to stay with her great aunt and uncle in Washington, D.C. These were her paternal grandmother's sister and her husband. She had never seen or heard of them much before. These relatives took her in because there was not enough room in Detroit and as the oldest daughter, she was picked to be separated from her family. After two days and one night in America, she parted with her parents and sister. The experience was traumatic for her. She came to DC on a train. Her great aunt and uncle spoke Yiddish, but she spoke only German so they could not understand each other. They were well off and had a beautiful home and a chauffeur. She felt sorry for herself because she was lonely and felt abandoned. Her aunt and uncle, the Ulmans, were very good to her, but she remained unhappy anyway.

Tape 2 Side B

She was separated from her parents for about 9 months. She was comfortable and treated well. Her relatives sent her to an Americanization school and bought her some American clothes. Mr. Ulman's relatives were not very nice to her, though she did not notice it at the time. She was sent to the Americanization school downtown at 13th Street and New York Avenue. She was the only child there, and she hated the school so she did not learn much. She cried herself to sleep and woke up crying. The Ulmans tried hard to please her and thought she was happy. She was not given any chores and Mr. Ulman took her to his business. She was not put into school. When her father called, she cried. A few months later, her father visited and promised to take her back to the family as soon as he was established somewhere, hopefully other than Detroit. Her father liked D.C., but he did not know how he could make a living there. Her father returned to Detroit and about nine months later, her father, mother, and sister moved to New York City. When she found out, she wanted to join them. Her father came and got her. She left a beautiful home on Davenport Street NW for a walk-up apartment on 91st Street and Amsterdam Avenue with bedbugs, rats, and mice, but she was happy because she was with her family. Her father started to look for work, and soon he was selling hair ribbons and stockings. If he would make two dollars, he would spend it to get more items to sell. Her family did not have much money. Her mother made hair ribbons and she and her sister helped. Her father kept looking for a more stable job. After a few months, he got a position representing a company that sold the same items he had sold in Germany. He was a representative for the Maryland-Washington-Virginia-Pennsylvania area. He liked New York, but he loved Washington and considered moving. He thought Washington was cleaner and more beautiful, much like Hamburg. Within a year, the family moved to Washington, D.C.

She had started public school in New York and was put in the sixth grade, which she failed because she did not speak English. May Corbid, a young black girl, was the only girl in her class who helped her. They communicated via sign language. She learned English by listening to radio and going to movies a lot; she had liked the theater since she lived in Germany. She lost some schooling by not going while living with her relatives and flunking in New York. She first arrived in America on November 17, 1938 and lived in Washington from November 19 until the summer of 1939.

While in Washington, she received some mail, maybe a postcard, from her family in Poland, particularly her father's mother and her grandfather. She was in Washington when she heard of the German invasion of Poland. The news was devastating to her parents. After the invasion, they knew nothing more of Europe or their family in Poland. Friends in America were being drafted or were enlisting, and she heard of some of them being killed. Her parents tried hard to get in touch with their families in Poland, but they never heard from them. She remembers conversations about things in Poland being very difficult, but she did not know nearly all of what went on. All the adults knew was that whatever was happening was not good. Her father was a newshound who listened to radio a great deal. She and her sister were not allowed to talk while he listened. They wanted to know what was happening in Europe, particularly in Poland, but not much came out. Her father became agitated every time Hitler entered a country, but he was also busy making a living. Her mother worked too and she went to work at the age of fourteen.

Pearl Harbor happened on a Sunday while she was taking a bath. At the time, her family was in a two-bedroom apartment. While taking her bath at 2 o'clock, she heard her father yelling that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. She got out of the bath and asked her father what was happening. He explained that Pearl Harbor was in Hawaii and that America would now be at war with Japan. Her father felt that once war was declared on the Japanese, war would soon be declared on the Germans. Her family wanted America to enter the war to stop the atrocities. She was aware of the Blitzkrieg, but she did not know about the camps or how her own family was involved, though she did know that evil things were going on all over Europe. She was aware of

the news. People like her father felt it was time that America took a stand and got involved to save Europe.

In America, she did not experience any anti-Semitism comparable to what she experienced in Germany. She was aware of anti-refugee and anti-foreigner sentiments. She had guttural German accent for several years, which was far from popular. She got into fights and some children made fun of her, including some of her current friends. She was a tomboy who got into fights. Sometimes she beat others up and sometimes they beat her up. Her father was likeable, honest, and straightforward and worked hard to make a living. Her mother also worked hard and knew that she had to learn English in order to belong. She herself picked up the language quickly, and when she did, she spoke without an accent and stopped experiencing a lot of the teasing.

She knew about some of what was happening in Germany, but knew no specifics about Poland. Her father was very concerned and knew evil things were going on. Her family did not know the extent of the damage to their relatives in Poland. One day, her family got a telephone call from Sweden. It was from her mother's sister Flora Kerner. She said she and her daughter Rita had survived but everyone else in the family was dead. Her father was on the telephone and he fell to his knees, completely drained. The conversation was short, but her father got an almost full picture of the information her family had heard of or read about. As far as her family was concerned, their worst nightmare had come true. Her family got a telephone call soon after the British liberated her cousin and aunt from Bergen-Belsen. To prepare to go to Sweden, her cousin and aunt were put in a displaced person's camp, from where they made their first telephone call. The British were generous about telephone calls, but her aunt had typhus and it took a few days before she was able to make a call. Thousands of people were trying to reach their families. Her Aunt said she would call again from Sweden. Before the call, her family, especially her father, had heard a lot about concentration camps, crematoriums, and the murdering of Jews towards the end of the war. Soldiers were beginning to return. Her family learned about Dachau early on, but by hearing about the atrocities from the media and from wounded soldiers, her family could only imagine what had happened to their own relatives. They hoped their families were not as touched as the others. They knew bad things had happened, but they still hoped to get some good news that some if not all of their relatives had survived. Hearing that their relatives had survived was horrible. Her parents were devastated. She was almost an adult and felt awful. Her family did not know how each of their relatives had died until her aunt and cousin came to America from Sweden. Her father helped bring them over in 1946. The Saturday after they called him from Sweden, a week after their first call, she and her father went to the Red Cross and wired off fifty dollars to her aunt and cousin, which was a lot of money to her family. Her aunt and cousin were sponsored by her great-aunt Ulman, who signed the affidavit. Her father paid for their passage and set up an apartment for them. Her parents worked hard to bring her aunt and cousin to America. They acted as fast as possible and did all they could. Her father loved America and its opportunities, and wanted to bring his family here.

She lived in the same apartment unit on Peabody Street as her aunt and cousin. She and her cousin were close in age, and one day, while sitting behind the apartment building, she asked her cousin what she had experienced. Her cousin spoke for over two hours in graphic detail of all that had gone on, from the ghetto to the concentration camp. This was the first big story she had heard. She was absolutely horrified and had nightmares afterwards. Her cousin told her how grandparents, fathers, families, everyone died-- in ghettos, in internment, through disappearance, and in gas chambers. Hearing about her cousin's suffering was one of her worst experiences. This was the first time she and her cousin had really talked her cousin's experiences. They did not revisit the subject together for years. Her cousin was named Rita Devine Hilton. Her aunt was Flora Kleinherdt Kerner. She married Mr. Adin and they lived in New York. Her aunt was

dentist, a skill that probably kept her alive during the war. She tended to patients with horrible mouth diseases caused by malnutrition, and the Germans wanted to show the Red Cross that they were doing all they could. Rita's testimony at is also at the Holocaust Museum, as well as Shoah {Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation}.

Tape 3 Side A

The American media graphically presented the news of the death camps on newsreels. There was a certain amount of disbelief as Americans tried to come to terms with how the atrocities could have happened under their noses. Her family never became used to seeing those pictures in the newsreels. They wondered how the American government could have been unaware of what was going on, and if they did know, why did America not do more about it? There was a certain amount of anger among people like her family. They could never even have dreamed of the atrocities they heard about and saw in the newsreels. There was a sense of anger, sadness, and disbelief. She did not talk for the two hours her cousin took to tell her story. She was completely in shock and wondered how the world could have just stood by. This response was shared mainly by other Jews, but many of the people her family associated with felt the same "How could this have happened?"

She followed the Nuremberg trials and was horrified by what had happened. Sometimes, she had trouble even listening to and watching them because they were so horrific. She felt there was no punishment suitable for the Nazi criminals. She spoke about the trials with people similar to her, but did not discuss them much with average Americans. The trials were not a big conversation topic in college, for people did not want to think of those things. She wanted to be accepted socially. Sometimes, she would discuss the trials for five to ten minutes, but not more. She was aware of the partition of Palestine and Israeli independence. She and her cousin Rita went to the Israeli embassy when independence declared and were part of a huge group picture. She was thrilled that Israel had gained its independence and felt that Jews finally had a homeland. There was a lot of apathy among the general public, including among Jews. The impact of the war itself had not sunk in for most people. True Zionists, such as her father, were thrilled, but many people simply wanted to get on with their lives. The full impact did not hit until much later, as recently as fifteen to twenty years ago, when the survivors started speaking. She started talking about her own experiences while her children were going to Blair High School. The teacher of her daughter asked if anyone had parents who had survived the Hitler regime. Her daughter Sharon, now forty-four years old, raised her hand. The teacher asked about her family's experiences. Sharon said that her mother was from Hamburg, lived under Hitler for six years, and escaped to America. The teacher called her and asked her to speak. That year, she spoke to all of the teacher's classes. She did the same for her younger daughter four years later. Most survivors did not speak for a long time.

She started working when she was fourteen, mainly for her father's business. She worked hard with both of her parents. Her father became sick, so she ended up running the business. She continued to run the business after she was married in 1952. Her father never could get proper life insurance because of his hypertension. Despite good medical care, he died at the age of 55. Before his death, he saw his two daughters get married and get a college education at George Washington University. He had lived beyond his means, but the family was able to rebound after his death. Her husband worked for the government, while she worked in a variety of fields, including jewelry and travel. They had a nice, pleasant life even while her parents were still alive. Her family was always struggling a bit, but looking back, she feels that life has been pretty good. She considers herself a "Yankee Doodle American." She often thinks about her life in

Germany and feels very fortunate. She is a member of Holocaust Survivors and Friends and speaks through that group. She is also involved in the United States Holocaust Museum and she gives talks, though she is not a volunteer there.

She returned to Germany to see Hamburg again. She would not have gone on her own, but she was invited and all expenses for the trip were paid for by city of Hamburg. She went as a guest with her husband. She went back to her apartment. She remembered exactly where everything was. She saw her private school and went in buildings, the apartment, and the back yard. Downtown, she saw the remains of her synagogue. The granite facade, which did not burn, was still standing and the Hebrew lettering was still there. Downtown Hamburg had been completely bombed and rebuilt, but the area she had lived in had not been bombed. Hamburg was a prosperous city. On the trip, she saw special places and went to Bergen-Belsen. It was like a cemetery for her because she thinks people she knew died there. It was sanitized, like memorial. Germans go there; it is two hours from Hamburg. There are few Jews left in Hamburg. Her impression from the trip was sadness. She cried when the plane took off to leave and in the back yard of her school. She was born and raised in Hamburg, and she felt her childhood had been taken away. She really felt the impact when she left and was sitting next to her husband on the plane. What she suffered was a small price to pay compared with what others had lost; she did not starve and she was not taken to a concentration camp. She was poor when she came to New York. She wondered what might have been in terms of education; many things had been taken away. She was sad when she left Hamburg on the plane, but for the most part while she was visiting she was too busy to be sad. She has reflected upon her experiences a lot since she visited Hamburg. She feels cheated and feels that her experiences still affect her life.

She thinks her suffering cannot compare with that of many survivors and those who were killed. If she could say anything, she would say, "Don't take anything for granted, don't take your freedom for granted. Don't take *anything* for granted because it can change. Be grateful for what you have here, whoever's listening to this. This is the greatest country on earth, not perfect; there is nothing perfect. This is not a perfect world, but here you have as close to perfection as it's gonna get. It's not gonna get any better. So don't take it for granted, love your country, vote, support it, work for it, and keep it free, keep it free."

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