

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Jutta Levy September 8, 1997 RG-50.106*0077

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

PREFACE

The following interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

JUTTA LEVY
September 8, 1997

(file 1 – RG-50.106.0077.01.03 – duration: 01:14:24)

Esther Finder: This is an interview for the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. We are interviewing Jutta Levy. My name is Esther Finder. Today is September 8, 1997. This is tape 1, side A. Tell me what is your name.

Jutta Levy: Jutta Levy.

Q: What was your name at birth?

A: **Lezalatta Jutta Letta Salzberg.**

Q: When were you born?

A: September 28, 1926.

Q: And where were you born?

A: Hamburg, Hamburg Germany.

Q: Is that where you grew up?

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

2

A: Yes, I grew up there, yes.

Q: Did your family have a long history in Germany?

A: No, none at all.

Q: Tell me a little bit about where your family came from originally?

A: My mother and father were both born In **Pabianice**, Poland. My father left Germany, no I'm sorry. He left Poland at a very young age to evade the Russian slash Polish army, service in the army. And he came to Hamburg. To establish business and make a living. And several years later he had, he already knew my mother. They married in Danzig which was then free. It didn't, it was didn't belong to any country. It was a not a free port, I would say but the equivalent of that so they were able to marry there. And then settle in Hamburg, Germany. Married in 1924.

Q: What was it like for you growing up in Hamburg? What was the Hamburg of your youth?

A: We had a very pleasant life. My father was a business man. He had established himself early on. He was relatively successful. My mother and father both employed household help. As well as my father had office help. We lived comfortable, middle class, maybe a little upper middle class life. My mother obviously didn't work. She was a very cultured lady who had studied

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

3

music in her youth. She played the piano beautifully and to say that she filled my life, our life, our home with beautiful music. She, and my father loved going out. They loved the opera, they loved concerts. They had many friends and father played cards and my mother had as I said before household help. She did enjoy cooking but she also every afternoon took her nap. And we had to be very quiet if we were home.

Q: Can you tell me your parents' names?

A: Yes. My mother was Rose. Her maiden name was **Kleinert**. My father's name was Isaac. **Salzberg**.

Q: Have any brothers or sisters?

A: I have a sister, Ruth. Horowitz.

Q: Who's older?

A: I am.

Q: What kinds of things did the two of you do when you were children for fun?

A: We went to the theater, we went to the circus. We went to concerts. Being the older one and being in a slightly at that, for that time anyway age group, I had a lot of friends. I was in a

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

4

gymnastic club called Bar **Kochba**. I went to parties, birthday parties and I had a lot of fun. Every summer, we went to Poland. My mother and sister and I. My father could not go. And we'll probably get into that. So I had actually two sets of friends. I had my grandparents and a large family in **Pabianice**. And my grandfather at times would rent a place in the country. This was in Poland. And oh I also went to camp in Germany as a younger person. So yes it was a very nice childhood up to a point.

Q: Let me ask you a few things about what you've already just told me. You said your father was a business man, but you didn't tell me what kind of business.

A: He was in the what we would call here dry goods. He was also a manufacturer's representative. He sold suspenders and garters for openers. He also sold children's clothing. Many things that are considered here dry goods. I would have to list too many things. And he was a manufacturer's representative.

Q: And you mentioned that you would go and have summers in Poland with relatives. Can you give me the names of the relatives.

A: Ok we would say with my mother's parents, **Sacka** and Marcus **Kleinert**. Those are my maternal grandparents. He was a dentist, my grandfather and they had a large home and where he also had his practice. Then I had my paternal grandparents although my paternal grandfather died early on. But my grandmother **Salzberg** lived and I loved going to her house, more religious than my maternal grandparents. And I don't want to get ahead of anything. And with her lived

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

5

with my paternal grandmother lived my father's sister who was widowed early on and her daughter. And I loved going there, especially on **Shabbat**. Because her house was smelled of fresh **challah** and chicken soup and my aunt **Henya**, my father's sister was the funniest person that I have ever met. And made me laugh a whole lot.

Q: What languages were spoken in your home?

A: German. And my parents if they didn't want us to understand, Polish. Although the primary language, even for my father was German.

Q: When you went to visit relatives in Poland what did you speak?

A: I spoke German and they spoke German back to me. My grandmother, paternal grandmother spoke Yiddish which if I understood it was all right and if I didn't understand it my aunt, her daughter would explain but it was primarily German. I understood some Polish although because they, if they spoke Polish there were things I could pick up and out, but I did not speak the language.

Q: During your childhood, did you ever reflect about how the life of the family was different in Poland than it was in Germany?

A: I really don't think so because my maternal grandparents were very comfortable. I liked the city of **Pavlenitsa**. I really did. It was smaller, but then Hamburg wasn't what it is today either.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

6

No, I have to say no that I didn't reflect. It was, it was different. My grandmother my paternal grandmother lived a simpler life. In a different section of **Pabianice**, but it was still it was nice. It was nice. I should say though that my grandmother **Salzberg** I do remember when I was very, very young we used to have facilities on the outside. I did not have that at my other grandparents' house. But that changed relatively early on. But I do remember that. But then again we always went in the summer so that was not a terrible hardship.

Q: You mentioned that you went with your mother and your sister but your father couldn't come on those trips to Poland. Can you explain?

A: Very simply he had left, I don't know if it was surreptitiously but he left to a, to avoid serving in the army and he could not return there. He was stateless, rendered stateless by the German government. Well, getting a little ahead of it he was stateless because he was Jewish but that came slightly later. But he was never made, he never was a German citizen.

Q: I want to ask you some more about Hamburg and your childhood. You mentioned that your different grandparents had different levels of religious observance but in your home in Hamburg what religious traditions did you observe?

A: All the holidays. Friday night. I want to say Saturday we knew it was the Shabbat. But we were not observant in the sense that the orthodox people are. We were not. But yet we were, both my sister and I as we were raised that's how we raised our children. The Sabbath with all its traditional things, the candles, the **challah**, the wine, the **boruchas**, it's all part of our life. And

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

7

has become and we've carried that on for our children. I speak for myself. I know both of my daughters. But we are not observant to the point of not riding on a Saturday or et cetera.

Q: And that was what your family observed even then?

A: Yes. As a matter of fact my mother was raised the same way. She was not raised in a particularly religious home. My father, yes.

Q: Was there a large Jewish community in Hamburg?

A: Yes. Very large. Extremely large. I didn't even realize how large as a child. Only it was in later years that after the end of the war and since I've been back that I realized just how large the community was. Synagogues and a lot of Jewish activity but we'll get into that.

Q: What were relationships like between the Jews and the gentiles in Hamburg?

A: We're talking about before the Nazis came in. Good. I had friends from early, early on that I can remember that were definitely not Jewish. And they were good friends. I might, excuse me. I might add my parents also my father was in a card game that was primarily non-Jews. So he was a businessman. As other businessman, as other businessman, the ultimate business man. He associated with and was personable I might add and associated with people that he liked got along with and did business with.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

8

Q: Did you experience anti-Semitism as a young child in Hamburg?

A: After the, soon after the Nazis came.

Q: But before the Nazis came?

A: Not that I was aware of.

Q: When you went to school, you started at kindergarten, elementary. Did you go to public school or private school.

A: I went to, I started out in public school. Yeah public school to begin with unh hunh.

Q: And then what happened.

A: Well since you know how old I am, I started school in 1932. 31, 32, when I was about five, five and a half years old. And it was fine. We learned, we had fun. And it didn't last very long because as you know in 1933 the Nazis came into power. And how I happened to be very, become very much aware of that is because of something that happened to me in public school. If you'd like I can tell it to you. I went to school one day as I always did and was called out of class. And there was, I was called into an office of a very quote unquote nice lady and she had a conversation with me and asked me many questions about my mother and father and grandparents, my aunts, my uncles. It didn't matter where they were. And what who my parents

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

9

associated with and who their friends were, who my friends were and but primarily about family things and where they were and what we did and this was all as far back she asked me as I could remember. And at that time I still had a great grandfather, my maternal grandmother's father was still living whom I was very fond of. So they dug into the back, my background as far back as a child of six, seven years old could remember. And when I came home and told my parents about this, they were furious. And it wasn't too long after that that my parents put me into a private school for Jewish girls. And my and that coincides with the time that I wasn't even welcomed in public school anymore. What this was about, this interview was called in German, I'll give you the German word for it. It's called **Razen undazuhom**. Literally translated means race research. Race, race research is what it means.

Q: You said your parents were furious. Did they explain to you why they were so angered?

A: I think so. To the best of my knowledge my father especially was very vocal about it. Because he felt at that time that it was a heck of a lot of nerve for these people to take, get hold of a young person like myself and dig into their background. I have to tell you that at the time, at the time, I wasn't aware. I was curious why. And I also knew that not everybody had this. And you know kids are very tuned into other kids and other kids knew that I went for this interview, but not everybody did. So already there was a line drawn. But it wasn't as obvious, as horrendous to me as it certainly was to my father. Specially my father.

Q: Do you remember the campaign that Hitler waged to get himself into political a position of political influence. Do you remember the election campaign.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

A: Well what I remember primarily is a man would get on television and he would not on television. I'm sorry I'm way ahead of him. Wow, thank god there was no television then. Who knows what damage he could have done. My father was a, like listening to the radio and I did too. But when this person came on, I never understood what he was talking about because this man screamed and yelled. And although I was very proficient in German and spoke what is now called **Hochdeutsch**. They don't even have that anymore. They speak one level of German. And I also wrote in this different script which is **Hochdeutsch**.

Q: Can you translate **Hochdeutsch**?

A: High German. High German. And yet I did not understand this person. If you listen to his speeches today on tape or in the movie, movies that we have and when I say we, I'm talking about the museum. Anyway historians have. Who understands what he's screaming about? I certainly did not. I will say this, that I could see my father and mother and friends. As I said before they had friends. Lots of friends. Being upset about it. And talking you know how is this all going to, what is he saying. Or why is he saying these things about an Aryan race and all the other things. Although he promised to make things better economically and that was what my father explained to us, to me. His real mission Hitler's mission was to make things financially, economically better at the expense of who knows. Who knew at that time.

Q: Do you remember Hitler being sworn in as Chancellor?

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

11

A: I believe they had it on the radio. I believe we were told that in school because I was still in public school. I believe that they talked about it because immediately the pictures went up on the walls of the school with him in his now infamous salute. Yeah. I don't know that I exactly heard or understood or grasped the concept. Can I tell you that I saw this man?

Q: I was going to ask you that.

A: When I was still in public school we went on a field, what's called a field trip. He was in Hamburg and we had to go downtown and see Hitler. And although it was from a distance, remember I was a small person then. So I craned my neck and yes I got to see him and we had to give the what is now the infamous Heil Hitler salute. I will tell you, I was not comfortable with that. And I didn't really quite know yet why I wasn't. But I wasn't. Probably what I heard at home. You know that from the speeches that he had made and listening to the grown-ups talk. But I did see him and heard him. I didn't, I no more understood him then I did when I heard him on the radio. But yes I did see this infamous man.

Q: What kind of impression did he make on you in person?

A: Being not, not that close to him. Well I already had preconceived impression. Having heard him on the radio and having heard my parents and their acquaintances talk so I think maybe that's why I was uncomfortable but I had to do it, give the salute. I might add I had to give that salute every morning once he came into power. As we pledge allegiance in school, in this country, to our flag, we had to give, I mean with every other word it was Heil Hitler. Never

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

12

comfortable with it and fortunately I didn't have to do it for very long because they didn't want me and we didn't want them in school.

Q: You were still going back and forth to Poland over the summers, during this time period. I want to ask you to walk me through some of the changes that you might have noticed among neighbors and friends in the early days of Hitler's chancellorship. What stands out in your mind about that time?

A: I had two very good friends, a boy that lived in our building, same building that I went to visit when I went back two years ago. And of a girlfriend. Her name is **Ingeborg**. I have, I remember her. The boy and I was a bit of a tomboy, this particular boy and his friends, but I'm focusing on him because he was, lived in the building. He joined very early on as a very young kid the Hitler Youth and from that moment on I became an outcast. For several years he tormented us with bad language, throwing stones, kicking us and as he got older, of course it got worse. He somehow disappeared. I don't know if they moved or what happened. I, I really don't know. The, this girl friend of mine from very early on, they didn't live that close to us but her parents and my parents were also friends. And I do remember their last name. It was **Vall**. They my parents stopped being friends with them. Or they with us and I never saw her again either. So it was almost abrupt because they didn't live near me. Whereas some of these other kids did.

Q: Did you start experiencing any direct anti-Semitism.

A: Early on.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Q: Tell me about some of these early experiences.

A: As I said you didn't have to know the people, the youngsters. Mainly young people. My age, older. You walked around with a nervous stomach and you saw kids that were not, that you knew were not Jewish kids. Because we were teased. We were made fun of. We were called bad names. They had nobody to answer to. In other words, this was the accepted thing. You felt fortunate if they left you alone. And I'm not going to tell you that they, many times when I say they, I'm talking different kids, different from different areas. Don't forget I had to use public transportation to go to school, once I started private school. So you felt fortunate if you didn't get picked on and made fun of and tugged at and pulled at and kicked. And I will say this, I fought back too. Yes I did. And but that didn't matter. I was very young.

Q: How did you fight back?

A: I hit back. I hit.

Q: what advice did your parents give you on handling these kinds of situations.

A: Not too much. You know we didn't talk about it all that much, even though we all knew what was going on. We and they knew what, were they not going to send us to school. It wasn't like an every minute type of thing. Though not isolated, it wasn't every minute. It was to begin with tolerable and then of course little by little it became intolerable, living under that regime for over

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

14

six years. So we experienced many things and learned 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. It wasn't pleasant and nice life that I was used to. Also I have to tell you, some of this other than kids in the immediate circle of friends, some of this was a little more gradual. Little more gradual. So that it not everybody pounced it, on you at the same time. And there were rest periods. But then of course in the last two years there, it became intolerable.

Q: I asked you a moment ago if you were still going to Poland over the summers. Did you notice anti-Semitism in Poland on those summer visits.

A: No because it was, things were very isolated visits as far as visiting family is concerned, going to the country. I have to say that I did not. They may have been. I heard conversations you know that they set, you know my grandparents used to say you know this person was you know not friendly toward Jews. But especially my grandfather. He was in a situation where he was a professional man. People came to him to get rid of a tooth, get rid of pain, to get a filling, to get a tooth pulled. They were more than grateful if you took care of them. And he was also somewhat educated in medicine. So they came to him actually for more than just the dental work. And I would say that 60% of his patients were not Jewish. But very grateful that he took care of them, because I used to sit there and watch him work.

Q: I had asked you about Hamburg in 1933 when Hitler was sworn in as chancellor. Do you remember some of the things that started to happen right after Hitler came into office. Like the burning of the Reichstag and emergency powers. Do you remember those events.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

A: No, not really, not really. I remember life starting to change but that was very subtle as I've said before, primarily amongst the young children. And this is, it was subtle. Mainly I heard it through my father who was a very much into the politics of the day and the conversations, et cetera. But other than experiencing the anti, what we now call, what was then called to the anti-Semitism or the anti-Jewish situation. Specific events like what you just asked me about the, no I, I have to say that I don't remember. I have to really dig down.

Q: Do you remember the boycotts of Jewish businesses.

A: Yeah , I mean my father was a victim of that. definitely a victim of that. But it took a while. I mean he, it was not subtle but he lost customers. Cause they wouldn't buy from him. They would initially say you don't need anything this trip around cause he also traveled. It didn't start to affect his livelihood until it ceased. It did totally cease. For the last year I would say not more that he was in business. And he also represented a company. He was a manufacturers rep. Who had to break up their relationship with him. But I might add they also wrote him a reference if you ever need it. That was very nice of them.

Q: Do you remember the book burning.

A: Well we saw some of it. In Hamburg most of it was done synagogues. Our synagogue. You know it's something that when you're young, that young, and you become aware of some of these things that you're asking me about, specifically the book burning. At first, no matter how

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

many times somebody explains it to you whether it be teacher or parent, it's something maybe you can, people can even relate to that here. You don't understand. You don't understand it. Why? Why get books together and burn them. They explained to us that they meaning the regime of the day didn't believe. They believed in burning the books that taught. Humanitarian things. Great writers that have terrific influence on, on everybody's life, that if it didn't match up with their beliefs it was something that had to be gotten rid of. But you go try to explain that to a ten year old kid. It's, it's hard to swallow that. It is hard to swallow. Burning books. I, I'm an old woman now and I have a hard time comprehending that.

Q: Imagine that you saw some book burning. Can you tell me, can you describe what you saw?

A: A bunch of frenzied Nazis have a pile of books that they've collected from around. I watched this out of our home in, from the balcony. This was a small, relatively small. This wasn't one of these big, big bonfires. They collected books. I don't even know where they got them from, probably out of people's homes or stores or neighborhood synagogues. I have no idea where they got them from. And they built like a fire. These were the uniformed brown shirt Nazis, a lot of them young. The youth groups, the youth groups. Hitler Youth. Which you have heard a lot about. And they would light them up and set them on fire and go nuts. And, and absolutely think they were listening to a rock concert. That's the only thing I can you know they'd go crazy. They were frenzied.

Q: I'm going to pause now and flip the tape.

Interview with Jutta Levy

17

Q: This is tape 1, side B, we are interviewing Jutta Levy and you were telling about the book burning and I wanted to ask you about any recollection you might have about President Hindenburg. Do you remember when he died?

A: I remember when he died and the publicity surrounding it and I haven't talked about this in a long, long time. So I'm not going to say too much about it because I just, I right this second. I know there was a lot of publicity about it and I want to say and I may be wrong but I think there was a certain amount of sadness within Germany that he died. But that I really that's all. I want to comment on that.

Q: You mentioned publicity. Did you see a lot of anti-Semitic publicity in those years.

A: Well they had lots of posters, store fronts were marked. **Juden**, which of course means Jew. Saw that pretty early on. I might also add that I would say that even prior to Hitler, maybe just prior, just after he came in. There were the makings, not even the makings, it was a natural but for a certain element of people to persecute or be anti-Semitic, as it is everywhere. Desecration of a synagogue, desecration of a store front, name calling. You know I, I want to say that also was part of normal life. It didn't necessarily all begin with this maniac. But of course it intensified. We have listen we have some of that in any country. And I might add in Poland too. But you know you don't dwell on it. It happens. It's over with, except where I grew up, it wasn't over with. But it does happen and life goes on.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Q: You mentioned you saw posters. Can you describe some of the things that you saw as a child.

A: Primarily posters of Hitler's with the salute. We've all seen those posters, pictures, pictures of SS men because they were the elite. Posters like that. Posters extolling **Mein Kampf** now. Not the book necessarily but that again is in connection with Hitler. I didn't know too much about **Mein Kampf** then, his book but that's what I remember seeing because they were up and around and especially when I still went to public school. I knew when he was sworn in those things were up in, within the school. And also throughout the city. Not everywhere but I would venture to say in the theaters and wherever you went. Restaurants.

Q: You mentioned posters in the context of anti-Semitism. Do you remember seeing any anti-Semitic posters.

A: I saw some but primarily I remember vividly my father showing us, showing me a newspaper that was called **Der Spiegel** which I think is still in business. It's **Spiegel** is mirror, the mirror. And they always depicted Jewish people with being very homely with a hooked nose and pockmarked nose. I remember seeing a lot of that in the paper and in posters.

Q: Do you remember the enactment of the Nuremburg laws, either as a specific act or even do you have a sense of what the impact of these laws was on your family.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

19

A: Well maybe not directly but certainly indirectly. Not knowing as a child what all, what impact it had at the moment or was going to have but I certainly became aware of it very quickly. Now you need to ask me specific questions because otherwise I'm going to be lost and go on and on.

Q: About the racial laws and the intermarriage and all those classifications.

A: Not just racial, not just inter marriage and et cetera, but also people that changed their religion from Jewish to whatever. It didn't matter. It did not matter. A person was still classified as a Jew not clean for lack of a different expression. Jews were responsible for all the bad things. Jews were not Aryan. They were not of a pure race. Jews were needed to be exterminated. Jews needed to be exterminated.

Q: Were you aware of the existence of concentration camps in the 30s?

A: The only one that I personally was aware of was because my father mentioned it as early as when I say 1933, that's when this particular camp came into existence almost simultaneously with Hitler. But we, I have to be honest. The media and the information that trickled back is not like today. Today a person sneezes at one end of the world and it's picked up at the other end of the world. Those were not days of great communication but my father did know about a camp by the name of Dachau which has become infamous. And but you didn't really understand. We knew we thought it was a prison camp. We didn't know all the horrible things that were going on there at that time. At that time. Had we known more I think we would have gotten out earlier, or

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

20

tried, excuse me, tried to get out earlier. Because we got out as we were getting to by the skin of our teeth.

Q: I'd like to go over a few more historical events and then ask you when the family made the move to get out. Do you remember the **Anschluss**?

A: That's when he went into Austria. I did. When you say do I remember it. It was part of what was going on that he marched very defiantly into Austria.

Q: What was the reaction of your family or the community to this event?

A: Like with everything else. There was a certain amount of, but I would not, certainly, there was apprehension. No apathy but apprehension with this will pass. Ok so he annexed or and, as you say **Anschluss** Austria. That's one thing that he did. Don't forget it's as far as it got at that time.

Q: How was that event reported in the media in Germany?

A: I don't have a whole lot of oh memory of that but tremendous victory. Wonderful. It was wonderful. They, they felt they always they gave us to understand and I'm only sort of repeating what I heard and was privy to. That the Germans always felt that Austria was Germany and Germany was Austria. It was like one. And I might also add that my mother had some education in Austria, as well as her brother did and Austria was the land of Strauss and waltzes and my

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

mother lamented you know the fact that Austria will probably never be as she had known it as a young person. That's really what I remember mostly. It did not make the impact on me personally as a young person that it would had it happened ten years later in my age.

Q: During these events what was the Jewish community doing in Hamburg?

A: Go, mostly going on as best as they could, as normally as they could with many people making arrangements, plans to leave. And others saying it will, I mean this will pass, this can't be happening. I may be getting ahead of it but people were starting to talk about getting out. And some left, some people left as early on as 1934, 35. My father's brother who would follow him to Germany and they were in business together for a time his younger brother. He did not leave under the circumstances that my father did because he was able to return to Poland and visit. But he left in 1936 and that was supposed to be when we were offered well we'll get into that I'm sure. But people started to leave. They didn't want to put up with, well they were afraid. They were afraid. Some people more afraid than others and also I might say it's a tremendous venture to pick up your family, your, your, your life and move it to wherever. It's a tremendous and especially when there are children. We knew my aunt and uncle never had children so it's not as traumatic. We had another my parents had friends Jewish Polish friends, they tried to leave but they didn't. They had no children. People with children, it was a little harder, it was a little harder to pick up. Imagine yourself having to totally leave. I mean for that time it, maybe today it isn't. People are moving about the whole world. In those days they, they left for political reasons like my father did but then he had established himself in, and was raising a family. It's not so easy but he started to think about it. As things progressed.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Q: One last questions about historical events and then I want to figure out where your family fit in. The Evian Conference in 38. What was the reaction as best as you could tell and the Jews around you when they realized what had happened at that conference. Or what was not going to happen because of the conference.

A: Well, being again young not really understanding the full impact of it, other than what I heard around me, they didn't go into these things in school. My I have to say my personal reaction is only what the vibe that I picked up from my family, my father especially. And that is the fear, fear. And it's not just from that conference but from everyday living is fear, fear that the average person in this country just doesn't understand.

Q: Explain what you mean by every day fear on an everyday basis. What was happening every day that made you fearful.

A: Just going out. Having to sneak to school. Did you ever hear of anybody having to sneak to school. In Germany there are six school days. One of them is Saturday. I went to a religious school, a Jewish school . One did not go to school on the Sabbath but we had to get in six days of school. So we went on Sunday. Well we had to sneak that so instead of carrying a book bag, I mean this is just one relatively small example, although not so small. Carry instead of a book bag, a dress bag. Put a book in, lunch, no outside recess, quietly. Again the word surreptitiously went to school. Also you never knew what was going to happen to you on the outside. Is somebody going to pick on you. Is somebody going throw stones at me. Is somebody going to

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

hit me. Is somebody call, going to call me dirty names and then as things progressed they did come into the schools, the SS people and very quietly and systematically escorted kids out of the school. Now I don't know if you want to hear this now or, or as you get on with the interview, but this is all part of it. So you live in fear because somebody out there is out to pick on you. For the lack of a better word. I think it's more than just picking. Kids get picked on all the time. but this is a different kind of picking on.

Q: When did your parents first think about getting out Germany.

A: Well we were my father was offered to leave Germany in 1936 because he had one brother over here. But in 1936 he was still under the illusion that it would perhaps pass. The other thing also was that sometime around that time the uncle that we have here suggested that my father come by himself and leave my mother and his two daughters to come at a later time. And that was not acceptable to him. I may have my dates a little muddled with that. But instead of he basically felt when that first offer came, no I have a family. And my mother was totally against moving. How could she leave. Poland was not that far away. If she came to let's say the US she would never get to see her parents and her family again. And this will pass, this, this can't last. People were in total I'm not going to say denial, but disbelief. Denial is too strong as far as the way I understand denial means they just felt it, this can't last. It can't last. This will change.

Q: What was the straw that broke the camel's back for your parents?

Interview with Jutta Levy

24

A: My uncle left in 36 or 37, 37. Before they ever left my father realized that he had made a mistake and that we also needed to leave and what did that. Totally no livelihood, number one. Number two the Gestapo started hounding us. Number three people were disappearing, people that we knew were disappearing. Kids were taken out from school, as I mentioned before, first very quietly, very nicely. And then not so nice. We lived in a very nice apartment building. You heard knocks at the door in the middle of the night. More people were taken away. A few screams, screeches. Everything you know it was horrific. We heard via my father and also via friends heard of people disappearing. Oh they were sent to on a train to no man's land which is out in the corridor. In fact that's the word I was looking for much earlier in the tape. And in the winter time. Because winter in Germany at that time came early on, sometimes on my birthday there was snow on the ground and I was born very late in September. But they were sent out on a train and then chased off the train into no man's land. And if they tried to come back or plead they were shot. These things came back to us. Or they froze to death or got away. And these things got back to me, to my parents and also to me. And by this time I'm already a pre-teen-er. Pre-teen. And so beginning to understand. But primarily for my father it was the total no job, no money coming in. Being released from his representation. And then his own business, what he did on you know himself was also nonexistent. And it was constant harassing of the Gestapo and threats and primarily people disappearing and what they heard. And never to be heard from again. And also other people making plans to leave because Germany at the time that we're now at was in a state of frenzy to rid itself of Jews. So before my uncle Max, Max Salzberg and his wife Alice left, we already knew that we had to also make plans. That's when my father was offered the opportunity to come alone and we would be sent for later on and he said no it's all of us or none of us.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Q: What was the deciding factor for your mother? When did she also accept that not to stay in Germany anymore. What was the last straw for her.

A: When her husband said it's time to make plans to leave.

Q: How did your family manage without the income from the business?

A: I never knew what my father had. In those days you don't think about it. I imagine that he had money saved up. He was not a rich man but he wasn't penniless so we, he existed like that and you know he may on his own have done some business dissolving, getting rid of stock certainly with the company he was with because he was severed, but managed to get rid of whatever he had, and also was, well I'm getting ahead of it again. You know we're now talking about two years of before we left that he had virtually no real income to speak of but we maintained the apartment. We maintained the help. He was able to, to do it. He never counted his money. I don't know.

Q: When did he lose the income. You said it was two years before you left but can you give me a year.

A: I think that the, the company that he was representing was in 1936 slash 37. It wasn't you know like this but, but also remember before he was let go, people weren't buying from him.

Well when people aren't buying from you, you're not generating the income so I always say two

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

years, two years because it just ebbed away. And people don't buy, you don't make money, you don't make commissions and your income ceases.

Q: What did they do to try to get out?

A: My father applied to well he first had to be get an affidavit from this uncle in Paterson New Jersey, Isaac **Gothelf**. He also needed to get this didn't, none of this happens overnight. He also needed to get permission from the Germans to get out, permission to leave. Might I add that all of us with the exception of my mother who had a Polish passport were stateless. And I was, my sister, my father obviously was. SO you start putting into motion plans to leave which isn't like going to a consulate today, get a visa and off you go. It's a lot of was a lot of work and persistence. With the Germans definitely bribing them. Making so called friends with them, well let's not call it friends, but it's bribing them and he did that. He bribed, he lied. He did he put every trick out of his bag that he could so that we would not be taken away. That didn't guarantee it. Did not guarantee it so he put into motion to leave. The affidavit from the uncle finally came. The permission from the Germans finally came. But we didn't have a visa from the US to come and that's where we almost didn't make it out because the Americans didn't want to give us a visa. I hate to say that. Sitting here in this beautiful country, but they didn't. And he had booked passage already for March of 39 which was changed because of a boat was being painted. So he changed it December of 38. That also didn't work out. The Aquitania so then he booked it for November of 38. With no proper papers. And my mother went, my mother, my sister and I went to Poland in October of 38 which was a harrowing trip which is a story all unto itself to say goodbye to the parents, the grandparents. Aunts, uncles, cousins. And when

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

27

we came home my father said we're leaving. We're definitely leaving and that was within two weeks that we came back. And my mother said I can't leave. My curtains are wet. I'm not this, I'm not that. I'm not packed. I don't have the thing. He said I'm sorry we have to leave. And we did. But we didn't have the visa so on the Saturday before we left we still didn't have it. We had pleaded, we had the way he was with the Germans because he couldn't, didn't bribe anybody at the American consulate. But he pleaded with them. He went every day practically. No visa, Mr. Salzberg, it's a quota it's a this, it's a that. Finally he went, took my mother, my sister Ruth and me down to the consulate. He insisted on seeing somebody. He was told nobody could see him. He says but you are going to see me, you are going to see us. Somebody has to see us. It was very dramatic, very compelling. There is no way that I can even describe that scene at the American consulate in Hamburg. There is no way. I can tell you about it and it's ever going to make the impact that it had on me anyway and I'm sure my sister and all of us, especially my father for the rest of our lives. This man finally let us in and we were told time and time again that you cannot have a visa today, the papers are not ready blah, blah, blah. We were like up on the fifth or sixth floor and my father 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 starts pulling me, my mother and my sister over to the window. We were going to jump. He meant it because he knew that our time was up. We had so far been left pretty much alone. As far as we weren't dragged away in the middle of the night like many of our neighbors, let alone friends were. People in school were. We were pretty much left alone. But our time was, was up. So this fellow who was there, Mr. Davis knew that well Mr. Salzberg meant business. And we did get the visa that day. And then the rest of it is all pretty dramatic too. We left. Am I getting ahead of myself here. We left a few days later. We got to Cologne. We left an apartment with furniture. Some

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

things we had, my mother had sent away in anticipation of leaving. We, we left. We got to Cologne but we left the housekeeper there. Her name was Frau **Krug** and we had a little parakeet that I entrusted to her. And all the **bens** and the furniture but the parakeet to me was my most important possession that I had to leave behind. We got to Poland the next morning. My father called her up. I was right there with him when he called and you could see his face drain of color. She told him, we left at, the train left at midnight. At 6 AM the following morning they came and they were furious, the Gestapo. These were the people in the black uniforms, the SS people came to take us away and when she told them that we had left they were furious. Absolutely furious. They destroyed our bedding. They destroyed our apartment, they trashed it. Bayoneted my bird, bayoneted this tiny little bird and beat her to a pulp. She was not a, see what she was doing anyway was illegal. She was, she was not a Jewish woman. I have no idea what she was. But she had nowhere to go so you know for her my father said listen. Whatever is here is yours. But what are you going to do with it. So she was in the apartment and they didn't believe her. They, they beat her and destroyed everything. And that's how we know when they came. We have no other way of know. How would we know but for her. And we were very grateful to be where we were, but we were still in Germany. If this were five years later with telecommunications being what they became, I don't know that we would have made it out. But we were in Germany and changed trains and came the next saga.

Q: What did you take with you when you left your house?

Interview with Jutta Levy

29

A: Me personally? I took a doll. I took my autograph book which I still have and I took my diary and whatever my mother packed. That's it. Some pictures. That's what I took, but most importantly my autograph book and my diary.

Q: And then what happened to you after, the next step for your journey?

A: We had to get to Paris. Then we came to the border in Aachen and the Germans gave us one last send off. Took my father off the train as they came through to check the papers. You don't dare move in Europe. There are compartments and from each compartment. Remember we were not the only ones running. There were many people on the train, some with no luggage but many people like us. But they took my father off the train and you don't dare move. Every time we moved we had everything or my mother or anybody that Nazi out there with the bayonet pointed at you and he's ready. Any excuse, any excuse so let me see my father. He's talking and he's very animated and we had no idea. All of a sudden they say the train is going to move and it started to, move, start to move along slowly and we're hysterical. There we are. My mother and two kids and no husband. He's still talking to the Germans. Finally we saw him run and he got on the last what do they call it, the end of the train. The man was 40 years old, suffered from high blood pressure. That he didn't have a heart attack then was amazing. What did they want from him. When he finally came into the compartment and told us was they said he had too much money on him. So he said well then take it. We don't do that. They didn't offer him an alternative. He says well why can't you take it. He says we are honest, we are honest people. We don't take money. Well he had to come up with an alternative. He says well then I'll send it to Hamburg, to the housekeeper. Is that all right. at first they said no and then they said yes. But of

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

30

course you know that she never got the money. And we're not talking about a whole lot of money because he came out with next to nothing. That's how, that was our goodbye and then once we crossed the border people started opening up. You know once we were sure there were no more Germans, now we're in Holland, Belgium. We're on our way to Paris. So we were very lucky.

Q: What was the exact date you left Germany?

A: We left Hamburg on November sixth going to the seventh of 1938, just about the last legal train. When I say legal, yeah legal. Not too many people came out after that.

Q: I'm going to pause now and change tape.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

31

(file 2 – RG-50.106.0077.02.03 – duration: 01:14:16)

Esther Finder: This is an interview for the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. Today's date is September 15. This is a continuation of the September 8th interview with Jutta Levy. This is tape 2, side A. You have been telling me about your escape from Germany. But I wanted to go back and ask about something you had said previously about the last trip to Poland. YOU said it was a harrowing trip. Can you tell me about that trip?

Jutta Levy: Well as I may have mentioned we went back at the insistence of my late mother. She wanted to have her last goodbyes to her parents and sister and all the relatives. So she took my sister and of course me, back to Poland. Now to go to Poland from Hamburg Germany, you get on the train and you have to go through no man's land. That's that stretch of land at that time, that was quote unquote free. That meant passing borders. You're going through border. Every border stop is a stop and the officials come on board. Well at that time, this is late 38, the Germans of course, the Nazis come on board and searched, questioned, very body on the train. I didn't know at the time what strip search meant. I was a little past 12 years old and I found that out in a big hurry. Because of a matronly German woman took the women aside and strip searched them. I was one of them. And if anybody has ever been strip searched and especially by an angry, German official of the Nazis, strip searching a young Jewish girl, you can imagine what that was like. Not pleasant, not nice and without getting graphic very nasty and impersonal. It is one of the most unpleasant experience that I had personally and I think that's all I'm going to say about that. I think one can imagine what that was like. They made it difficult. They let us go but they made it unpleasant, difficult, and also very, very frightening. I was dreading the trip

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

back home because I hadn't even gotten there yet because I was afraid that I'd have to go through that again. But mercifully I did not. They were very thorough about checking our luggage, checking us personally but this intense strip search was not repeated. But it was going out of Germany to Poland. Why they didn't do it on the way back quite in that manner I don't know. It's was maybe a fluke or maybe the other was. I don't know. they were angry people that, I think if they had had the chance they would have thrown us off the train. Just to be never heard from again which they eventually, which they had already done and did more of. Again, we were lucky. Sometimes not knowing a lot of things, not knowing what had already been done is a blessing.

Q: I'm going to ask you. You just said a moment ago that they had already done, they had already thrown people off the train. Can you clarify that point?

A: in Hamburg where we lived as I said previously people began disappearing. Especially people, **Aust Juden** which are the Jews from eastern Europe began disappearing. My parents for instance had a couple. I can even remember their name, Mr. and Mrs. Max Steiner who disappeared. We learned later on I learned later on. My parents knew even before that they were rounded up. They were taken away put on a train, sent to what I keep referring to as no man's land in the dead of winter. Told to get off at a given point. Oh they weren't the only ones. There were hundreds of them. Told to get off the train. And just let go. Chased off the train, let go, in the dead of winter. If the people didn't move fast enough for them, they were shot. If they managed to get away, who knows where they went. Some managed to escape to other parts of the world. Others froze to death. Others were shot to death. These stories have been

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

documented. These stories my father found out and I did to after a time. At the time that I'm talking about now when we went legally to Poland, legally to Poland. I mean they could have done what they wanted to. But they didn't. At the time we did not know what had already been, the atrocities that had already been committed. We didn't know. Communications as I've said before was certainly nothing like it, not anywhere near what it is today. Had it been I don't think I'd be having this interview.

Q: When you got to your relatives in Poland, what was that visit like?

A: Heart wrenching. Very heart wrenching. Not because of any dark premonitions, certainly not on my grandparents, my relatives side. In fact my grandfather was a very intelligent very this is not my maternal grandfather who is a professional man. Very far sighted very ahead of the times. But he could not foresee nor did he the tragedy that was to come to Poland. What was happening in Germany he felt as so many people did at that time, not so much anymore with German Jews. But living in Poland was like living in another world here or another, certainly a faraway country here. He just felt that it might pass. But he also fully understood why we had to leave given the circumstances I've described before. Lack of making a living, the name calling the anti-Semitism is a mild word for what was happening. The burning destruction of synagogues. He was well aware of that. So with a lot of understanding he wished us of course the best but was sad to let us go. Not just him, all the family. It was a heart wrenching experience, much more so for my mother and it was for my sister and me too. I felt it maybe a little more keenly being older and I loved my family there dearly especially my grandparents, my maternal and my paternal grandmother in her, on my father's side. What was also very heart breaking I might add is that

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

my father, my late father was never able to go back because of the reasons I stated before. Especially for his mother and his side of the family. Realizing that we were leaving, realizing that perhaps they would never see him again was conveyed and understood by me even at my young age. So that whole trip was very fast. We didn't stay long. And again very, very heart wrenching. Sad, sad.

Q: Did you notice any changes in the social attitudes toward Jews in Poland at that visit

A: No. At that visit I wasn't even exposed all that much. We mainly visited. I also visited with my girlfriend and I had friends over there but especially one who also did survive. Her family did not. No I can't honestly say. My grandmother still, my maternal grandmother still had help in the house. MY grandfather's practice was continuing on. No I can't say at that, don't forget. They were always somewhat anti-Semitic, some a great deal Anti-Semitic. I never felt it to that extent. After all I was a visitor. And by a visitor I mean visited family and loved ones and was loved in return so maybe we were shielded, although I don't think so.

Q: Did your cousin or your friend ask you about what was happening in your life back in Germany during that visit.

A: Oh yeah they did. And as best I could explained, especially about they were interested in the school, what was happening in school. What was happening to some of the friends that I had back in Hamburg who a lot of them at that point already weren't there anymore. They had either emigrated or were taken away. and of course their fate was unknown to me at that time as with a

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

lot of them even to this day their fate is unknown to me. So yes they asked and as best I could, as, as kids we're all we were all the same age. I had explained to them and they were interested in what was going on thinking surely this would never come into their lives. Little did they know but a few months later they marched in, the Nazis. Into Poland. And their lives changed.

Q: You told me about leaving Germany. And I wanted to ask you to think back and just once more reflect about the moment when you were out of Nazi Occupied territory.

A: Unbelievable as I have told you. First of all the relief of my father getting back on the train. Knowing that momentarily we were crossing into a place that was not Nazi Germany. It's hard to explain when you realize that you can say something without being fearful, being afraid. I told you that life had become full of fear, nervous stomach, that kind of fear. People here are people in general unless they went through a similar experience can't understand. It's not fear of an exam, it's not fear of, it's a totally different fear.

Q: With respect to that fear that you're just describing. You mentioned a nervous stomach. Were there are any other symptoms or manifestations of this fear that you can remember from your childhood.

A: Me personally. That nervous stomach that developed when I was a kid has stayed with me to this day, to me. I can't attribute hyper, I suffer from hyper tension. I can't attribute that to it, although my father developed hyper tension there. And ultimately actually died from that because we didn't have the drugs that they have today for it. But he had hypertension, I have

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

hypertension. It's an inherited thing probably. But I'm more keenly aware of a nervous stomach which I developed and I still have it. I don't know how to describe it. it's fear even to this day of a uniform. My father had a business here downtown and I'm digressing a little bit and he made friends with all the police which was in downtown Washington years and years and years ago. Every time a police man would come up to collect for something or just to come up and say hello, my father froze. Every time a uniform came in during the war. A friend of mine was in uniform, whether it be army or navy uniform, especially officers, he froze. Momentarily and I have to tell you I do too. And I wasn't, I had friends that were in the service, but the moment when you see a uniform that is the fear that developed over a period of time and you live under a regime for that many years. six years is a long time.

Q: Often times children will have nightmares if they're anxious about something. Is that something that was true in your experience.

A: I think so. And this was before we left. When you hear footsteps at night on marble floors, boots, and they're not, you don't know but they're not stopping at your door but they are stopping someplace else and you hear conversations and it gets loud you can't help but take this with you when you go to sleep or if you're awakened by it. It's hard then to go back to sleep. Sure. It's a, it was a fearful frightful I don't know how else to say it time in my life. I can seek for myself. Not knowing all the ramifications but knowing enough to be afraid.

Q: Let's go back to your trip out of Germany. Tell me about route through Europe.

Interview with Jutta Levy

37

A: We went by way of Aachen. It's near the border where my father was taken off the train. And once you are through that you're in Belgium. And there's another stop and more uniforms come in. The uniforms at this point though are Belgian officials who spoke French and not German. So once we got past that and they were, they were official, they were to the point but even though we were fearful but there was nothing really to be afraid of at that point but as I said before, you don't get over that. Once we got through that border, don't forget there were many other people on the train in the compartments other than us that were on the run. Some with only the clothes on their back, no luggage even. But then they started to talk a little bit. Without fearing that they would be arrested or they would be overheard for saying something that wasn't politically correct. And what stuck in my mind to this day is that people smuggled things out. In the most ingenious way. I remember one lady had I don't know if it was a coat or a jacket but her big buttons about the size of maybe even bigger than a half a dollar and she was so proud of herself, as well she should have been, that she was able to smuggle out diamonds that were hidden in the hollow of those buttons and I remember that and I was totally amazed. But in retrospect how she got away with that. How they didn't, I mean this was just one. People had other ways of bringing things across. But that, that was one thing that stuck in my mind. That they were so relieved that they almost started to share and I did this and I did that and they were saying, well they were basically trashing the Nazis which they hadn't been able to do all these years. Being afraid to be overheard or if somebody, if they felt they were with somebody that they could trust and they couldn't trust them. That was another thing. So you know it goes on and on. It goes on and when you live under a regime like that and people like ourselves, people like myself it takes a while to trust again and to say wow I can say this. And believe it or not,

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

38

even to this day and I'm almost 71, even to this day I can say that (fully?). I can say that. I can be critical. I have never ever taken that for granted.

Q: Continue on with your trip.

A: So we then came to the rest of it was uneventful. When I say uneventful, nothing is uneventful and you're sitting with people that were running away from a dictatorship such as we were running away from so nothing is uneventful. But we don't want to be repetitious. I don't want to be. We got to Paris where my mother had her brother there and we stayed there waiting for the Queen Mary to take us to America. While we were in Paris, an incident happened that really changed the rest of Germany forever. And that was the young Jewish fellow. He was a Americanized, Greenspan that was his name and he killed an attaché in Paris of the German embassy. Most people are, historians are very much aware of that. This of course caused a tremendous upheaval in Germany and that is a, it culminated what they call here now Kristallnacht, the night of broken glass because of what this young Jewish fellow did out of frustration, anger and whatever other emotion you can think of and I will say this, go on record and have said it before. That was the culmination this Kristallnacht, the night of broken glass. They had been doing these things, certainly in Hamburg and other places in Germany all that year and certainly all that fall and early winter while I was still in Germany. I heard oh yes, store fronts being broken into. And I knew of book burnings. I saw some of it. And I what I think we mean by Kristallnacht which we were still in Europe then. But it was the culmination of and so I only want to say that after that it was a miracle, as it was a miracle with us that we got out of Germany at the time that we did. After that we would not have been a relatively no it wasn't

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

easy, but it would not have been let's say legally to use that term. Because we left legally. We had proper papers. After that there was no such thing. He was done with, Hitler was done with German Jews. If he hadn't annihilated them if we hadn't gotten out, their life wasn't worth a plugged nickel. Because shortly thereafter he moved into Poland.

Q: While you were in Paris and your hearing this news, what was the reaction of people around you.

A: First of all my father was appalled. I keep referring to my father because he was a very strong influence in my life. He was, I listened. I listened. When he and my uncle and other, we had other relatives in Paris were talking about this incident it was with (pause) regret that this had happened because it put in jeopardy so many people, which of course it did. It also was with some relief that we were out because had the, had we not left exactly when we did. And I mean almost to the minute, I wouldn't be talking to you today. We got out just at the nick of time, six hours before the Gestapo came to my house. That this young man chose that day that week to shoot the German attaché, causing tremendous uproar in Germany, and the fact that we were no longer there was very fortunate for us. So yeah we had there was a tremendous amount of relief. On my father, my parents' part and of course transcended to me. And even though I might have left with a lot of sadness leaving behind friends and stuff. And a life. I having had it explained to me what was going on at that point and papers being full of it, radio, I was to tell you that I was pretty happy being out of there. Naturally not knowing what was facing us in a new country, in a new life, but still we did not have to fear for the Nazis. There were other fears. So yes, generally that's the reaction. And again I'm talking as someone who at that point was 12, a

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

little over 12 years old. So I am, my reactions were through my parents and other relatives that were there.

Q: Is there anything else that stands out in your mind on your stay there in Paris.

A: My father had a cousin in Paris who lived outside Paris. Their name was **Gothelf**. The first cousin was a well-known artist there, Sam **Zamush Gothelf**, a well-known artist. He had a son, 12 years old and here I meet this handsome young fellow. He was about 15, 16 at the time. And at 12 years old the hormones already are working a little bit so of course I immediately fell in love with this young cousin. He wrote a beautiful poem in my autograph book. Remember I never go anywhere without my autograph book. He was also an artist. He even drew a beautiful little picture. A forlorn seashore because we were leaving and turns out that this cousin we heard later who I really liked so very much. His name was Guy, Guy, G-U-Y. Joined the resistance and was shot as was his father. And needless to say although I found this out several years later, it saddened me deeply. He was, they were talented lovely, lovely people. And especially the young fellow who I, who I liked so much. Actually I would say that was my first real crush. So the other thing leaving there we had to go to **Cherbourg**. And everything happens at night. I don't know why. Late at night we got to **Cherbourg**, got on a tender. Everything was black. Everything was sort of blacked out. And all of a sudden this humongous monster appears in the water. And that was the Queen Mary with a few little lights here and there. This huge to me then and of course it is huge ship out there that we had to get on. And I have to tell you I was scared to death, but we got on the ship and started our voyage across. In November, the middle of November when the seas are pretty rough. So and we along with many other people left.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Q: Anybody stand out in your mind who was on the ship with you.

A: As a matter of fact, I have pictures, tiny little pictures. There was a couple and I don't know if, where in Germany they were from, but they were from Germany that traveled and left as we did. Basically the same circumstances that were traveling with very, very young children, babes in arms and I do have a picture of them. Because I, I loved autographs and pictures if I could get them. And I do believe they also wrote in my autograph book. They stand out because I, even though I don't know where they came from but traveling with very, very young children into an unknown situation.

Q: Did you make any friends on the ship?

A: No other than, well acquaintances but nothing lasting. It's weird that on the same ship which I found out later was a school mate of mine who boarded the ship before I did because the ship came, the Queen Mary came from Southampton to **Cherbourg**. She boarded. She and her family boarded the ship in Southampton. They left before I did but we never ran into each other. That ship is a big one, was a big one, still is. I've been back on it when it was in Long Beach, California.

Q: Tell me about arriving in the United States.

A: That is quite something. We got on deck at 7:00 in the morning that the ship was coming into

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

the New York harbor and it was misty, it was cold, it was gray. As I expected it would be. And I don't know because I think life was gray and kind of sad at that point. The thing that was pointed out to us was the Statue of Liberty and I had heard about it but vaguely. And I couldn't tell you if I knew the significance of it but I soon learned because people were talking about it. and to see the Statue of Liberty and people talking about what it meant that we are now free and to pursue, to, to worship, to all the things that it really stands for. To have people talk about it in German because that's all I spoke at the time, that was quite a moment. Thinking back on it now. Getting off the ship was quite something else again. My father got down on his hands and knees and he kissed the concrete ground as he came off the boat. And that's a moment I won't forget. The next thing that I saw was a stevedore that just that one stevedore. I remember. He was black and I had not seen too many black people before. In fact I hadn't, I had seen one. And he was in flowing robes and sort of a diplomat in Hamburg. So and then at first not seeing my relatives, well I mean I had never met them, you know and then my father pointed out over there his brother and his two brothers actually. The one that had left before us and the one that had been here for many years. I have no other impressions. It was very overwhelming, very, very overwhelming. And if you want me to continue on in that vein. The uncle was there that had signed our affidavit. We went to his home. we spent one night there and I was separated from my parents which was almost as traumatic as that whole experience of leaving Germany. So if you want me to continue on that I'd be glad to do that.

Q: I'd like you to reflect on some of the difficulties in general. I don't need it necessarily day by day account, but overall what were the difficulties that you had adjusting to life in the United States

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

A: To begin with it was awful. Because as I started to tell you, I was here one day, new country, new language, new everything and my parents went off to Detroit Michigan where my father's two brothers were and I was to go with this great aunt and uncle who lived in Washington, DC, people that I didn't know, really never heard of them, but this was my grandmother **Salzberg**, my paternal grandmother's sister and her husband who said that they would take me because there was not enough room for me in Detroit. So since I was the older of the two daughters, I was the one that was elected to go with them. Now coming to a new country, being here one day, at most two days and one night and then leaving my parents and my sister was t, do you use the word traumatic. It was traumatic. I came here with them on the train. They were very nice people. They didn't understand me, I didn't understand them. They talked Yiddish but German and Yiddish people say are so much alike, but if your ear isn't used to it you don't understand. And they tried, maybe a little bit of German but it was I didn't understand and I had to go with them. And nobody's going to feel sorry for me because they had a beautiful home. they were very well heeled people. He had a chauffeur driven car in Washington. And so I don't want anybody feeling sorry for me. I just felt sorry for me. It was my heart was aching. I was alone. I felt like I had been left, like I had been abandoned. And so I was not a happy person when I first came here. And I must say even though these people were wonderful, they meant well. The Ulmans, U-L-M-A-N. They were very good to me. They were generous. But I was very unhappy and very lonesome.

Q: We have to pause so we can change tape.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Q: This is an interview for the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, I'm interviewing Jutta Levy.

This is tape 2, side b and you were telling me about being separated from your parents and your sister and coming to the Washington DC area with other relatives. How long did you stay apart from your parents.

A: About nine months. Nine months. Yeah and I want to say that I was comfortable. I had, my physical needs were taken care of. I was treated very well. They sent me to the Americanization school. They bought me a couple of more Americanized clothes. Not much, a little bit. They had other family here from his side. He was, Mr. Ulman was not my blood relative but his wife my aunt, great aunt I might say that part. So his he had family here and they weren't too nice to me but I frankly didn't realize that until I understood a little bit more but they sent me to the Americanization school. Downtown at 13th and New York Avenue. The building is still standing. So I was put in with, I was the only kid there. They were all adults. To say that I disliked it is putting it mildly. I hated it. And I don't think I got a whole lot out of it because I was frankly unhappy. I cried a lot. I cried myself to sleep. I don't know. I woke up crying. I was lonesome. They tried very hard. I, I need to say that they tried hard and I guess they thought I was happy. They had a business here. He took me to the business with him. I had no chores to do. I basically had nothing to do. I would go the Americanization school which was not a good experience for me. They didn't put me into a school and I wonder, years later why not. But that's how it went. If my father called I would cry and tell him how unhappy I was and a few months later he did make a trip to Washington to see me. I did not see my mother that whole time. And he came here and he promised that as soon as he could establish himself somewhere and he was hopeful it would be other than Detroit. He didn't like Detroit. We would all get, be

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

45

together again and at that time he looked around Washington and he really liked it but he at that time had no knowledge of how he would arrange making a living and coming here. So he went back to Detroit. About nine months later, maybe a little more but let's say nine, nine and a half months later my father did pick up with my mother and my sister and moved to New York. My mother had some cousins there. And he felt maybe that would be better. He didn't like Detroit, didn't like what was going on there between the brothers, et cetera. And he came to New York and once I knew that they were in I wanted to be there also. And he came and he got me. And from a beautiful home on Davenport Street in Northwest Washington I went with my, I went to a walk up apartment at 91st and Amsterdam Avenue. Right along with the bedbugs, rats and the mice. But you know what I was happy cause we were all together at this point. Then he started to, he started to look for work do work. He sold hair ribbons, stockings. If he made two dollars he would spend it to buy then made two more dollars, spent, and bought kept the profits so we could eat and have the rent. We had very little money. We did not come here with bundles of money. He my mother made hair ribbons and my sister and I helped and various other things like that. And in the meantime all the while looking for some type of work. Without getting too wordy on this. About not too many months, not too many months, he found a position representing a company that sold basically the same things that he sold in Germany. For the territory that encompassed Washington, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. So he started thinking about making the move to Washington so he could be closer to the territory that he was to represent. And that was for him a dream come true because he already liked New York. He didn't love it, but he did love Washington. A good reason. It was a beautiful city. It was cleaner at that time. Than New York and very much like Hamburg. He always used to say it reminded him, it was that type of city. So I would say within a year's time we made a move here. And I

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

might add, I did start public school in New York. In those days they put you in class. It was sink or swim. Or is it swim or sink. I don't know. But I was put into sixth grade which of course I promptly flunked because I didn't know how to talk but I did have a young girl in my class. I know her name because she did an autograph. May Corbet who was a black girl who helped me. The only person in that class in New York that helped me. How I don't even remember. I guess with sign language and little by little I started to learn English. I also listened to the radio a lot. And went to the movies a lot, a lot. Because that was an escape. And it was, and I liked it. I was a movie fan in Germany and just a fan of theater and movies theater in Germany so I went to the movies a lot. In New York and of course continued it here. But I did lose some schooling along the way. Number one I didn't go to school. Number two I flunked and but here I am.

Q: Can you give me a time frame. When did you first arrive in this country?

A: We came here, it's, it was 17th, 17th of November. Into, we came to America the 17th of November 1938.

Q: What was the time frame that you were in Washington.

A: I was here from then, maybe two days later, maybe the 19th until the summer of 39. So from November I was with the aunt and uncle until the summer of 39.

Q: Where were you when you first heard about the German invasion of Poland?

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

47

A: We were at that time already in New York. That was in August of 39 I believe. No. I think, well I think I was I think I was already with my parents. I'm not 100% sure. It may well I must have been. I don't really recollect 100%.

Q: Can you recall, what was the sense in this country to the news coming out of what is now war torn Europe?

A: What was my, my no I remember I'm a teenager at this point. I want to just go back a little bit. I have in my possession and I remember getting when we first came to Washington, so we were already in Washington. Sketchy mail, maybe a postcard from my family in Poland. You know my father's mother wrote and her family wrote for her and my grandfather wrote. So we were already in Washington when we heard about the invasion of Poland. And I have to say that it was devastating news to my parents. Hearing that the Germans had marched into Poland. We then knew nothing further. As far as the what happened in Europe, in all of Europe as it became war torn, it was a tragedy it was terrible. Again what happened other than the, the fact that I had so much family in Poland but the fact that I had friends over here who at that point being 17, 18 years old drafted into the army or signing up for the army maybe, whatever going into service. And some of them never to come back. Or hearing almost immediately they were killed. Because already I'm a, at this point I'm a teenager too. And I again have friends that went off to war and never came back.

Q: During the time between the beginning of the war, with the attack on Poland being a time when American got involved, is there anything in that time frame that stands out in your mind?

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

A: Primarily the fact that my parents tried very hard to get in touch with their families in Poland. Never hearing again. There was conversation that things were very difficult in Poland for our families there. We did not and I reiterate did not know all the ramifications of what was happening. But we knew I should say the adults, my parents knew that whatever it was, it wasn't good. And having escaped from that regime ourselves, we knew that whatever was happening wasn't good. It was a constant fear of what was happening over there. To our families. And we're talking Poland specifically. My father was a news hound. He liked, he wanted to listen to the radio constantly when he wasn't, when he was home. WE didn't dare talk while he was listening to the news because he was anxious to know every little bit that there was of what was going on in the world. Primarily in Europe and more specifically in Poland. And not a whole to come out. Again, given the lack of knowledge as far as communication is concerned as we know it today. Some things leaked out of course, not leaked out but became known but again things move very swiftly once that Hitler marched into Poland. It was a progression that went along very swiftly as history tells us today. And we all know it. Poland was not the only stop he made. He made quite a few other stops and it was a constant search for news and for us specifically. But of course my father became agitated every country that he went into. That Hitler went into, he was agitated. And he was in a constant state of agitation and frustration. And also making a living, making a living. My mother worked and at 14 I went to work. I don't know what else to say about that period.

Q: Do you remember Pearl Harbor?

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

A: Oh definitely. Certainly. It was on a Sunday of course as everybody knows. If you must know I was taking a bath. We were four people. At that time we were already in a two bedroom apartment. To begin with we were four people in a one bedroom apartment. And shortly before Pearl Harbor we moved to a two bedrooms and at 2:00 I took my bath. And I heard my father about that time yelling that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. And I did not know where Pearl Harbor was. Obviously he did. And I quickly got out and I thought what's going on, what's going on and he explained that Pearl Harbor was in Hawaii which was at that time a US possession or protectorate. I don't know what you call it. And essentially we would be at war with the Japanese. I have to tell you though that there was a little bit of a lilt to him, to my dad because he felt that once the Japanese, once America and at that time Roosevelt had not been declared but he and his friends and there was lots of talking going on. Once they declared war on the Japanese, as certainly they did it wouldn't be too long before we would declare war on Germany. And they were waiting for that, they were waiting for that. As much as people didn't want to go war in America or Americans to go to war, people like my dad and at this point we too felt better get in there. Have to put a stop to what's going on. So it was horrible, horrible, horrible. And things happened so quickly within a period of two, three days. First Japan, then Germany and of course we knew about the Blitzkrieg and we at this time knew I don't want to jump ahead of me.

Q: At this time you knew, you want to finish that sentence.

A: Yeah we knew that certainly not all of what was going on in the camps or anything like that.

You know we didn't know that. We knew some, we knew some. We didn't know to what extent

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

our own families were involved in that. We didn't know. But we knew there were evil things going on all over Europe where Hitler had invaded and we certainly knew about, we knew about the French, his marching into France. And we certainly knew about the Blitzkrieg between the bombings of London and Britain and what was going on over there. We did. I mean we had news commentators, radio, newspapers so we certainly were aware and it was for that reason people felt, people like my father I don't want to include all Americans, felt that it was time that the Americans took a stand and got involved also. To save Europe.

Q: Did you experience any anti-Semitism or any anti-foreign sentiment in this country.

A: Not Anti-Semitism as I knew it. Anti-Semitism as I knew it in Germany, no. No, no, no, no. Anti-refugee. Anti-refugee, anti-refugee. You know we're foreigners. For several years I had a guttural accent. Germany was not popular. Having a guttural German accent, didn't exactly make me queen of the day. I fought hard and bitter to lose it, got into fights. Kids made fun of me. People that I'm friends with to this day made fun of me and I had, I was a tomboy. I had fights with them. I'd beat them up, they'd beat me up. As far as anti-refugee as my parents ex, might have experienced it, I don't think so. My father was a personable man, a likeable person. Straightforward, honest man and he made a living, starting to make a living, worked hard. My mother did and as I said I went to work at 14 myself. But I knew that if I wanted to get along, and wanted to belong that I needed to learn English. And I did so in record speed I might add, although at the time it didn't seem like it but I did. But I have people here friends to this day. I was just with one of them that remembers when I really couldn't speak the language as I am

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

speaking to you today. But once I did, and it's been many years and I speak without an accent.

Once I got over that there was no I didn't experience that anymore. (pause)

Q: I want to ask you when did you begin to realize what was happening or what had happened to the Jews in Nazi occupied Europe?

A: Well in Germany of course we knew. Because we left. So we know more or less what had happened in Germany. As far as the countries that he occupied. For instance in for us more importantly Poland, we got a phone call. We knew that things were not good. Things had started to come out. My father was very, very concerned. My parents were about, and other people, but we're specifically talking about my family. We knew that many evil things had gone on there and I refer to them as evil things as opposed to say anything else. Just how bad and how our families were affected, we really didn't know. It was a nightmare that was going to come true. Then we got a telephone call from Sweden, from mother's sister. Flora Kerner at that time. And, telling us that she and my, her daughter my cousin, Rita, had survived but that everyone else in our family had perished. I remember my father being on the telephone and falling to his knees because he was so very emotionally upset, drained. And very other thing that you can name. It wasn't a long conversation but it was enough so that he got an almost full picture of filling in gaps of things that we had only heard about or read about or listened to on the radio and now his worst nightmare come true as far as our personal family was concerned.

Q: When did you get this phone call?

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

A: Very shortly after my aunt and my cousin were liberated from Bergen Belsen and I have to correct myself. They called from the what's the camp called. Where they put people. They were liberated by the British. To get them ready to go to Sweden and I can't think of the term. It's displaced person's camp they were put in. And that's where my aunt called from. It took several days after liberation because they were very generous from what I understand about having survivors call but my aunt had not been well. She had contracted typhus, I believe it was. So it took a few days, maybe not even extra days, but it took time. and there were thousands and thousands of extra people in various camps that were trying to reach family all over the world. But she did call us and she told us at that time, she would call us again when they got to Sweden because that was where they were going.

Q: What kinds of things had you heard about what happened to the Jews before you got that phone call. You said that this filled in some gaps. Can you recall what things you heard?

A: Well, you know my parents spoke, and more specifically my father had heard a lot of things about concentration camps and murdering Jews, crematoriums. These things started late in the war years, or end, towards the end of the war. Don't forget soldiers were already coming back. Not that he met them personally. Some yes, some not, but there was the media and so he did know about camps, crematoriums. He knew about Dachau, or he knew about Dachau early on but not knowing exactly Dachau came into existence as I said, I think I said earlier in 33. But the atrocities that were being committed were somebody's worst nightmare and hearing them prior to getting this telephone call and from the news media and the people that had already come back so, wounded soldiers et cetera, made it, it became very factual and he could only, we could only

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

imagine what had happened to our own family. However, always hopeful that perhaps they weren't as touched as so many thousands, millions were. At that point we weren't thinking in terms of millions. We didn't know. At least I didn't know but we knew that bad things had happened over there. We could only hope that we would get some good news that families had survived, some of our family if not all had survived. Hearing that they hadn't other than my mother's sister and her daughter was in one way of course very good news. But in another it was horrific. It was my mother and my father were devastated as was I. At that point already I was on my way, I was an adult just about, an adult already and I remembered being very pained, very, very pained. To say the very least. It's an awful feeling to hear that all your family that you left behind but two people had perished. And at that time we really didn't know exactly who died in which way. We didn't know that exactly until they came here. And I'm getting ahead but my aunt and my cousin came here after Sweden, not too in 1946. So about a year, a little over a year after they were liberated. My father brought them home. He, if you like I can tell you when they called him from Sweden which was maybe a week after their initial call, he immediately went and I went with him, this is now 1945. Immediately went to I believe it was the Red Cross. I remember going on a Saturday downtown with him and getting, wiring off to the Red Cross and the wire services, \$50, which to us was like it would be \$5000 today. Got it together and sent it to my aunt and my cousin in Sweden. And with which he then went to work to bring them here. Which he did. He had them sponsored by my aunt, the lady that I lived with here. They were moneyed people as I said. He got her to sign the affidavit. She didn't blink an eye and signed it, not with all the problems that we had. And we tried to get her over here and did of course. And but we paid for their passage, and we set up an apartment for them where we lived. And he went and, and worked very hard, along with my mother. And I remember going with him to these

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

various places to bring them over here. So I want to give him, my father and my mother all respect and credit that's due them for acting as quickly as they did in seeing to the comfort and to bringing these two survivors over into what my father called the land of milk and honey which he was not an original of that expression. But he loved America and the opportunities that it gave him and he wanted them here.

Q: When they did come, did you ask you cousin what her experience had been?

A: One afternoon, we lived as I said in the same apartment unit, Peabody Street, she and I were out back. We were basically the same age and in fact we recently talked about this very thing I'm telling you now. I asked her, what was it like? What was camp, concentration camp like? Well for two hours or more my cousin told me graphically as graphic as she could get exactly what camp was like, what ghetto was like, what camp was like for her because I have since heard other stories but that was my first. And I was absolutely horrified. Talk about nightmares, if I didn't have terrible nightmares before, I sure had them after that. Here was somebody in front of me that had lived through these horrors and they were other people that had worse stories. But her story and it's been documented was not pleasant, it was horrible. What my aunt and she went through and my family. Telling me that how my grandparents died, how my, my father's family died, how my cousins, my aunts, my uncles, how they all died at various stages of the internment, in the gas chambers, in the ghettos, just disappearing. One goes to the left, the other one goes to the right. One meant certain death, one was uncertain. Hearing all that just between the two of us was about one of my worst experiences and I'm sure it was, I think probably the first time that she really talked about it. And for years and years and years afterward, we never

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

talked about it again. My cousin's name is Rita, R-I-T-A, Levine Hilton. And she for a time lived, for a long time lived in New York but my aunt remarried. My aunt's name was Flora Klinnert Kerner. K-E-R-N-E-R. and she married a gentleman here by the name of Adin, A-D-I-N so her name the last 40 years after they came here until she died. Anyway they were married over 40 years. Was Flora Adin, A-D-I-N. She was a dentist also. I have a feeling that that kept her from being exterminated because she could tend to patients that had from what she told us horrible diseases in the mouth because of malnutrition, et cetera. And they tried the Germans, to for the Red Cross anyway for people who came to put up an appearance that they were doing all that they could, quote unquote. Of course that was all nonsense. My cousin Rita Hilton's testimony is on file at the US Holocaust Museum as well as Shoah. She gave testimony to Shoah also. Her testimony is or will be viable.

Q: I think we're going to pause now and change tape.

Interview with Jutta Levy

56

(file 3 – RG-50.106.0077.03.03 – duration: 25:04)

Esther Finder: This is tape 3, side A an interview with Jutta Levy for the US Holocaust memorial museum. You had just told me about your talk with your cousin when she told you of her experiences in the Holocaust and I wanted to ask you how was the news of the death camps presented in this country, in the American media?

Jutta Levy: Well in those days we had newsreels. And which most everyone at this point has seen. That's all we had at the time, well that's all you have. How was it presented. It was presented graphically and with certain amount of disbelief. I think the disbelief is to this day. The disbelief. Not that people didn't believe it. But my god in heaven, how could this have happened. Virtually under our noses. How could such a thing have happened? Never did my family or I ever, ever become used to seeing those pictures or those images. They were shown here not just by the news media, in the news and in the movies. Didn't have television, just yet. But it was not easy to take. It really was very difficult but the main thing was how was it that this government, you're talking about the American government, how is it that this could have happened. How was it that they didn't know. And if they did know why didn't they do more to help? Why didn't they put a stop to it? As though that was so easy. But these are questions that bubbled up. There was a certain amount of anger amongst people like, like us. How could this have happened. Ok we didn't know about it. Or we didn't have as much of a clue as maybe the governments didn't. What did they do? Why was it allowed to happen? There was anger. There is anger today about the very same thing because we're finding out more and more and more. we're still finding out. These atrocities that we heard about and then saw in the news, newsreels,

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

atrocities that my generation, my parents' generation and people of their, of the generation before have never even dreamt of, could not even visualize other than for the pictures. Anger, sadness. Disbelief, just as when my cousin sat and talked to me. I don't think I said a word. For two, better than two hours and believe me, if you knew me it's not easy for me not to talk. I was totally in shock at hearing that something like this went on and the world stood by. And now as an old woman I have to say how could the world have stood by. I didn't understand it then, I don't understand it now.

Q: Can you make a distinction in your mind. I asked you what the Americans thought and you responded to me but was that a general response for the American people or perhaps was it a response from the Jewish community. Do you have a sense of I hope I'm making my question clear. Do you have a sense of whether it was the general public in the United States that had that response or was it perhaps a Jewish response that you just described.

A: Well I think primarily it was a Jewish response. However I was still in school. And at that point, 45, 46, I was on my way to college, so I was there was a mix I'm talking about younger people and also older people. I have to say that the people that we were associating with and I include us as a family I would say that that was a universal attitude. How could this have happened. how. Simple as that, or as complicated as that. How could it have happened?

Q: Do you follow the Nuremberg trials?

A: Did I follow it? Somewhat, yes. Yeah.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Q: What were your reactions to the trials and what came out of them.

A: Horror. Horror. I have to be honest with you. To begin, not to begin with, some of I couldn't, I personally had a hard time even having listened to what my cousin had to say, some of the things that came out, I had a very hard time listening to. I had a very hard time watching the visuals, very hard time. Because they are so horrific. My reaction, you don't want to know what I think about what, well they never got a chance to really punish. What they should have done to these people there is, I have no answer for it. I really don't. there isn't anything that I can think of that reflect of what, how some of these or all of these criminals should have been punished. There isn't a punishment. And I don't know what, I don't know.

Q: Did you and your friends ever talk about the Nuremberg trials while they were happening?

A: You know if I talk to people like myself, yes. If I talked to Americans not as much. You know when you're young, you're in college by that time, its', it's not going to be the topic of conversation. You know people turn away. They don't want, the average whether they're Jewish or not they just don't want to be, they don't want to think too much about these things. but I have to tell you something, I myself was still in the process of, want to be accepted, I want to be like the rest. How much on that, of that can I, can I personally focus on. The general interest was there but overall after five minutes, ten minutes of conversation it was over with, on to other things.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Q: I'm going to get back to that. I have one more question then I want to get back to just that point. Did you follow the events of partition of Palestine anyway?

A: Yeah we did, I did. I was aware of it. When you say follow, I didn't read every word on it but I was very much aware of what was going on and ultimately the independence. I might add a little PS. MY cousin Rita and I went down to the what was then the counselor embassy, Israeli when independence was declared and she and I were even in a huge group picture together. But yes I followed the creation of the state of Israel, the partition, you know all that went on, yeah followed it. Was interested. Was thrilled when independence came. Because I felt along with many other, I can speak for myself I felt my God, the Jews now have a homeland. Not that I wanted to go there to live. I was perfectly content here. But we now have a homeland, something that we didn't have when we needed it the most.

Q: Now I want to get back to what you were saying before. From your perspective as a refugee that had come to the united States could you see what effect there might have been on the American Jewish community as a result of the Holocaust. And the Nuremberg trials and the birth of the state of Israel. Did you see any changes in the Jewish community from when you first arrived.

A: That's a very tough question because you know for as many people as there are and as many people as I knew not that it is that many, but you get different reactions. Totally different reactions. This, I have to tell you amongst a lot of people and Jews too there's a lot of apathy. I think that's the right word. The war was over, six million Jews plus perished. What a horrible,

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

horrible thing. Now this is years back. we're talking from, you're asking me about that. Terrible. It must never happen again. I don't really think that it all sank in. There are too many things happening. Same with the state of Israel. That there are your true Zionists who absolutely were thrilled. My father one of them. Thrilled with the fact that there was a state of Israel. But you also found a lot of ok it's done, let's get on with it type of attitude. And the ramifications of all what we've been talking about the last few minutes, didn't really come to a, well there's no concluding cause nothing is over. But the full impact didn't come til many, many, many years later. I would say as recently as 15 years ago, 20 years ago. That people really began well when those survivors started speaking. They haven't been talking all that long. I for one started to talk about my own experience when my kids got really involved in their high schools, at Blair High school. The teacher wanted to ask my older daughter who is now 44, is anybody in class who has a mother or father that is survived the Hitler regime that was from Poland or Germany or Romania, or Russia or whatever. And the only one in the class that raised their hand was my daughter. Shannon. And the teacher said well she asked about me and my daughter was told her that oh yes my mom was born in Hamburg Germany and she lived under Hitler for six years. My four year old grandchildren when they were at that age that this Grandma came from Hamburg Germany. Hamburger Germany. Anyway she said my, told her that the mom that she was born in Hamburg Germany, came over here and the teacher said would your mother be interested in talking and my daughter says I don't know. Anyway teacher called me. And I did talk to all the classes during that year of that and then, and then the teacher. I don't know if the same teacher did, I did it for my younger daughter also when she four years later followed. But you know up until except for isolated cases, do you know they didn't speak. The survivors did not speak if

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

61

you want to call me a survivor. Or a refugee, it really doesn't matter. But we didn't talk about it. Who wanted to hear it?

Q: Tell me about your life since the end of the war, about your personal life, your professional life?

A: Well as I told you in the beginning we fluffed over that quickly. I went to work at the age of 14. First for others. I won't even begin to tell you all the things that I've done. But then primarily for my father in his business. I worked hard. I worked with both my parents. My father got sick early on so I ran a business. I have to say that. I ran a business. I got married in 1952. We held onto that business. My father was very ill, required, he could never get the proper life insurance because of his hypertension. We, he had the best of care. we tried very much, very hard to keep him going but he died at 55. He accomplished a lot in a very short time. Married off two daughters in style, college educated, two daughters at George Washington University. Had a home. lived well, way beyond his means. So by the time he died we were pretty well tapped out. So but we rebounded. My husband went to work for the government. I went to work for various people. In the jewelry business, in the travel business, in a doctor's office. Too many things to name. We've had and I have a, we always have even when my parents were alive a nice life, pleasant. Problems yes. Always struggling a bit. A lot, a bit. Looking back on everything and I hope there's more to come it's been ok. it's been fine. I'm a Yankee Doodle American. I reflect many times on my life over there. And how fortunate I was, we were to have gotten out when we did. Because but for the grace of God we would not have been here.

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Q: Are you affiliated with any survivor groups or organizations?

A: Yes I am. With the Holocaust survivors and friends. I'm a member and it's through their auspices that I do whatever speaking I do. Primarily at the US Capital Children's museum and whoever wants me. I've also been involved in the US Holocaust Museum, although not I'm not a volunteer there because believe it or not I still work a little bit. So there's just so many things in the week and I feel that giving my talks and I am contributing something.

Q: Have you ever been back to Hamburg?

A: Yes I have.

Q: Can you tell me what that experience was like?

A: I have to tell you that on my own I wouldn't have gone. Had I not been invited and the trip been paid for I wouldn't have gone. The city of Hamburg has invited people like myself back and two years ago my husband and I went as guests, everything paid for. What was that like? The day I got there I knew how to get back to my apartment. And we took the subway whatever. I knew exactly where to get off. It's amazing how everything came back. I saw the apartment, I saw ultimately the school where I went. Not the public school, the private school. I went into the building, into the apartment. I went into the back yard where I had to be so quiet. During our recess. Went to the downtown branch of the school, saw what was left of my synagogue. That's

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

63

unusual that that façade is standing. The only thing that remains of it is the front of it because it was granite and it had been relatively newly built. They couldn't burn granite. The Hebrew lettering is there and I have pictures of that. What was my you asked me what was my impression going back. The area that I lived in was not bombed or harmed so basically it was somewhat frozen in time. The downtown area has was completely bombed and rebuilt. It's a very rich city moneywise. Pros, prosperous is a better word. I did get to see some special places that we used to go to. I also had the opportunity to go to the concentration camp Bergen Belsen where to me that's like a cemetery because people that I knew and loved I think perished there. I'm not even sure but certainly my cousin and her mother had survived it. it's been sanitized. It's become like a memorial and I will say that the Germans do visit there because they have very few Jews in Hamburg. Very few. Bergen Belsen is about two hours outside of Hamburg which I didn't even know. Between Hamburg and Hanover. I didn't know that. Til I got there. I've forgotten that you asked me. The overall impression. I was sad. When I left the plane took off and I looked down at the city where I was born and I was sad and I cried, the only time I cried. Oh I shouldn't say that. I did cry in the back yard of the school because it hadn't changed. But when we left I cried. Why? I was born there. I grew up there. What I felt they took away my childhood. I had realized it before but it didn't impact me as much as, my husband was sitting next to me on the plane. And it didn't impact me until I left. They took away my childhood. They did and for that and that's a small maybe price to pay in view of what others lost but don't forget I lost my family too. But I wasn't in a camp. I didn't starve. We were very dirt poor when we first came to New York. All that was do-able and bear-able. But we're talking about me talking about me and how this whole part of history impacted me yeah it did. They took away my childhood. They took away what might have been for me, education wise. Many things. And

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.

Interview with Jutta Levy

64

once I got that out of my system on the plane going from Hamburg to Frankfurt, I became sad. While I was there I wasn't even sad, other than various you know just moments here, moments there. Because we were kept busy. But then reflecting, I have reflected a lot since I came back. I was cheated also. Cheated. It was, they took away a chunk of my life, a big chunk. And I think it has impacted me, the way I act, the way I think and the way I behave, even into my 70s. And I'm starting to fill up and I don't want to. It's sad.

Q: IS there anything that you'd like to add before we conclude.

A: Maybe the only think I'd like to say. I know that what I've gone through doesn't begin to tell a whole story, doesn't begin to compare to so many thousands but I have survived the millions that were killed. It doesn't compare. If I can teach anything or say something that will have an impact other than the few things I've said on this tape, 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. Who's ever 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 going to get. It's not going to get any better. So don't take it for granted, love your country. Vote, support it, work for it, enjoy it and keep it free. Keep it free. Thank you very much.

Q: And thank you for doing the interview and this now concludes the interview.

(end)

The following transcript is the result of a recorded interview. The recording is the primary source document, not this transcript. It has not been checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy. This document should not be quoted or used without first checking it against the interview.

The interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Information about access and usage rights can be found in the catalog record.