United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Interview with Hedi Pope
November 6, 1997
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PREFACE

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HEDI POPE
November 6, 1997

Question: This is the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** interview with **Hedi Pope**, conducted by **Gail Schwartz** on November 6th, 1997 in **Alexandria**, **Virginia**. This interview is part of the museum's project to interview Holocaust survivors and witnesses who are also volunteers with the museum. This is tape number one, side **A**. What is your full name?

Answer: My full name is **Hedi Pope**. It at one time was **Hedwig**, but that was such a mouthful to put on your naturalization papers, so I permanently changed it to just **Hedi Pope**. I do not use a middle name.

Q: And what is your family name, your maiden name?

A: My maiden name was **Politzer**. That's like the **Pulitzer** prize, but with an **O**. And it was always **Hedi Politzer**. As I say, the **Hedwig** was not something that I especially cherished, even as a child.

Q: And where were you born and when were you born?

A: I was born March 18th, 1920 in **Vienna**, the capital of **Austria**. I have an older sister, there are just the two of us. My parents were both born in **Vienna**, and they were both born in 1887. So we're really going back to the Victorian age, the Gay 90s, whatever you want to call it, and my upbringing, I think, was accordingly.

Q: What is your sister's name, and when was she born?

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A: My sister **Ava – Eva – Ava**, I guess, **Ava Politzer**, she is not married. She was born in **Vienna** also in June 1915.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your parents, how – and also how far back the family goes in **Vienna**.

A: Okay. Both my parents came from rather prosperous, middle class, I guess you would call it. Both grandfathers were prominent businessmen in **Austria**. Grandfather **Ludwig Politzer** was born somewhere in the far reaches of the **Hapsburg** empire in what is now **Hungary**, I guess, and came to **Vienna** as a very young man, to learn the language and to absorb a little culture. That was the thing to do for young people with any kind of ambition, to come to the capital at the time. It was, of course, the cultural center, right after **Paris** and **Rome** and **London**. He had a very interesting gold and silver – he was a gold and silversmith in a ta – in a stre – on a street that was called **Papagenogasse**, which is rather – rather very Viennese, you know, **Papa Geno** is one of the characters in "**The Magic Flute**." And a very interesting thing about Grandpa **Politzer**, we never really knew what kind of an artist he was, and in – in eight – in 1981, when the **Metropolitan** Museum had a beautiful exp – exhibit of **Hapsburg** treasures and – and costumes, we suddenly stood in front of a big, big **[indecipherable]** I call it, exhibit of jewelry that Hungarian noblemen wore, and it was made by **Ludwig Politzer** in circa – it said

circa 1872. So my sister and I just – just – just couldn't believe it. I mean, this was just an unbelievable thing. We traced it down and it is now the property of the **Imperial** Museum in **Budapest**. And to try to get hold of somebody who knew something about it was – this was 1981, I said, was impossible. So I'm still trying to figure out how I could see it one more time. But this was a – a beautiful thing. Also, he has a – a very interesting piece exhibited in one of the museums in **Vienna**. So unbeknownst to us when we lived in **Vienna**, he was apparently quite – quite an artist. The business was later on carried on after his death by one of the brothers of my father's, but I don't really know what happened. It doesn't exist any more. The other grandfather also came from somewhere in **Hungary**, as a very young man, about 15 years old, to learn something besides Hungarian. And he turned out to be a very well-known businessman. He had the most – best known haberdashery, I guess you would call it, on what would be the **Fifth** Avenue of **Vienna**, called **Kärntner Strasse**. And once or twice a year he went to **London** and **Paris** for buying materials and – and – and for made-to-order suits for men and women. It was called the English fleet, the **Englisch-Flotte**, it was very well known, and it was, until about 10 years ago, carried on by a much younger child of hi – much younger than my mother's child, but that's a long family story that I don't think I have time to relate. Well, anyway, they were both very prosperous. My father's family had –

there were two sisters and five brothers, seven. And my father, **Oscar Politzer** was the youngest. My mother's family, there were two older sisters and one younger brother. My mother's name was **Marie**, but she was all – always **Mitzi**, little **Mitzi** because she was tiny and very, very delicate. And all she really knew how to do was play the piano. That was the thing to do. And both households had a cook and a maid, and in my mother's family there was a mademoiselle that came several afternoons a week because you had to learn another language, absolutely. And my father's family with the five boys especially, there was a sort of a tutor, another – another teacher who saw that homework was being done by these – by this big family. I – I think this is important to – to realize how very much entrenched this – both families were in **Vienna**. They were socially and financially very, very much Viennese.

Q: And what kind of work did your father do?

A: My father was, I guess you'd call it a businessman. He was supposed to – to, with his brother-in-law, my mother's brother, take over the business from my maternal grandfather, but things happened. Grandpa **Berger** was his name, was widowed er – er – ma – at age 60, and remarried a much, much younger woman, to the great distress of the children. And they had another child, and that other child, of course, was inheriting the business, instead of the son and son-in-law and that was

that. So my father had – it's hard to – to translate it. He – he represented foreign firms. He was a businessman, and business was not good. We're talking – my parents were married in 1914, beginning of the war. And the time between the wars was economically very bad in **Europe**. So we had everything a child would need. And besides, you didn't talk business with your children. I was really not aware of what my father did. I wouldn't say I didn't care, but you just didn't discuss it with your children.

Q: Did your mother work?

A: No, Mother did not work, and it's – it's interesting, because she was a very, very talented and very smart woman, but girls of this age in that level of society just didn't work. There was – she played the piano very well, and I guess she knew how to cook, because she had to learn it. But then we always had a maid or somebody else who cooked, so Mother didn't – I mean, she brought up my sister and me, but that was about it.

Q: How religious was your family?

A: Not at all. Not at all.

Q: Did you celebrate any religious holidays?

A: Not at all. We had a Christmas tree, and the 24th of December was sort of a family reunion. We had a Christmas tree with real candles. And there were always

two big pitchers of water standing nearby, because we always had one or two mine – little minor fir-fires. But that – that was it.

Q: Was Christmas a religious holiday for you, or –

A: No.

Q: – a civil hol – a civil holiday?

A: It was strictly a civil holiday. We didn't go to church or midnis – mass, or anything like that.

Q: Did you ever go to any synagogue services?

A: Very rarely. I remember one wedding of a cousin, much older cousin, that I attended, but that was about it. Which seems strange, but that's the way it was.

Q: Well now, let's talk about you. Let's talk about your childhood, and also your neighborhood where your family lived. Was it a mixed neighborhood of Jews and non-Jews when you were growing up?

A: You're asking me a question I really don't know how to answer, because I don't know. Even though you hear a lot and read a lot about rising anti-Semitism, I was not aware of it. I had friends – I had Jewish friends and I had, of course, the state religion, so to speak, in **Austria** was Catholic. So most people were Catholics, but there were some Protestants. And you just didn't pay too much attention to where people went on Sundays, or if they went at all.

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Q: What kind of school did you go to as a young child?

A: I went to four years of elementary school, and then –

Q: Was this a public school?

A: Public school, yes, definitely public school, very close by to my house. I walked – I could walk by myself. And after four years of elementary school, you had to decide whether you wanted to go to an eight year gymnasium, which was high school, or just four years of – which was called **Hauptschule**. Most of the time, if you just didn't make very good grades, and couldn't really do very well, you went to **Hauptschule**. Or if there was no money at all – cause you did pay a little bit for gymnasium. And children went to **Hauptschule** if they wanted to follow a trade. It's th-the sy – the school system is very ve – was very different and still is very different from he – here in the **U.S.** I went to a eight year gymnasium, which was very strict, very difficult and very, very cut and dry academic, I would say. And I'm – I'm glad I had the good education I had.

Q: While you were going to school, I assume you had no religious training at – at that time. Did you have any hobbies or other interests, besides school?

A: From age five on, I danced. I was gonna be a dancer, and I was gonna have a dance studio, somewhere. And that was that, and the opportunities, of course, in **Vienna** were tremendous. Our household was very much infused with music. We

had a beautiful **Bösendorfer**. That's one of the big, big, beautiful pianos we had. Mother played quite a bit. My sister had piano lessons, seemed forever. And Mother tried piano lessons for me, but I just couldn't sit still long enough. So I – I had – Mother was my teacher for about three years and then we both gave up, and I'm truly sorry I did, but I gave up. So I – I danced two, three afternoons a week. You know, school was from about – well, em – elementary school it was from eight to 12. Then in gymnasium you went to school every day from eight to one, and it c – also on Saturdays, so the – the dance classes came in the afternoon. And very early in life, I did a lot of performing. That was really what I – what I loved. One of my teachers was a – one of the soloists at the **Staatsoper**, and she had a studio on the side, and was also often asked to choreograph for the **Burgtheater**, which was the dramatic stage – this dramatic, state supported stage. And there I had all sorts of opportunities. I got paid something, which amounts to nowadays probably for about 10 cents. But at the time it was – it was great to have a little – little money to save, and I usually saved it up to go on a skiing trip, because that was the other – I would n – wouldn't know whether it was a hobby, but everybody skied, and we also skated. I – we had membership to one of the ice skating rinks. And then every year, that was later on in gymnasium, the whole school, or those who couldn't ski well, they had to stay home, went somewhere for a week, into one of the youth hostels in

the **Alps**, and just looking back on it, this was probably the most beautiful, best times we ever had.

Q: What language did you speak with your parents at home?

A: Well, we spoke German, and although people from **Berlin** don't always want to admit that Austrians speak German, it is **Volksdeutsche**. So that was the language we – I had seven years of French in ha – in high school, in gymnasium, four years of Latin and about two or three years of English. So we – tha-that was very much – everybody had to take languages. And French was really usually the first foreign language. Now it's – it's English, but in those days it was always French was the first foreign language.

Q: Were your parents, or maybe specifically your father, very politically oriented, politically involved?

A: No, not at all. At least that's the way it seemed to me. I have no way of – of knowing, but no, my answer would be no. I – my – my mother's brother **George**, he was two or three years younger than my mother, was terribly proud of his World War I record. He was in the cavalry, and it was hard to get into the cavalry. I don't know whether you had to pay somebody to get in, or it was the uniform, that beautiful red pants, red trousers and blue jacket that was expensive, but he was very proud to have been in the cavalry. And was wounded in World War I, he had a very

badly crippled hand from – from a wound in World War I. And later on, after the war was over, he joined a party called the **Ligity-misten**(ph). They were – I don't know whether it was a political party or just like an association, people who wanted to have the **Habsburg** – the **Habsburgs** back. And later on, when the Nazis marched in, that was – was very bad. I'll come to that later.

Q: Was your father Zionistic at all?

A: Not at all, not at all. Religion had – had absolutely nothing – no – no impact on me.

Q: Did you feel Jewish?

A: No, I never did. And I –

Q: Did you know that you were born Jewish?

A: Yes, yes, that I knew, but it was just something that was just sort of glossed over, I guess you would call it. It's hard to believe, but that's the way it was.

Q: What kind of relationship did you have with your parents? Was it the kind that you could talk things over with, did you have especially close relationship?

A: Well, I think the relationship was close, yes, but close for these years, for – for the – for the years in the – in the 20s. Probably not for now. I'm – I'm very close with my daughter now, much closer than I ever was with my mother.

Q: What about your relationship when you were a child, with your sister?

A: Well, we – we fought, like all sisters do, but basically it was a friendship and we're still very good friends.

Q: Now let's move to 1933. You are 13 years old, and **Hitler** has come into power in **Germany**. Do you recall – okay, obviously you were quite young – any changes that you were aware of when he f – from 19 – in the early – you know, 1933, in the beginning?

A: Well, I want to go back few – few years before that. We talked about the **Soltsis**(ph) and the Nazis. The **Soltsis**(ph) were the social democrats, and the Nazis were – you know, the word Nazi comes from **Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei**. So there was this talk, and of course children pick up things. So neither one was particularly good, but the social democrats were the leading party after World War I. And I remember vaguely there was a kind of a – almost a little revolution. I think it was about '27 - 1927. Maybe I'm thinking of 1931, I'm not sure. There was a big new building development where a lot of people could get very low rent apartments, and they tried to have a little revolution against the somewhat authoritarian Christian democrat –

Q: [sneezes] Excuse me.

A: – government at the time. So I – I'm – I was aware that there was something – something going on. This was in '31. 1933, yes, we heard about **Hitler**, but that was

next door. That was – that was far away. It's hard to believe this nowadays, but you know, we didn't have television. We had just gotten a radio, and communications just weren't – and besides, I was 13 years old, I had too many other things I – I wanted to think about and do. So we – yes, we knew about **Hitler**, but that was about it. Then things became more serious. In 1934, and I remember that very well, that the Chancellor **Dollfuss** – I don't think one even knows the name here, was murdered. He was the – the Austrian chancellor. And it was very obvious that the Nazis from – the German Nazis were behind that terrible murder. It was in July, and I was on vacation at one of my aunt's villas on the lake. And we were very, very worried about what was really happening there. But then that calmed down. **Dollfuss** successor was **Kurt von Schuschnigg**, and he was a very, very different kind of chancellor. I remember Chancellor **Dollfuss**, he was a very short man, he was just five foot tall, and he was the butt of a lot of jokes. But he was a very popular man, he had a great deal of rapport with the – with the people. And the – this new man, **von Schuschnigg** was a kind of a college professor type. Very serious, seemingly not a whole lot of sense of humor, and he was also at the time, the head of the **Heimwehr**. **Heimwehr** was sort of a militia type party, it was a different party. It was somewhere between the Nazis and the **Soltsis**(ph). And a lot of the **Heimwehr** – **Heimwehr** people were aristocrats that at one time of course

were for the return of the **Habsburgs**. So he definitely lacked popular appeal. And I think he – he had absolutely no way of communicating with **Hitler**, he wasn't even trying. And he was the wrong type to ever meet up with **Hitler**. This is – this was 1934. The – 1936, of course, was the year of the Olympics, which the museum so very, very beautifully, I thought that was a marvelous decision, whoever made it, to have that year show other Olympics, because I remember that very well. I was very much into athletics and of course we realized that **Hitler** used this as a tremendous propaganda tool, the – the Olympic games. And we were so, so taken by this beautiful black man **Jesse Owens**. He was – but it was – it was very, very – there were several Austrian competitors, one or two of them were Jewish, who were not allowed to participate the last moment. So it was a very, very strained. It started – it started to be very, very strained.

Q: When **Hitler** came to power in 1933, and as the year started to go on, did you yourself think more about being Jewish, or did that not enter your mind? I'm talking, you know, even up through the '36 Olympics.

A: No, this – this didn't really – I don't know, I – I – it's funny that I have no – no feeling, no – no memories that I said oh dear, you know, what's gonna happen? Just not at all. This really didn't happen until after 1938. I had in s – in school, of course there was a – we knew that there was an underground. The underground Nazi

movement started when **Schuschnigg** came in because he – he did a lot of – lot of really very, very awkward things. He tried to outlaw the National Socialist party in **Austria**, and that was the wrong thing to do. They went underground there. So right – right on my right side, we – we sat in – in – in school, in sort of desks that were three or four. The girl on my right side, I knew wore a little swastika on her lapel, on the underside of her lapel. The girl on my left, her father was in the military, and he was to be the Austrian attaché in **Berlin**. So you know, I had a little bit of a political fallout there on – on either side of – but we were – we were friends. I think the girl who wore the swastika on the – on the side of the lapel knew that I knew she wore it. But that was alright, you know, it – and we also knew that there were certain – certain professors, certain teachers who we knew were – were Nazis, but they – they didn't make any – any difference, they didn't treat us any different. It was – it was interesting. When I think back of it, there was very little of this polit – it didn't come down to the youngsters, let's say, ti – our age group.

Q: So you yourself never, up until 1938, you yourself never experienced any difficulty, any anti-Semitic overtones?

A: Not at all. Not at all that I – that I can remember. Maybe there was, there probably was, underground. But a teenager just didn't pay too much attention to it. I – I went to a very nice dance school. That's – when I say that, it's the social

dancing, the same – same school that my mother went to, and he's still there, the school is still there, only not th – the man is long dead, but there you know, you would have – would have said you – you – perhaps there were any – any differences who could come into this class or that class. But I just don't remember that there was any discrimination like this, I just truly don't.

Q: And you didn't see any evidences on the street or with businesses. What about your father's work?

A: No, my father's work actually, I think he had some work with German firms, I don't know what happened there. I – I really, as I said before, there was very little business talk, and children were – it was just like – like not in front of the children kind of a – kind of an attitude, which seems strange, but that's – that's the way, at least in my family was the way.

Q: Well, now let's move through – through 1937, and now to March '38, unless there's anything in 1937 you wanted to cover.

A: Not particularly. I think there were – there were signs that – that **Hitler** – it seems to me that – that Mr. **Dollfuss** and Mr. **Schuschnigg** were good friends with **Mussolini**. That was of course on our south, you know, we were in between. And **Mussolini** was – was very friendly to **Austria** and he – the way I – I read some of the stuff now in retrospect, after almost 60 years, he tried to – to tell **Hitler** to stay

out of **Austria**, because I think he – he want – he was afraid of **Hitler** like everybody else. So when – when **Hitler** made moves to – which he did, to invite **Schuschnigg** to come to see him, **Mussolini** told him that he thought that was a mistake. And he also told **Schuschnigg** not to go. But I don't know what happened in 1937, but I know 1938, early 1938, January, February, **Schuschnigg** finally had to go to **Berchtesgaden**. And I remember that – that period very well, because I was in my last year of high school. And there was a sort of an unwritten law, at least it was – my parents insisted that I didn't go to any of the big carnival **[indecipherable]** it was called, until I was a senior in high school. So this was my – my time to go to – to balls, and – and the political situation seemed so – so uncertain and so – it was so, so gray, and so, so unpleasant that I was afraid they were all going to spoil my fun. But I did manage to go do some of the dances. But I do remember the time that **Schuschnigg** went to **Berchtesgaden**, I remember that – that very well, because even though we only had radio, it was all given over the radio and there was also something called – here it was called March of Time, I think. You went to the movies for just about 45 minutes, and you had the news there. So we – we got a lot of that through – through these films. And there were reports of how, for about two hours **Hitler** just raved and ranted and would not take – accept anything that **Schuschnigg** suggested. And **Schuschnigg** at the time had a

minister – I don't know minister of what, but his name was **Guido Schmidt**, who was really a Nazi. But he came with **Schuschnigg** and kind of egged him on and say oh, come on, give in, make a few little – little allowances. But it was a totally – total disaster, that meeting that he had with **Hitler**. He came home and if I remember right, I think it was a – it was a secret to the Austrian population that he was actually there. I don't think we knew about it until he came back. And it was a – I mean, we were told that it was no good, and **Schuschnigg** suggested a plebiscite. And **Hitler** said absolutely not. But **Schuschnigg** did it anyway. And that truly was the straw that broke the camel's back because that was just **– Hitler** was just waiting for – for an occasion. So on March 11th, he – his army crossed the border. And I remember that extremely well because I was at a dance rehearsal. See, by then I was – I was 17 going on 18 and I really – I was very serious about my dancing and this was gonna be a production of **Faust**, second part of **Faust**, under **Max Reinhardt**, and that – of course he was the – the – the god of the theater at the time. And this was Friday evening and the rehearsal was called off. And of course that whole thing was called off because **Reinhardt** was one of the first that crossed the border; he was smart, he left, Friday the 11th. And then Saturday the **Luftwaffe** flew over **Vienna** and Sunday the 13th, **Hitler** came in. And I will never forget that, because even though we were told not to go da – out on the street, of course we –

we young people wanted to see, no matter – whether we're for or against, but you – you wanted to see, and this Sunday night, I had tickets to go to the opera. I had a – a boyfriend at the time who was in his one year of army duty, military duty, and he had cheap tickets, or free tickets, probably. Well, you couldn't – you couldn't cross the street in front of the opera, I mean th – the ring – there's the – there's a big avenue that goes around the old town, called the ring. And all along the ring are the beautiful buildings, like the opera, and the – the parliament, and the university and the **Burgtheater** and all that. Well, people stood 10 deep to see the parade, so we never made it to the opera. In fact, at the opera, people were hanging out fo – of the windows, and it was sort of stormed by the – by the people who wanted to see the parade, and of course, **Hitler** himself, he was standing up in car with his right handed lifted, and so forth. So it was rather – rather impossible thing to erase out of your head, the noise –

Q: What were your thoughts when you – you – you said you saw the parade.

A: Yes.

Q: And what were your thoughts?

A: I don't know. I don't know whether we thought that we – we had heard that the last few years, Jews really had a hard time in **Germany**. Their businesses were either closed, or they were not allowed to do this and that. But people still – still had

a life in **Germany**. It wasn't the – the horror – the Holocaust really didn't start until several years later. So we figured well, **Austria** – because we always – the Austrians always felt oh, it won't happen here, you know, that's the Austrian temperament. But I don't know whether – whether I – I was very busy trying to finish high school. That's – that's my feeling now, but I don't know at the time. I think my parents were – were terribly undone by it. But they too felt, oh well, yes, the kids should probably leave, but we'll somehow stick it out. It was that attitude.

Q: You said the day before was Saturday and the **Luftwaffe** came flying by. What were your thoughts then?

A: I don't know. I s – I – I was told to stay home, and everybody stayed home, because it was – by then you really had the feeling – see we – we thought that there was gonna be a fight. We thought there was gonna be a war. We had a small Austrian army, but I think they were totally overwhelmed by the thought of the – of the German army and the **Luftwaffe**, so that they decided well, we better not have a bloodbath. I think that was the idea. So one stayed home.

Q: All right, you've seen **Hitler** go by in the car, and –

A: From a distance.

Q: – from a distance, and then what happened next?

A: Well, we didn't have school for a week. You know how kids are. And it was my birthday. And that was the birthday I don't remember, because I think everybody else forgot about it. It was very, very – we – we didn't know. It was a – it was a in limbo kind of a thing. There was a lot of – lot of parades, lot of oh, you have to join the **Hitler** youth. But of course, you know, we wouldn't. We wouldn't even think about it. It was a very –

Q: Why wouldn't you think about it?

A: Well, because, first of all I – you – you had to declare that you had eight Gentile – Aryan it was called – grandparents. And then I know a lot of people who did not join the **Hitler** youth. You didn't – you didn't have to. You were told you had to, but if you didn't join, you had to explain why. So it was a – I think that was probably the first feeling of oh, we better have – we have to leave. If you – if you not part of the **Hitler** youth, you couldn't do anything. So I can't really answer that question, I don't know what I felt. As I said, I was busy. End of – end of high school was a very – it was very difficult. There was something called **Matura** which was oral and written exams, very difficult. It was a sort of a summary of your – your high school years, and we had to study hard. So we still were going to finish this. So that week of vacation, which I guess it was, I don't know just exactly what I did. I – I'm sorry, I can't tell you.

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End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** volunteer collection interview with **Hedi Pope**. This is tape number one, side **B**. And we were talking about – we had gotten up to the time when **Hitler** had come in and you had been a – you said, a half a kilometer away. Did you start to feel more Jewish from then on?

A: No, I don't think I did. The – I – I still saw my friends. I sa-sat next to the girl who now wore the swastika on the outside of her lapel. And school continued. This was March, we were going to have our **Matura**, that's those orals and written exams in June. We had to work hard. One of our favorite professors was gone. She was the German literature lady. She was Jewish, so she had to go. We had a –

Q: How did you react to that, knowing that she had to go because she was Jewish?

A: Well, you better not react it, because if you expressed yourself to somebody, you were not certain what that other person – how that other person would react, and perhaps tell somebody that **Hedi** said such and such, and then that could hurt my family.

Q: How did you know it could possibly hurt your family?

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A: Well, we were told that you – right after March 13th, there were quite a few people who quickly disappeared. We weren't sure just where to. Some of them voluntarily just left. Some of them left with a passport, some of them without. Others were taken to concentration camps. This was – this was rather – you – you – you realized very soon that things have changed and you had to be careful. Careful is the word. So you just accepted it. We had somebody else take her place. The principal was replaced, because he was part – he was high up in the **Heimwehr**; that was the patriotic front, or whatever you want to call it. And he was replaced by, interesting enough, one of the regular teachers who everybody knew that he – she was in the underground Nazi party. So that's – those were the changes that took place. Also, as we came in after that one week of vacation, we saw a picture of **Hitler** in the classroom, all the classrooms had pictures of **Hitler**. And every class started, you know, different teacher comes in and we had to stand up and say **heil Hitler**.

Q: Did you do that?

A: Yes, of course. And that's another question I always get, and I feel like oh dear, what kind of a characterless person? But you know, I wouldn't be here if I would not have raised my right arm.

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Q: Were you able to talk about your concerns and your fears with your parents, or did they discuss this with you?

A: Oh yes, oh yes, we discussed it. And the – the idea was to – oh yes, you children, you just must go, and for me it was a perfect time to leave or do something else. I was possibly gonna go to university, I don't know what I was gonna do after **Matura**. So we started corresponding with two cousins we had in the **U.S.**

Q: Ju-Just a moment, we'll get to that. What was it like for you to see a swastika?

A: Well, it made you mad. I – I don't know what else to say, I – because if – if you said some – again, I have to repeat, if you – if you said something against it, or if you s – I don't know, people spit on it or some, they were immediately taken away. I mean, it was wi – life was dangerous. And I think our parents probably told us to, when we go out, be careful. And if somebody comes towards you and – and a perfect stranger says **heil Hitler**, you'd better say **heil Hitler** back.

Q: Did you yourself have any fearful experiences on the street?

A: No, not at all. I think partially because it was – I was very blonde and blue eyed.

Q: Uh-huh. Did you have any special identity papers, or your family, saying that you were Jewish at that time?

A: No, not at all, no.

Q: Y-Y-You said that people started to leave, that – those who could. Were you ev – ever aware of a man named **Adolf Eichmann**?

A: Of what?

Q: Of a man named **Adolf Eichmann**.

A: No, no, not at all. No, we knew of – of **Hitler** and **Goebbels** and **Goering** and **Himmler**. **Eichmann** I – I – we – that name, I – I didn't know until they were looking for him in **Argentina**, I think. No.

Q: All right, now you said your parents started to take measures to get you and your sister out of the country?

A: We had – we had cousins who had come to **Newark**, or to the une – the **U.S.** and settled in **Newark**. There were two women, there was cousins on my father's side, a good bit older than we were, very independent ladies. One of them – this – I'm talking about the 20s – got a doctorate at **Heidelberg**. Now that was very, very progressive. The other one was a x-ray technician. She went to **Sweden**. She just had had it with **Austria**, so she up and went to **Sweden**. And then the – the one who – th-the one who went to **Sweden** then went to the **U.S.** This was about 1936 or 1937. She was just a very adventurous person. The other one, with a doctorate from **Heidelberg**, got married and had a young child, and followed her sister. She – this woman with – then divorced, followed her sister to **Newark**, **New Jersey**, and the

two of them eked out a living, so to speak, in **Newark**, **New Jersey**. And when we wrote to them, they said, by all means come.

Q: How soon after **Hitler** came into **Austria** did you – did your folks write to them?

A: Oh, I imagine was probably June, July, somewhere there. Not really sure just when. One thing we did right away, and it was a – it was a network kind of a thing. Everybody went to the **United States** embassy and got a quota number. We had no idea what it was, but everybody should have one. In order to – to emigrate, you had to have a quota number; quotas being very different by countries. And the Austrian quota was very good, meaning the **U.S.** didn't mind Austrians coming in. But the Italian quota was not very good, and God forbid if you were born in **Hungary**, they wanted – like two people a year they accepted. Was a very interesting thing because I don't know whether this is still that way, but you – you needed a quota number. And if you wanted to know, you know, how many a month, they didn't really tell you at the embassy. But I remember at the time they said oh well, your number should come up around the first of the year. So this was, you know, a – '38, so maybe by '39 we could – we could think of it. But I remember very well just stand in line at the **U.S.** embassy in **Vienna** and get a quota number.

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Q: Did you see any signs on Jewish shops saying that they were Jewish shops, or were you aware of businesses that were closed? Did you see any measures starting to take place once **Hitler** – once the **anschluss** occurred?

A: Yes, yes, we saw that, but to the extent of – not yet. This – this was to come, but not – not yet. Quite a few business people, what happened is they perhaps – if they had an employee who was Aryan that they could trust, kind of put it into his/her hands, and that way protected themselves. There were a lot of ways of – of getting around that. Then they needed doctors badly at the time, so the Jewish doctors could stay because they were needed. So there was a lot of case by case, it was this – this sort of thing.

Q: In April, it's been written that some Jews were taken to the local amusement park and assaulted. Are you aware of that? To the pra – the **prater**, **p – p-r-a-t-e-r**?

A: No, I'm – I'm – I don't know. I wasn't – it was probably true, but I was – I was not aware of that.

Q: So you have graduate – when was your graduation?

A: All right, we g – w-we graduated and that was kind of interesting. There were so many parades going on, and so many – so many different things that we did not have to go through the orals. And that's unbelievable, I mean, if – if – if I can say there's one – one good thing came out of it, that I didn't have orals for my **Matura**.

That the written exams were in – in mathematics, and Latin, literature and French, I think. And they were, you know, five hour exams. You – you got a – got a – a title, a theme, and you had to – to write a paper on it. So they – we had to go through that, but the orals – and then that was such a relief, it was wonderful. And we had a – there was a tradition of having a **Matura** fire. And that meant you went to a restaurant, and met one more time all the – all the peop – this was an all girls' school, so there were about 30 of us. And I guess you call it a roast here, but one of – one or two of them wrote a newspaper about it, and said the most awful things about their teachers. But it was you – it was a totally, totally good affair, with – you couldn't have guessed what was going on around – around us. This was in June then, at the end.

Q: Did you talk, or confide in – confide with your sister and – your concerns, or your fears about what was happening?

A: I don't remember. I – we probably did, yeah, uh-huh.

Q: What was she doing? She's a – was older than you, so what was she doing while you were finishing up?

A: Okay, she had done her **Matura** five years – four years before I did. And then took business courses, and went to **Paris** for a year as a receptionist at the **Hotel Des Saint Peres**, which still exists. So she spoke fluent French, which she still does.

And then came home and really didn't know what she was gonna do. It seems to me she worked for sa – for one of the book stores, as – I don't know what she did, but it was no – no specialty. I da – I had this dance specialty, she didn't really have a specialty.

Q: Did you ever – or di – did your father talk about ever going to this central office for Jewish immigration in **Vienna**?

A: I – my father was a little bit more forward looking than my mother. She, I don't think, could imagine herself leaving **Vienna**. My father started taking Spanish, and English and plumbing. He was – he was good with this sort of thing. And actually the – the line of – of pre – representations he had with other firms was in the line of bathroom fixtures and that sort of thing, plumbing type of thing. So he – he took – he took courses in that. And of course his – his business more or less came to a standstill, and I – I to this day wonder how we could afford the rent, and the food, really. I imagine there were some savings, I don't know. We had – I had a very wealthy uncle and aunt, sister of my mother's, who didn't have any children, I think they helped us out at the time. I really don't know. Again, it was something that you didn't discuss with your children, so I – I'm not aware of – of – of what happened. But the – they definitely turned to – turned our thoughts to getting out. I didn't

finish my story about what we were going to do about coming to this country. These two sisters were very willing to take care of us, but –

Q: What – what were their names?

A: Okay, of course they were both born **Politzer**, older brother of my father's. And **Helen**, the one that went to **Sweden** and came over here, never married, so her – she stayed a **Politzer**. And the other one's name was **Freid**(ph), and that's an interesting story, but I don't think I'll have to tell – the time to tell about her.

Q: Her first name?

A: **Anna** and **Helen**. And they – when you sh – when you have – want – have some – somebody to immigrate, you have to furnish an affidavit. There was a – a new thing too, the quota and affidavit we had, those were new words in our vocabulary. And these two ladies did not have enough money to – didn't earn enough to – to say, we'll take care of these. So we had to find somebody with more money. And my mother had some old friends, two bachelor brothers who I think grew up in **Vienna**, that she wrote to. And this was very brave of her, because I don't think she'd heard from them, I mean, I don't know how many years. And they immediately answered, says yes, by all means, we'll let you have an affidavit. And I think it was the idea they had to do it with these two cousins, because – here again, this is interesting about the **U.S.**, two bachelor brothers could not bring in two

young ladies. Which makes sense, I guess. So between the – this was a joint affidavit, between the two men, who had enough money, and the two women who had all the family love you could wish for, that said okay, we'll take care of these two young women.

Q: You've graduated from gymnasium, and then what did you do?

A: I graduated and we went for two or thr –

Q: Excuse me for interrupting. Was there any mention of **Hitler** at graduation ceremonies?

A: Not that I remember. Not that I remember at all. As I said, it was very – it was a fun affair. I still have that newspaper with all the funny things in it, quite yellowed with age, and it's in German and nobody but me can enjoy it. And the teachers were there, and they laughed with us, and it was – it was a goodbye and so forth. It was really amazing that there was none – no – no animosity whatsoever.

Q: And now – you started to – to tell about what you did after graduation.

A: Okay, we had a real – real nice vacation. One of my aunts – one of ma – sister of my father's had a lovely villa. She actually she lived there all year long, near **Salzburg** and we usually spent two or three weeks every summer there, and there was no exception, 1938. Only it was very sad, all the – the fun people, the – there were youngsters our ages, many of them came from **Czechoslovakia**, they had their

summer villas at that lake. They were – none of them came at the time, because of course, the Czechs were next, and I think they knew it, so they just – they just didn't come. So it was a very – it was a lovely time, but the good friends weren't there. And then I took up – I watched my mother cook, and I took some dressmaking course, and I – I choreographed some – some dances for myself, because I wanted to audition, and I was going to, you know, make it big on **Broadway**. And that was about it.

Q: Were you aware of a conference in July 1938, the **Evian** Conference?

A: I just very, very vaguely – every time I see it at the museum, I say yeah, I think I remember that, but I – I don't think I was terribly aware of it, no. It was – when – when the affidavit came in, I don't know chronologically what – how it happened, but the coordination of getting your passport; telling the – the official, whatever, yes, we're gonna leave; getting the affidavit; getting sh – a reservation on ships was – was – was – was daunting, it was very difficult. We went on the **Holland** American, of course they were overflowing with requests. And – but as I said, you – you weren't sure whether – whether your papers were gonna be in order for this particular crossing, so –

Q: How did you feel about leave – talking an – talking about leaving **Austria**? Did you feel very Austrian? And leaving your family?

A: I don't think it really hit me until just – just before. As I said before, I had a – I had a boyfriend and he up and left rather precipitously because of something, I'm not su – just sure what it was. I guess it was the family's house was searched, because one of his brothers was a member of the heim – **Heimwehr**. They were not – they were not Jewish. And he just up and left. And he told my sister, but he tell – he didn't tell me. So I was very undone. This was in August, I think. And – so that – that was kind of sad. And then some of my – my – the girlf – my girlfriends left. One of them left for **Sweden**, and I still correspond with her, and her grandson came to see me about a month ago. So I – I keep in touch with people, and another one I went to school with left for **England**. And she wanted to come to the **U.S.**, but didn't have her affidavit yet. So people kept leaving, and there was a lot – lot going on all the time.

Q: What's that like for an 18 year old girl, and again, did you feel Austrian?

A: Oh, I felt very Austrian. I did not ever want to say that I was German. And of course, to this day I – I ha – I have my old passport, and it has a big swastika on it, and that really – that really hurts. I was – I was never – never wanted to say that I was German, I'm Austrian. And I say it now, too. That – that was very important.

Q: Well, here you feel very Austrian and – and you're told – then you – your family says you're going to be leaving. How did that affect you –

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A: Well –

Q: – at – at that time.

A: Yeah. Well, I think at the time, it was a tremendous adventure. I think I felt that and I – I had to fee – it was the idea of the young ones go, and somehow make it possible for the parents to come too. So I – I think it was that feeling. I – I ca – I can't really reproduce what I felt at the time. I think when you're – when you're 18, you're a little selfish. You know, it's just – it's just one of those things.

Q: And again, the summer is over, the fall is starting, of thir –

A: The fall is starting, and –

Q: – of '38 and are conditions worsening? Are you seeing things on the street, are you witnessing anything?

A: I – I personally did not witness anything. But people are leaving, and then you heard some awful things happen, yes. That so and so's father was shot because he tried to get away from something, or yes, yes, you did hear things. It was – it was – it got to be awful. But you know, until it happens to you, it really doesn't register. And of course, that gets us to November, and that's when – when things really became very serious for us too, for my family.

Q: From what I understand though, in October there were attacks on synagogues, to its schools and stores. Were you aware of that before the November night?

A: I – I really d – I really don't – not aware of it, no, uh-huh. Things have a way of blending together now, even though I remember things better from back then, than I can tell you what happened yesterday. But still it's – it has a way of – of – of – the- there are a few dates and things that absolutely stand out and always will, but then I – I am not aware of anything in October. No, it was the – the November seventh when – when this young, very misguided man by the name of **Hershel Grynszpan** went to the German embassy in **Paris** and shot this consular official of some sort, **vom Rath**, **vom Rath**. And that was on seventh, I think, and then, during the two days before the man died – he didn't die until the ninth, things started to – to boil, but didn't really boil over until the man was dead. And then **Hitler** took advantage of that, and it seemed – almost seemed as though he was waiting for an occasion like this. And that of course was – was horrendousness, the only way I can describe it.

Q: And what was – what did you see then?

A: Well, what I – what I saw before it hit our family, I remember one thing that – I don't know what I was doing downtown. Right in the center of the city there was a – I don't know he – whether he was the rabbi, or he was – he was just somebody with – threw a robe and a little yarmulke on his head, and two or three guys went just after him with – with a whip, you know. And the man cried, and – and leave me

alone, you know, and the ah – and then people around it, it was – it was terrible, you know, you just – just went away. You – you – you felt you should protect the poor man, but then again, if you did, then you got the whip. So it was this sort of thing all the time. So that's what I saw, and then, as I said before, my father took classes. I don't know whether this was plumbing, or English, or whatever it was he took, and he just didn't come home on – on – we always call it November 10th, because that was when it – when things were really – in **Vienna** were really unleashed. And we never saw him again. And that was – that was rough. No phone call, no anything. Somebody called a few days later saying I bring regards and he's fine, and hung up. Well, it was somebody who was let out apparently, for some reason or other. And much, much later, not too long ago in fact, I read a description of what happened to people. They herded them to one of the military installations in **Vienna** and they made them stand up for 24 hours, and then – no – no water, no food, and then took them to the train stations. It was November, it was very cold. And the next thing they knew, they were in **Dachau**. And I've – I read a lot about it because my mother never – never really heard, and I'm glad she didn't, that there was quite a bit of torture going on, and horrible things. And what puzzles me very much, because my father had been in the war. He was in World War I. He was not a hero or anything, but he had served in the military. He was only 52 years old, not quite. He

got to be 52 in January. And people got out. If you could prove that you – that you – that you gonna be out of the country within two weeks or something like that. And we – we moved heaven and earth. We had a nephew of my father's, a cousin of mine, who had been in **Israel** by the – at that time. He was a rabid Zionist and he had gone before things happened. And he – I think we telegrammed, and – and he somehow found a way, and we, you know, let them know that my father will be out, but nothing happened. And the – we have – I can show you that later, we have com-communications. We have the correspondence of my father. I think after about two weeks we had a card saying I'm fine, don't worry, you know? And we got about every other week, or something like this. I have donated the correspondence to the – to the Holocaust Museum, I don't know what they're gonna do with it. I made copies though, so I have it right here, I can let you have it. And on it, it says you have to have only so and so many lines, and be sure and date it, and I don't know what else, I mean you – you were really – you – you basically had to tell your family that you were fine, that – that was the thing. So that was it, and this was January – November, December. Our date of departure was 11th of January, which was my father's birthday, and we were so hoping that we – that he could get out and we could see him. And he – again and again wrote don't – don't change your plans. Don't – don't – don't do it, so we wa – which we didn't. And so we left –

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Q: Le-Le-Let's back up a little bit.

A: Yeah.

Q: What else did you see in November? You said you saw the rabbi being attacked. Did you see any other damages?

A: Yes, horrendous. I – I – I terribly resent the name of **Kristallnacht**, because all I can think of is – is – is something pretty. And it wa – there were a lot of – lot of broken windows that I saw. And I – there's several other things that – one of my friends, she was not a real buddy friend, but she – a good – good ac – acquaintance, called me and said, I want you to come over and see something. She called me and then her very best friend. So the two of us went over there and I shall never forget what happened. Some people rang the bell and said we – I don't know whether they said they want to inspect the apartment or what it is, but they totally, totally vandalized, like breaking **Dresden** figures. Cutting open feather pillows and going all over the place, and cutting nice upholstery. I mean, it was just something you – you, in your worst nightmares. So she wanted me to see that. And I mean, things like that. Or so and so's father was – didn't come home, or so and so left, on – of course, we had a story to tell too, but you were told to be very careful and – and not – not talk about it, which is hard to do. You were really very dependent on your concierge. You don't call it concierge in **Vienna**, you call it housemaster in **Vienna**.

But we had a – a family, they – you know, they live sort of on the – on the – as you come in. And usually have a little apartment there. And the family that – that took care of us, I think we – we were very lucky to not – not have more happen to us than it did, because they put – they had – they could protect you. If somebody came to their hou – to – to that door and said, okay, tell us, who – who should we vandalize or something, you know, you were – you were totally in – a victim in – in their hands. And a lot of this – this happened. Or if – if, let's say I – one of my classmates wouldn't like me, or something like this, or if – if somebody's – somebody's boyfriend you broke up with or something. I mean, it was this sort of thing. Revenge was rampant. It was – it was not – it was not good.

Q: What did that do to you in a personal way?

A: Well, I – we were terribly, I mean, to – for my sister and me to leave, was – was terrible, you know, what could we do and – and we – we could leave – we could each take 40 dollars with us. So we had –

Q: Wha – wa – when you say for you to leave was terrible, what did you mean by that?

A: Well, you – we didn't know when we were going to see our parents again, of course. By then Mother was alone, but my uncle and aunt, her sister, had moved in with her. And we were terribly afraid that something was going to happen to Uncle

Alfred, because he was president or vice-president of a company that had its headsqu – head – headquarters in **Berlin**. And not only – of course it was the – by then he had lost his job, and we were terribly afraid that something's gonna happen to him. Well, nothing did, and they lived with my mother until they all together came over here in 1940, and Mother could join us. But the – the idea that – that our father was at **Dachau** and – and Mother was alone was – was pretty awful.

Q: In November did you see any destruction of synagogues, or any building destruction?

A: Yes, yes, yes, yes, I saw – I saw a lot of this. Interesting thing happened to my – but that di – that – no, that didn't happen in November, that happened before, and I think I'd like to back up because that's rather interesting story. My Uncle **George**, my – younger brother of my mother's, who I earlier told you about, that he was a member of the **Ligity-misten**(ph), the one that was – he was hurt in World War I, had a store in the inner city of **Austria**, of **Vienna**. And one day some – two **SR** men came in and said, come with us. And he immediately showed his World War I wound, and I don't know what happened from there, but they let him go and said, but you and your family have to be gone in a week. So here is, you know, your – your life suddenly, you got to – where do you go? And at the time the – his wife had a brother in **Italy** – I mean, the irony of going from **Austria** to **Italy**. But they did,

they were safe with the young boy, who was eight years old at the time, my cousin **Peter**. And they went to **Italy**, and of course pretty soon they were thrown out of **Italy**, so they had to go to – to **Cyprus**. And then this – then they were thrown out of there, I'm not sure what happened, but they ended up in **Palestine**, and were protected by the Anglican church. And my cousin, the young boy who was eight years old, is a very well-known university professor, **Boston** University. The – the man in sociology. So, you know, s-some – but I remember we ma – my mother and my sister and I packed up their stuff after they were gone, you know, they had to – to get out in one week. And we – we packed up their belongings and – and sent them to I don't know where, but they – they never caught up with them, so they – they had nothing.

Q: You said that you felt bad about leaving your – your parents and not knowing when you're gonna see them. Did you feel bad about leaving the country?

A: Yes.

Q: Feeling Austrian.

A: I felt very bad – badly leaving the country, but as I said before, going to **America** was quite an adventure, and there were quite a few – before things happened, before things got bad, a lot of young people, not as young as I was, maybe a little older, went to **America**. The ones that – with a sense of adventure.

America was – was where – where – where it was at, you know, we got all the – the – the movies, the **Fred Astaire** and **Ginger Rogers** movies, and this sort of thing. So **America** seemed like quite the – quite the place to go, cause a lot of people did not have the good luck to go to – to the u – to the **U.S.**, they had to go to the **Dominican Republic**. And I know of people who went to **Columbia** and **Bolivia**. And that was just not as – not as attractive as going to the **U.S.** But it was – I had very mixed feelings, I'm sure I did.

Q: So your quota number came up while your father as in **Dachau**?

A: Mm-hm, that's right. I think it came up then or maybe a little before that, I'm not really sure just – just when it come. I have an old – old little diary that I have, I should look this up, but I'm not sure just when we finally were told yes, you – your affadave – no, well, not only the quota number, the affidavit was accepted, because quite often people got their affidavits and oh everything's gonna be all right. Well, something happened, and something was not all right, I'm not sure. But the combination of our affidavits, I think, was – was very good with the – the – the family, the – the cousins that took us, and the – the – the financial security of these two men.

Q: You said your father was picked up, was this while he was in class?

A: Yes. Apparently the whole class was picked up. We-We're not sure. We – we really don't know, and we will never know. But they were picked up. That was a – it was probably because I think the – these classes were overseen by – by a – a Jewish organization, I'm not sure. Or may – before emigration or something. We – we will never know. I mean I will never know. My mother probably would have known, but I don't know.

End of Tape One, Side B

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Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** volunteer collection interview with **Hedi Pope**. This is tape number two, side **A**. And we're now in January 1939, and you started to talk about getting ready to come to the **United States**.

A: We were very sad to leave without knowing too much about our father's status, but our – my aunt and uncle who had moved in with Mother told us, just don't worry about it, an-and – and everything will be all right, they said.

Q: Did you write back to your father?

A: Oh yes, yes, but I think just mother wrote, because there were – there was – you know, they limited you to so and so many lines, so many – a-and only one side of a piece of paper and so forth. So it was just Mother who wrote as – as little as she – as much as you could say in so many words, and he – Father wrote again – again and again, the girls should go and I wish them a wonderful trip and so forth, but don't make any change of plans on account of me. So we did – we did – we did write, yes, uh-huh. And we left on the 11th of January, and went to **Rotterdam**, and there we had a friend look out for us for one day and a night. Let's see, yeah, we went to – we started from **Rotterdam** with – on the **Vandam**(ph) with **Holland** American

Line. It was January in the **Atlantic**, it was very, very – how do you say it? I get seasick, in other words.

Q: Wa – what was it like to say goodbye to your mother?

A: It was – it was very difficult, and I remember myself just sobbing away. My sister was much braver, but I, I was really – I was really quite undone. But I, you know, finally had to get on the train, and that was it.

Q: Did you take anything special with you, or did she? Did your mother give you anything special to take?

A: Well, we had a little – we had – you could take one or two pieces of jewelry, but you were told if an **SR** man or **SS** man on the border says he wants that, you have to give it to him. So we bought a ring, and a diamond pin, and we took a few things with us, yes, but very little. You know, you – you had luggage, and there was just so much space.

Q: Did you bring anything of sentimental value?

A: Well yeah, we had diaries and old letters and – that I still have. And the – the little bits of – of jewelry and – and pictures, photos. Lots of photos and stuff.

Q: And so what was the train ride like?

A: Well, the train ride was – was very – very interesting, but not – we had a little food with us to – to eat on the way, and the lady in **Rotterdam** was a friend of one

of the cousins in **America** was just lovely, took care of us for a day and a night. It was very rainy, and gray and – and sad. That's all I can describe it in – in retrospect.

Q: And then you get on the boat?

A: I got on the boat, and that was lots of fun. I hate to admit it. The first four days I was terribly seasick, and I was afraid to go down in my cabin because I always got sick. But then I got over that, and the **Vandam**(ph) was a very slow boat, and there was something wrong with it too. So instead of just nine days, it took 12 days for us to cross. And there were a lot of others in the same boat, so to speak. Several Viennese, and we danced a **Lambeth Walk** at – in the evening, and the food was delicious. And it was really the first time on a – on a boat for me. We hadn't traveled a great deal. So it was sort of a – almost a last fling kind of a thing.

Q: Did you run into any difficulty in showing your papers once – in leaving **Vienna** and getting to **Rotterdam**? You know, when you had to go through that type of situation.

A: Not at all, I had a – I had a passport with a swastika on it, and – and it was just made out, you know, rather recently. And no, there was no – no problem. I s – a lot of people did, I think we were – we were lucky, because it depended totally on who you met up with. As I said, if somebody wanted your coat or your – your ring or something, they – you had to – you had to surrender it. There was nobody there that

you said oh hey this – this person is not – not supposed to do that. This totally, totally lawless – lawlessness, but that was – we went through **Germany**, and then of course we went through **Holland**, **Rotterdam**, everything was okay.

Q: How did it feel to go through **Germany**?

A: It was a – it was a night train, and really it was perfectly – perfectly normal. Everything – everything was just fine.

Q: You had referred to your passport, even previously, with the swastika in it. What – what is that like for you to carry a passport – or what was it like for you to carry a passport with a swastika?

A: Well, it – if this was the only way I could get out of, that was it. You had to accept it. You – there was no way you could protest, no way. And I think this is very difficult for – for – for young people in **America** to – to understand, that there was no – no phone number, no 9-11 you could quickly call, or anyth – anybody. There was – there was no law. There was – was absolutely no place where you could complain. You just had to accept it.

Q: Was there any time prior to your leaving that you ever felt your life was in immediate danger?

A: Not really, but I think it was just in my nature and my being 18 years old that I was just – I was optimistic and everything was gonna be all right. And the worry

about our father, I think was just so – so on the forefront, that I didn't worry about myself.

Q: Were you a very daring young woman?

A: Gee, I don't know how to answer that. I-I – I guess you'd call it enterprising, yeah, mm-hm. I don't know about daring.

Q: Was your sister as optimistic as you?

A: No, my sister's much more re – much more retiring than I am, an-and I think that is pretty much true through the rest of our lives.

Q: So now you're on the boat and for – what'd you say, 11 days?

A: Yeah, it was 12 days, mm-hm. Was a – was a long ride, but th-the landing, the approaching **New York** harbor is – is something that – that's – that's just overwhelming. And it was a – finally cleared up. The sun was out, it was very cold, but there was the **Statue of Liberty** against a blue sky, it's – it's good. And there were ma – both my cousins, and only one of the gentlemen were at the dock. And things went very smoothly from there, we had all – our papers were in order, and we had a big what you call steamer trunk, and – or two of them, I think.

Q: How good was your English by that time? You said you had taken English in high school.

A: Well, unfortunately, I had seven years of French, but only three years of English, and my English was not good. I could s-somewhat understand, but I was – it was – it was a disaster. But of course, here again too, you – you – when you're young you – you can muddle al – muddle along. And living with my cousins meant at least I could – they – their – their English was pretty good, they had very heavy accents still, but the – the – it was – it was pretty good. So right immediately we didn't feel that this was gonna be a disaster.

Q: Did you have any special emotions when you stepped onto American soil?

A: Well, I did. I – you know, you – you heard so much about people kissing the – the earth, and – and – and **Ellis Island**, and so forth. I think we – we were a little bit more sober about it all. We were glad that we were there, but we also were wishing that – that our parents could be with us.

Q: On the ship, were there other young women your age? You said there were other people in your s – in the similar situation, leaving. But were there a substantial number of young people in their late teens, early 20s?

A: Yes, I think I was probably among the younger ones, but there were young couples, and young singles too. Yeah, it was a very – it was a very interesting – interesting 12 days. We had – we had fun.

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Q: So now you've landed, you've met – and your – did you go directly to **New Jersey**?

A: We went directly to **Newark**, **New Jersey**, yes, and so what are we gonna do next? Well, everybody – we were called refugees. Oh, we were one of the big army of refugees, and I got to hate that word. And we came with all sorts of addresses. Everybody had people to call on that could help. And some – some of them were very unlikely. But very soon – my – my sister very soon found a job with a family to take care of some children. And I was determined I was gonna dance. And I didn't – didn't find anything right away. And of course, within a week, we got a letter from our s – our mother that our father had died. Which meant of course, everything just – just kind of fell apart there for a few days, and oh, our cousins were wonderful. But we had to pick ourselves up. As I said before, we he – we each had 40 dollars. And it's amazing how far 40 dollars went in 1939. So we –

Q: What – what date did you actually land in the **United States**?

A: We landed on the 23rd – or was it 25th? I think it was the 25th of January. I always get mixed up between the landing and my father's death. I think his – he died on the 23rd of January, and I think we landed on the 25th, something like that. So it was – it was very cold in **Newark**, **New Jersey** and we started going into **New York**, which meant you had a little s – little streetcar ride that cost 10 cents. Then you did the

Hudson tubes, which cost a nickel. And then you had the subway, another nickel. So there went, if it's a round trip, 40 cents went for transportation. And of course, if you were in **New York** and you were a whole day, you had to have lunch. So at **Niddick's**(ph) you could get a na – a frankfurt for four or five cents, and an orange drink for five cents. And if you were still hungry you could get a cream cheese and nut bread for five cents. So for, let's see, 40 cents fare and 15 cents, that's pretty good. You still didn't have to pay more than 55 cents for the day. So those 40 dollars went for – for quite some time, and everything else, our cousins were beautiful about it, and took care of us. My sister, as I said, then she gave up the – the job of taking care of children, and she at the time, of course, had – knew shorthand and typing and she was fluent in French. Her English was better than mine. So she found some secretarial work very quickly. And I got in touch with somebody who had – who was the pianist for one of my dance teachers. He was in **New York** and I looked him up. He was also the nephew of somebody we knew, so it was almost like a friend. And he says well, he said, it just so happens that I got together with somebody from one of the cabarets in **Vienna** and they're forming a new group, and they found some sponsors, and maybe they can use a dancer. And I got in touch with this person who was – whose name was **Herbert Berghof** and he was very well known actor in **Vienna**, and I did my little twirling around with my

dance dress, and I had a record on the record player. And he says, well, I think maybe we can use you. And they had just started rehearsal – this was in February – and we got rehearsal pay, 15 dollars a week. Now that's – that was good. That was very good. So I started rehearsing with this group. It was an interesting group, they were something called **fromme a kleine kunst Bühne**, which literally translated means small stage theater. It was a – sort of a topical review that had been very successful in **Vienna**. And they got out quickly, because it was the kind of a topical review that made fun of politics, and – and they – they better – had to get out. So they met again in vien – in **New York** with **Herbert Berghof** as a director, and they had sponsors, a list of sponsors that you wouldn't believe. **George S. Kaufman** and his wife, **Irving Berlin**, **Edna Ferber**, down the list. They all – I don't – I have no idea how much money they – they gave, but it was a little corporation that was formed, called itself the refugee artists' group. And they got a theater and we opened a show in June 1939. And for – as I said, rehearsal pay was 15 dollars a week, and then when we opened, we got 40 dollars a week, which was the minimum that actors' equity paid. And you know, all the other refugees made anywhere from 12 dollars, 15 dollars, 20 dollars, but nobody made 40 dollars a week. So I really thought I had it made. This was summer 1939, it was terribly hot. There were all but four theaters opened on **Broadway** because they were the only

four that had air conditioning. And the music box, where I was doing my thing, was one of them. It was just a glorious two month. And interestingly enough, for some reason or other, some time before I got in with that group and knew that it was really gonna do something, I had applied for college scholarships. That was another address I had, to be sure and go to the international students' service, and apply for a scholarship. Of course, I did really not know what a scholarship was and I really didn't terribly want to go to college because I had done my **Matura** and I was not that brilliant a student. So I had applied anyway, and the woman there didn't speak German. I – my English was very broken, so we got along just fine and – and she said, well, you might hear from us. And sometime in August I got a beautiful letter from International Student Service that said, we have scholarship for you at **Miami** University in **Oxford**, **Ohio**. And I just had totally forgotten that I had ever applied. And I was so happy performing on **Broadway**, I really didn't want to do it. And there was some friends – friends of my cousin's, wonderful woman who lived in **New York**, who was in radio and the arts, says, you'd be a darn fool if you wouldn't take this. Said, I don't want to. She said, well, you better. And of course, war clouds over **Europe**, very, very obvious things were going to – to be really bra – breaking there very quickly. And this show had very good critiques, but somehow

we being refugees and foreigners, with the war breaking out, it was all a bad situation. We had to be fingerprinted because we were enemy aliens. So –

Q: Was it – was the troupe primarily a Jewish troupe?

A: No, no. Some – some were, some were not. And so I reluctantly said to **Herbert**, you know, I'm going to go to coll – **Herbert** was the director – I was gonna have a scholarship. He says oh, I hate to lose you. I said, well, what do you think of the show? He says well, it may just fold. And it did. And I want off to **Miami** University, **Oxford**, **Ohio**. So that was one of those decisions that I did the right thing. At the time it was – it was very difficult, and I had to leave **New York** where my sister was, and I was suddenly thrown into a totally, totally different environment. It was a good thing. And I think from then on in, I realized that there's more to it than just staying in **New York** and being surrounded by nothing but refugees. And it was a – it was a good – it was the best decision I ever made.

Q: How did the other students ac-accept – accept you?

A: Well, I'm gonna write a book about that some time. In fact, at my f – my 50th reunion at **Miami** University, I was asked to give a speech, and it was mostly on Am-Americanization. And **Miami** University was a good place to – to get it. I think some of them thought I was from the moon, and they – they – you know, **Austria** and **Australia**, and **Vienna** and **Venice**. I mean, it was all very confusing and what

did you speak, what language did you speak? And I couldn't believe it. I got – I went to the – the registrar didn't really know what to do with me, or whoever says whether I'm a freshman or a sophomore. He said, well, we'll see. I brought my – my report cards, but you know, they were all in German. So I guess I got sophomore status right away. And I said, yes, but I just want to dance, I don't want to play basketball. Well, I had to take all these things, cause I was a physical edu – physical education major. And the faculty was just wonderful. I mean, I can't – I can't say enough of the – the kindness that – that was extended to me. The students were kind of strange. I think they re – really didn't know – I was dating some, but very little, because my English wasn't good enough, and I think it was too much work to go out with somebody who didn't speak the language.

Q: Were there other students in your position?

A: Yes, there was a – a – there was an Italian boy, young man from **Rose**(ph), but he was Italian, for some reason or other. And there was a Hungarian and a German – two German girls, and a whole group of Indonesians. And their English was – was nonexistent, so I don't know how they got along. But I had – I just – the faculty was just wonderful, because I'd had to take freshman English, and this woman sat down with me, and you know, corrected, and taught me, pronounced and so forth. I – I immediately got a part in a play because the word got out that I'd been on

Broadway, you know, that was – so – so this – this marvelous man, who was a well-known **Shakespeare** scholar of all things, gave me a part in the – in the – in "**Twelfth Night**," and sat down with me and worked on pronunciation. So there were all these wonderful things that happened, and I – my grades were strange in the first semester, but my English was – by Christmas my English was a hundred percent better, and I graduated with a **B.S.** in 1942.

Q: What kind of nata – and your mother, you said, came over when?

A: Okay, let's see, this was f-fall ni – fall 1939, I went to – to **Miami** and I remember there was a minis – one of the – I think it was a Presbyterian minister, I don't know how I got to him. Well I – I had really wanted to join a church, I needed something, especially with – with my father having died, it was just this – it was – I was totally undone. So I got to – to talk to somebody from one of the churches and said that I'd like to help my mother come over here. And they were actually ready to help, but then Mother got affidavits from the same two men, and the uncle and aunt got – there was a distant cousin in **Illinois**. So they got over here, they came over here together in April 1940. And very difficult for them. My mother was 52. Her sister was a good bit older, like 59 or something, 60, and Uncle was about in his early 60s, and he was a – a – a big man back in **Vienna**. And even though he had a little money that he managed to bring out, illegally of course, but still out, he had to

take some insignificant little position doing something. And they eked out a living for a few years, yeah. Mother came down here with me after a few years and – and spent her last years with – with me, with her grandchildren.

Q: Did your – you said you had the need to turn to the church after your father died. Did you turn to the church rather than exploring your Jewish roots because of what happened to you because you were Jewish?

A: I have the feeling, you know, it's – it's – it's funny, I – I can't – I can't think of – of what happened. I have the feeling the churches turned to me. I think they – they felt they wanted to do something for me. I – I really think it was that way. I just don't know. It's a good question, that I will ponder, but I don't – I don't know how to – how to answer that, mm-hm.

Q: You had to leave **Austria** because you were Jewish. Did – did that make you feel more, or less Jewish?

A: Less, I think. I think I was mad. I really think I was – was – was very angry.

Q: Angry at being Jewish?

A: Yeah. If – if that's the way it is, goodbye. I was – I was not brought up with, you know, going to temple and doing this every Friday night and the big holidays, so – so what good did it do me? It – it – it – it was terrible, what it did to me. I – I really think that was my – that was my attitude.

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Q: You were, I guess in the beginning of your college career when **Hitler** invaded **Poland**?

A: Yeah – yes, yeah.

Q: What was your response to that news?

A: Well, I – you know, I think we all felt well, finally there's gonna be a war, you know? And of course, we were waiting from – I think it was a great disappointment that **America** didn't do more. In fact, that – this is something I remember. When we were – when **Hitler** marched int – in March '38, what did President **Roosevelt** say? Wha – why doesn't he? Because we had great respect for the – for the president. Help is gonna come from there, you know, that was the promised land. And that was a great disappointment. Now, I was old enough to understand that, at the time. And then you came over here, and there were some strange things. There was a Father **Coughlin**(ph), this isolationists. And by then we were old enough to understand. And I remember at **Miami** University there was a lot of this – this isolationists, like they didn't know what language I spoke, and so forth. You know, it was f-from – from another world. I think this was an eye opener. And I don't know what my reaction to war was. I think if – I think we were terribly scared. I was at the time scared that my mother wasn't going to make it out. And I think it was the last Dutch boat that came – that left **Rotterdam** in April. And I also

remember that one of my best friends – but this already happened in summer ’39, she came over, I knew she was on the **Bremen**, and that was one of the ships that – I think it was the **Bremen** – the news was turned around, it was going back. And I said, oh my word, **Charlotte** is on it. Well, they turned back again and she – she landed. But it was – it was those – those things. So I think it was f-finally it was gonna do something. And – and also maybe, just maybe Americans were gonna be pulled in. But of course they weren’t until they had to. Which is a – which is all – which I can understand. I can understand it now better than I did then.

Q: So you were in college for the next three years?

A: Well, I – I – I graduated in – in 1942, and during the summers during those years, I had camp jobs. I was a camp – camp counselor, because my – my field was, well, as I said, physical education, but I still did the dance as a kind of a major. And at one of the – one of the summer camps, the head counselor was a faculty member at **Wellesley**. And she asked me what I was gonna do when I graduated from **Miami**, and I said well, I guess I’ll teach phys ed in some school. She says oh, go on, go on with it. I’ll what I can do for you to get you a scholarship to **Wellesley**, and by golly, she did. And I – from **Miami** University, I went to **Wellesley** on a full scholarship and got a Master’s degree there in ’43. So I had it made by then, cause that – that opened all the doors.

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Q: So, just to get back to the church; so you said the church was a big help to you a- and but did you con – actually convert?

A: Well n – yeah, I actually converted, but – but again I didn't – didn't practice and –

Q: Wha – when did you convert?

A: I'm trying to think. I think '39, I think it's before I went to college. No, no, no, '40. I think it was '40 because **Miami** kind of – you know, they were nice to me. They – they – they cared. So I – it must have been 1940, somewhere there.

Q: What – what denomination?

A: It was – it was Presbyterian because the Presbyterian minister, you know, was – was just very kind, very nice, and his wife invited me to Thanksgiving dinner, that sort of thing, you know, it – it – it – I guess you'd call it an opportunist. But then, whoever is nice to you, you know, you – at the time I was – I was alone, I had to – to – to fend for myself. So I think that's – that's what happened, I'm not so sure.

Q: So you were at **Wellesley** for a year?

A: For a year, yes. That was a very tough year. It was 40 – '42. Fall '42 to '43, was very cold. They – because of the fuel shortage, they made a two month vacation. I think we – we left there early in December, and didn't come back til February. I took a job somewhere in a public library in **New York**. My mother was here by

then, of course. And in ’43, I graduated and – ’43 – of course, the war was very much on, and accepted a job. I had – yeah, I had th – some choices, but – and I really wanted to – to – my mother, of course, very desperately wanted me to stay in **New York**, but nothing came through in **New York**. So I went to **Spartanburg**, **South Carolina**, **Converse** College, and had three very happy years there as an assistant professor. And that took me to 1946.

Q: You obviously followed the path of the war. How difficult was that for you?

A: Well, again, I was very young, and you had these attachments to various people who were on different fronts. I corresponded with one young man in **Europe**, one in a – inya – **Burma** theater and another one in the **South Pacific**. And I did a little dating in **Spartanburg**, it was a –

Q: The-These were all Americans?

A: Yeah, oh yeah, uh-huh. This was a – **Spartanburg** was very much a camp town, Camp **Croft**. It was an infantry camp. And it was a lovely college that had a very interesting music department. So with – with my dance thing I – I really had a – it was a good – good place for me. Cooperation with the music department, and I had to put on the – the annual May Day and there were several other chances to dance myself, and it was – it was a good – it was a good three years.

Q: Can you describe your thoughts at the time of the end of the war?

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A: May 1945, I remember it so well and – and I get a big, you know, young kids shake their heads because it – it was at **Converse** College, and I guess we heard the news on the radio and everybo – everybody sa – it was announced that no classes this morning because there's gonna be big announcements about armistice. And we were all assembled in the – in the big assembly hall and listened to a radio saying the war is over. So that was – that was tremendous. And of course I – my mother was in **New York** and my sister was working. And I was, by then, 20 – 25, and I was just wondering what – what was gonna – what – what's gonna happen in **Austria**. I didn't immediately want to come back, because I realized that that's impossible, and I didn't have any – didn't have – had very little money. My first salary was 1700 dollars a year for assistant professor. It's hard to believe, isn't it?

Q: Were you a citizen?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: When did you become a citizen?

A: You take out first papers when you first come. And I took out my first papers in **New York**. This was – it must have been right away in '39. And it takes five years, so that would have been '44. Something happened there, because I was in **Ohio** when I was supposed to be doing something else, be sworn in for something, and it took extra long for me. It – it took, I think five years and a half for me to be a

citizen, but – because there was some paperwork there. So it must have been ’44, maybe – maybe early ’45, I’m not sure just – just when, but yes, I definitely couldn’t wait. Your – your first papers are your – your sort of your – your passport to everything. But we had – we had to be fingerprinted. When the war broke out in September 1939, all alien – I was an enemy alien. I had that passport with the swastika on it. So I was an enemy alien, and had fingerprinted. But – and you had a little card with your fingerprints on it, I think, or something. It was – was kind of obnoxious, but then, why not? It’s just like now, you know, with a – I – I – the immigration nowadays, you know, I – I tried to tell everybody I was a legal immigrant. And that was the only way to come to this country, I don’t think there were illegal immigrants then, I don’t know, maybe there were. But this – this was all very legal.

Q: Did you have any negative experiences from other Americans because of where you came from and the way you spoke?

A: I remember one – one professor in the education department in **Miami** University who gave me a **D** and I was very undone about it. It was very difficult for me, I mean the expressions were so – it was so far removed from my background. And I remember I went to my advisor at the time and I said, I don’t know what I’m gonna do, you know, it was so divis – and she talked to him, and

she very frankly said well – he said – he said, how is she every gonna get along in a school with that – with a broken English, or something like this. That was – that was the only time though. Otherwise no, it was – it was nothing but – but positive. I – I must say I –

Q: Where did you live after the war?

A: Okay, I was three years in **Converse** College, and I got – I was married in '46. And that's very interesting story because I corresponded with my husband for a year before I met him. His – he was in **South Pacific**, and my best friend, who went to **Indiana** University while I was at **Miami**, met her husband at **Indiana** University, and they were married there. And when the war broke out, her husband went into the navy and was stationed in the **South Pacific**. She took a job with the Defense Department in **Washington**. And every time I went from **Spartanburg** to **New York**, I stopped over in **Washington** and visited with her and we had fun, we took pictures. And she sent a photograph of her and me, to her husband in the **South Pacific**. And this Lieutenant **Pope** saw my picture and wanted to know whether I was free and available. So I said, well we'll – we'll try a correspondence. And he wrote me a letter and I wrote back, and we went back and forth for a year. And it's – was ver – it was a very interesting correspondence. And – and war was over in the **South Pacific** in August 95 – in – in August '45. And he came back – well, the –

the single guys didn't come back right away, you know, they had to wait. So he came to **Spartanburg** in January '46, and stayed and stayed. And I said, don't you think you should see your mother and father? He said yeah, I think I'll do that, and hope to get a car away from my father, and I'll come back. And he did exactly that, and he was back within a week and stayed, and we became engaged and married in June '46. And the funny thing is that he kept all my letters, and I kept all his letters. And when we celebrated our 50th anniversary a year ago, I put all this together into two books and gave it to my children. So they have all that correspondence, which is kind of a nice story.

Q: How many children do you have?

A: Two. We have two children; a daughter **Bonnie**, who is – lives in **Des Moines**, **Iowa**, married for the second time. She is a special education, learning disabilities teacher. She is married to a – to a – to a physician. Her first husband was – is an academic, he was – he's now vice president of a university in **California**. And she had a child with the first husband, our only granddaughter. She's 19 som –

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning Tape Two, Side B

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Q: This is a continuation of the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** volunteer collection interview with **Hedi Pope**. This is tape number two, side **B**, and you were talking about your son.

A: Okay, our son **Bruce** is – he's a little younger than daughter **Bonnie**. Lives in **Atlanta**, is an optometrist. He was married for five years, but is divorced.

Q: Did you work after you were married?

A: When we got married in 1946, we first settled in **Washington**. You could not find an apartment for love or money in **Washington** in 1946. Somehow we – we – we got a little place in **Adams Morgan**, and I immediately found a teaching position which – which was called **Marjorie Webster** Junior College. I taught dance for two years, until our daughter was born in '47. We moved into **Fairlington** Apartments, stayed there for four years until we built this house, 1400 **Questo**(ph) Drive. I did what I said I was gonna do when I was 10 years old, I was gonna have a dance school, and I did it in **Alexandria**, **Virginia**. I opened it in 1947, and it was a – was a really flourishing business. I'm very proud to say that I had as many as 250 students. I taught afternoons, of course, children had to come after school. I did all sorts of benefits and – and performances. I carried on until about 1980. I was somewhat burned out by then, and one of my former students took over briefly, only she didn't try to – she – she didn't want to work that hard. And it's finally

closed, I'm not sure just when, 1985, I think. We had a – a – a professional group, dance group attached to it, but that – that really depended on funding and things became just too difficult. So I've been very happily retired since about 1980.

Q: Do you think that you would be a different adult if you hadn't experienced what you had gone through?

A: Oh yes. And I hate to – hate to say this but I think my two children are – are very di – they're wonderful children, and they're making a good living, and they're – they're working hard, but they've never had the hardships that I had to go through, and it's – it's hard to admit it but I think a little hardship now and then is good for you.

Q: What did it do for you?

A: Well, I'm – I'm more compassionate. I'm more aware of what – what awful things can happen, and I don't know, it's just – I'm not – I'm not glad that things happened the way they happened, but I – it has certainly – certainly widened my horizon, if that's a – that's an understatement, I think. Yeah, I think things could be very different, very different. I can see it now. We go to **Austria** often. I have good friends there, I went back to my 50th high school reunion, and I stayed with a former classmate who was m – first time married to a pilot in the **Luftwaffe**. And she invited me. And I think it was almost – th-the invitation wi – to me was almost like

a peace offering, it was wonderful. She – she just was as sweet and nice as you can be. And I heard a lot of stories that what happened to people who stayed over there. And some of the experiences were worse than mine.

Q: Yo-You're saying austri – not – not Jews, but Austrians who stayed?

A: Yeah, Austrians, mm-hm.

Q: Yeah. Was there ever a time when you resisted thinking about what you went through in those difficult months in **Austria**, and then losing your father?

A: Well, I – I don't know how to answer that. Of course, I th – I think of – in fact, I think of it all the time and it's – it's very difficult to – to – to not – not be bitter. Ma – my mother lived with us for 10 years and she naturally, understandably was very bitter. And she could – she could not enjoy the things she should have enjoyed, like a – two cute little grandchildren here. And my husband was very good to her. My husband is Gentile. So she was bitter. I – I am not bitter, and – and I don't think I ever will be. I think the – the – the museum d-doing the – the museum work is almost like therapy.

Q: Let's talk about that now. Can you describe your first encounter with the museum? This is before you began as a volunteer. How did you learn about the museum and so forth?

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A: Well, there was an awful lot in the paper about the Holocaust Museum. And initially, maybe when it was first chartered, which I think was in 70 – 1978 under **Jimmy Carter**, I said to myself, what do we need a museum right here in **Washington** for? I – really, this was my reaction. Which is strange, but – but that was it. I said, people are not gonna understand it. Which, you know, I had exp – experience with that, and that's why I never really – I never really talked about my experiences to anybody. My children didn't know about – about their grandfather until they were grown, because I had the feeling that was – was – I couldn't do it, I don't know. It's strange, but it's – that's the way it was. So I had the feeling wha- what's this – what's this museum gonna do here? And then i-it was built. Of course, you saw the picture of the – the railroad car coming into the museum, and all that, it got be kind of exciting. So when it – when it opened, and there was a little item in the paper about volunteers are – are being searched for, I – I applied. And I think the first visit was – is quite overwhelming. And I – I remember my sister and some other people said, how can you do that, how can you do that? And I still have a very good friend who was – was married to a German, and she said, I don't want to go there, I can't go there. Different people react differently. I – I – I wouldn't say I enjoyed it, but it was – to me it was wonderful that this was done.

Q: So you began working when it first opened?

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A: I – I – I think I was in the second group of volunteers. It opened in April ’93. I didn’t start working until October/November ’93. So –

Q: And – and what kind of work do you do there?

A: Just on the floor. I can’t think of the word right now for –

Q: In the Visitors’ Service?

A: Thank you, Visitors’ Services, yes, uh-huh. The – the usual, you know, answering questions in the information desk, giving the little spiel at the elevator, tearing tickets and just – just generally. I – I wish sometimes that the work would be more intelligent, but then, if they need the menial tasks, that’s all right too.

Q: Why is that all right?

A: Well, they need – somebody needs to do it.

Q: How has working at the museum affected your life, or has it? And has it affected your memories of the Holocaust?

A: Yes, it has definitely affected my memories of the Holocaust. I have a library about the Holocaust. I’ve learned a lot of things about it that I didn’t know. This is – this is – and the bookstore, I think, in that museum, is wonderful. I – I – I buy all the time, and I – I feel as though this is a – this is very important work. Very important. I had a chance to – to do some of the **Fanny Mae** tours, but I truly felt that the children who are led in small groups had no idea what this was all about; they were

not prepared. I think it's been corrected now, and they only take the little older ones, and prepare them better. I – I love to give a little briefing to th-the group there. But I la – I like my duty at the group desk best, because there yo – I have the feeling I'm – I'm dealing with – with people, and I – I love these little older teenagers, juniors or seniors in high school. And give them the briefing and tell them about no eat or drink and that sort of thing. And then I very briefly mention that when you go on the fourth floor now and you see the takeover for **Austria**, you think of somebody who's been there, and their mouth just drop open.

Q: Cause you tell them you yourself are from **Austria**?

A: That's a huh, just like that, you know. And I wish I could do more of that. That's the – that – that's **[indecipherable]**. I wouldn't call it a complaint, because that's the way it is, but one – I think one could – could use people like me, who've been there, and –

Q: What special insights do you think you bring because of your experience?

A: That it's really, truly true and somebody who was there is still alive. It's a – I – I th – that's what makes it very interesting to me, that I'm old enough now to look back at it and how – how – how wonderful that I could be there and now I'm here and I can still talk about it, and it's all true. I – I think the museum has la – done a lot to the – the deniers of the Holocaust anyway, but then if there's somebody there

who – who really – and this person, you know, I speak English pretty good, and all that kind of stuff. It's – I think it makes it very believable to – to that particular group, and I can tell, because then they get on the elevator and – and they say thank you, thank you so much and that sort of thing. It's – it – I think it means something.

Q: If you have friends who are survivors, do you enlist them to be volunteers in the museum?

A: I haven't really, no I haven't – I haven't tried. I – I don't have any friends here who are survivors. I've – me think, no, I – I don't have anybody. My sister came to visit and of course she looked at it, and she was – she was somewhat blown away by it. I think you are when you see it the first time, but then you get used to it.

Q: Can you describe your relationships with the other volunteers who are survivors, or who were witnesses to the Holocaust?

A: In my particular group, let me see, let me think. Yeah, my particular group is one – one other lady from **Hungary**, and we talk about it a little bit, but not very much. And then there's another gentleman on Fridays who – Friday mornings who I talk to. I'm not sure what happened to him. We – we talk about it very little. It's interesting, but we – we don't. I – I don't feel our – I'm – I want to dwell on it. I'm very happy to talk to you and talk about it there, but – but to constantly – it's a little bit like, you know, people, men who have been in a war, and constantly talk about

their experiences in the war, and people just sort of yawn and say, yeah, yeah. It's – it's li – it's a little bit like that, and I don't want to be that way.

Q: Can you tell me about your impressions of the me – museum's non-survivors volunteers and staff, either Jewish or non-Jewish?

A: I'm – I'm very impressed with the type of person who is a volunteer. I don't know whether I'm just – just lucky with the particular group on Friday afternoons, but they are just a – just a wonderful group of people, and they – they – they listen to your experiences and they – they – they feel that I have something to offer that they don't have, and they like to listen and hear about it. I have to say the same about all the nice young people who are employed, and not volunteers. I say that especially because I-I've heard people complain about them being not always aware and tactful and so forth. I've had just the opposite experience. I – I think they're very nice young people, and they too want to listen, and when they hear that you're a survivor, oh, you know, they – they get very curious. And one young man wrote a paper about me for his – one of his college courses.

Q: This was an intern, you mean, at the museum?

A: No, he was a regular employee. He wa – he was a regular Visitor Services, but paid, Paid staff.

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Q: What is it like for you when you're at the museum and you hear people speaking German, do you say anything?

A: Yes indeed, I say it in German. And then they kind of look around and they're very happy. I do that in German and I speak enough French too, to do it, and I enjoy that very much. I – I – it's – it's difficult to admit, but my mother tongue is sort of gone away. It's difficult sometimes to – to express myself. So it's – yeah, I – I like that the – the – the foreign language thing is – there should be more of it, I think and should be publicized perhaps that – but then again, me – especially Germans, they all speak English, so they don't really need me.

Q: Is there any memorable experience that you've had while you're working at the museum?

A: Well, the – the one small group of **Fanny Mae** kids I had, and I led them around and we came to the – to the Austrian part and then to the **Evian** Conference, and the idea of – of people not – people not being able to go anywhere if they're thrown out of their own country, and this young man, who had no clue to what this whole thing was all about, he says, oh dear, where would I go? That to me was a very poignant remark. Otherwise I – I – these very much routine, and it's – it's pleasant work, but it's not – not terribly challenging, shall we say.

Q: Are there any particular exhibits there that you identify with personally?

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A: Yes. I – I think the – the one – the little – little video on **Austria**, which is – is very wrong in a way, because it doesn't show the many people that didn't go out there and yell **heil Hitler**; there were a lot of them. I mean, on the outside it looked as though they were welcoming **Hitler**, but there were a lot of them who didn't. The – let's see, seems to me there was a – a – one – one thing that gives me goose pimples every time I go up there, there is something called a **Horst Wessel Lied**, have you ever heard of that? Which became almost like an anthem, and we had to learn the words to it. And that – that is being played, you know, on the fourth floor. And every time I go up there and hear it, I just – just shiver a little bit. It's interesting. It's a very kinesthetic experience. And the whole thing on **Kristallnacht** is – is to me is – is very – very shattering. It's shattering to me, and sometimes I stand up there and people go up there and they look and then they walk right by. And I feel as though I want to shake them and say hey, read on, you know, that sort of thing. So I think that's – that's probably – but that's impossible to impart on anybody else. That's just something you – you have to have experienced yourself and – and nobody else can – can feel the way you do with things like that.
Q: Did you lose any extended members of your family? Do you know of any who lost their lives?

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A: Yes, uh-huh. We – let's see, I have cousins on my father's family that were deported to **Auschwitz** and **Theresienstadt**, and I wasn't sure which ones, so I looked up their names and I found them in the archives. Those were children of the older sister of my – my father, so they were quite a bit older than I was. And I have a cousin in **England** who lost her parents and older sister. She is exactly my age. Her father was my – my father's brother, and mother. So we lost them. Let me think, on my mother's side, there was a cousin of my mother's, and her mother's sister. So the very, very old lady, and her daughter, they were deported to **Theresienstadt** and the old lady was 80 years old, had a broken hip when she was deported. So I hate to think of what – what happened to her.

Q: What is it like to stay in in the archives and look at a list and see your family relations' name?

A: Well, I don't know, it's just – I don't know whether it was because it was almost 60 years ago or what. And I have the feeling if – if – what they must have suffered, I should suffer a little bit, looking at the names. That's one way to look at it. I don't know how – how else to – to describe it, you know, it's – it's – again, it's sort of like therapy. It's guilt, I guess. I don't know.

Q: Guilt of what?

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A: Guilt that I'm here and they are not. Cause it was – it was luck, and these two cousins, one of them – one of them died when she was 80. The other one, kind of an interesting story, the one that – that was married and divorced and has a son, is now 94 years old and lives in **Helsinki**. Cause her son, who got his degrees from **Swarthmore** and **Harvard**, he's a psychiatrist, married a Finnish girl, and the Finnish girl couldn't stand it in the **U.S.**, so they had to move to **Helsinki**. And he teaches there, and my cousin **Annie** lives in **Helsinki**, and writes, and she writes in German and English and Finnish and French. A real genius. And my sister visited her last – last **[indecipherable]** so some – some people, you know, if – if these two women wouldn't have given us the affidavit and the impetus to come, we – I – I wouldn't be here. So it's –

Q: Over the years, in 50 - 60 years later, have your feelings about being born Jewish changed?

A: I don't think about it. And was kind of interesting, I have one – one granddaughter, and okay, my children are – are half Jewish, so my granddaughter is – has one Jewish grandmother, me. And this was a few years ago, she – they going to **Congrational**(ph) church, or something like that. And she says, you know, Mom, you know I am Jewish? And you should see her, she's blonde and – the most beautiful blonde hair, blue eyed. She looks like a – like a Scandinavian of some

sort, but you know, it's that sort of thing, it's – it's – makes you laugh. No, I don't – I don't – I don't feel Jewish. And I don't – this dwelling on – on what happened, and some awful things happened to these people who – who speak for the museum, you know. I don't know whether you've – you've interviewed any of the ladies who – who speak about their experiences, and – and – and they go around talking about it all the time. I don't think I want to do that.

Q: Did your mother or sister also convert?

A: No, no, mm-hm. But my mother never went to – never went to synagogue. You know, we live across one s – synagogue right here. I'll show it to you. And Mother was lonesome and Mother didn't have anybody her age, and I said, well, Mother, I'll take you across there, I know they have women's gr – oh, I don't like that.

Q: So neither your mother or your sister were upset when they heard –

A: No, no, oh no, no. No, they – I think they encouraged it. Not at all. It seems strange, but – but I think – I think European Jews are very different in that respect from American Jews. Maybe it became that way, I don't know. I – I just truly don't know, I would hate to – to express my – an opinion. My – my cousin, the sociologist college professor, he – they converted when they were in **Palestine** with the Anglicans. I think they became Anglican. And he, in fact, writes a lot and talks a lot about religion. Was on television with **Bill Moyers** not too long ago, and he

considers himself a – maybe not a Christian, but – but forgets about it. So this is a – I think the har – the – what has happened has a lot to do with it. He maybe felt angry too. Hey, if you don't want me, I don't want you kind of a feeling. I don't know. That's hard to analyze.

Q: You said that you really did not tell your children when they were growing up, about your –

A: That's right.

Q: – experience, or what happened to their grandfather. And when did you start telling them?

A: I hate to pinpoint it, I – because I'm not sure – when I had the feeling they were old enough to understand. When they learned things in history, you know, to s – to place it where – where it belonged.

Q: And what was their reaction?

A: I – I – I know – I know my – my daughter, let's see – I took her to – we were in **Vienna** together, and I took her to my father's grave, and there was some Hebrew letters on it, and I think that's – that's when it came out. She was a teenager then.

Q: So your father's body was returned from **Dachau**?

A: He was cremated, yeah. Because the story goes that it's – it's – that he died from natural causes, if you can say that. It's ridiculous. He – he became ill with

pneumonia. And believe it or not, he – there was a hospital. He was – it was at a – the – at the concentra – conc-concentration camp hospital, and died there. So his – his ashes and – and belongings with a little package, you know, came – came to Mother. And something happened there, he – they – they wouldn't open the grave of his parents, so he's actually buried with his grandmother. Very, very strange. And I go there, I mean, when we go to **Vienna** I always go to – go to the grave.

Q: What was your daughter's reaction when you told her then that – of your background?

A: I don't think she – I don't think she reacted at all. She says, yeah, I saw – I saw the Hebrew. Is – this was not – this was not anything that was either upsetting her or even – it was just something she – she took. And then I think she – she told her brother and – and he said, oh, you're kidding. But that would be his reaction, he's a different sort. So it's – it's not – it's not that much of a deal, somehow. I hate to admit it, but that's just about the way it is.

Q: Are there any sights or sounds today that trigger a memory of your time –

A: The **Horst Wessel –** the **Horst Wessel Lied**, yes, and oh, **Strauss** waltzes, yes, mm-hm. But I think that's my dancing background that does that. I was – I would just come from – from – we – we spent two weeks in **Europe** in September, and we were – for one week we were in **Austria** in a little village way up in the **Alps**. And

it's kind of interesting to see these young people, it's – **Austria** is – is booming, you know, it's very, very do – economy is doing very well, and even the people up there that – what used to be peasants, they're very – they speak English rather well, and you – you wonder what their grandparents did. In fact, that was my real reaction. I – there was a group of German kids at the museum, and it was such a happy coincidence because the – the museum should somehow be prepared to get foreign s-speaking people into the right places. Well, this was wonderful, this was a group of exchange students who were on their way back home, I think, they came – they were in **Cleveland**. And they were wonderful kids, very well behaved, but I really and truly said to myself, I wonder how much they know about this, and I wonder if anyone's grandfather or great-grandparent was one of those **SS** people who did awful things, or what – what they know about it. Because for a few years now – I – I mean, y – I think now they're teaching it again in school, but let's say in the 50s or 60s, I don't think the schools in **Germany** were taught – taught about the Holocaust. I – I really don't think they were. Oh what? Yeah, really, does that happen? No, not here, kind of a thing.

Q: Ha-Have you been to **Germany**?

A: I – just through it. Not really, I've never – well, you know, you land in **Munich**, and we took what is called the romantic road. I'd like to go to **Berlin** because it's

supposed to be beautiful. But not really. But I don't think it's on purpose or – it just hasn't worked out. I'd rather go to **Austria**.

Q: Do you feel Austrian or American?

A: I feel American, very American. In fact, this hyphenated thing, you know, Italian-American and so forth, I – I just think it's bad. I'm – I'm American, very much so. And I – in fact, I think as soon as I went away from **New York**, cause I went back a lot, because my mother was there – my sister still lives there. But as I started **Miami** University and went to college, and entered **Wellesley** and so, I was – was very bent on – on Americanization. I was probably going to the other extreme. I wanted to not have an accent, I wanted to – to be Americanized. And, I don't know, then with American husband, of course, he was in the navy, you know, and his parents, **Massachusetts**, **Boston**. So I – I made a real effort the other way, maybe – maybe to the extreme, I don't know. But I feel very American. But when I go back to **Austria** the – the dialect comes back and I – I feel very much at home. It's a wonderful feeling. It's something that – that is kinda great when you go to a foreign country, but it's not a foreign country. It's very nice.

Q: Is there anything you want to add before we close?

A: **[indecipherable]** I don't think so. I think you thoroughly milked the subject. I don't – I don't know. I have no – nothing. No, not particularly. I was very happy to do this.

Q: Well, thank you very much for doing the interview. This concludes the interview of **Hedi Pope**.

End of Tape Two, Side B

Conclusion of Interview