# United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

## Interview with Ruth Harvey
## August 22, 1997
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# PREFACE

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# RUTH HARVEY
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Margaret Garrett: This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Ruth Harvey conducted by Margaret Garrett on August 22nd, 1997 in Bethesda, Maryland. This interview is part of the museum's project to interview Holocaust survivors and witnesses who are also volunteers within the museum. Tape 1, side A. Would you state your name at birth.

Ruth Harvey: My name at birth was Ruth Abel, A-B-E-L.

Q: And your date of birth?

A: October 9, 1928.

Q: And place of birth?

A: Berlin.

Q: Would you talk about your parents and your grandparents.

A: I only knew my maternal grandparents and they were gentle people but I also, they were a bit forbidding. They didn't have a great way with children.

Q: And their religion?

A: They were Jewish.

Q: And your mother?

A: My mother as well was Jewish.

Q: And what about your father and his parents?

A: My father's father was Jewish but in those days you were German first and then whatever religion you were. He happened to fall in love with a Christian girl and switched religions in order to be able to marry her. He became a Christian.

Q: Yeah, in order to be able to marry her because of her parents or—

A: Now this is something I do not know. I don't know. This was quite a long time ago.

Q: But you were just told that he could not marry her unless he converted but you don't know why.

A: I don't know whether it was a must situation or whether it was just something he chose to do. Probably her parents might have objected but I don't know any of those circumstances.

Q: So your father was raised Christian.

A: Yes. Although secularly really. Observing the major holidays but nothing much in between.

Q: And do you know whether he was Catholic or Protestant.

A: No, no Protestant.

Q: Protestant. Lutheran or –

A: Yes, Lutheran Protestant. So he—

Q: Protestant Lutheran.

A: Yes.

Q: And so his family were secular Lutherans and were not very observant, as far as you know.

A: I wish I could tell you. But you know my father was already 40 when I was born. His parents were long dead. I never knew them. All I knew was the stories he told me.

Q: And what kinds of stories did he tell you?

A: Well I mean the history of the fact that he never knew his mother. Only after she died, he heard some aunt saying the poor boy and that was actually his first memory. He does not remember his mother. She was the Christian. And his father, he was extremely close to, very, very, he loved him and honored and respected him. In fact all during my childhood not, not a day would pass that he wouldn't mention his papa. In one nice way or another.

Q: So you had an idea of him, even though you didn't know him.

A: Oh I saw photos of him. A very, a man, with very big eyes and worried looking. He had been widowed so very early and was never remarried you know.

Q: So your father was Lutheran and your mother was Jewish.

A: Jewish.

Q: And what was your household like? Did your family—

A: Well. My parents were not church goers or temple goers as such. My mother sometimes with friends might go to temple for high holy days, Jewish high holy days. But other than that she never did and my father simply was not a church goer, although he was a very religious man. When I was a teenager I spoke to him once and he didn't answer me, didn't answer me. And after about five minutes, he looked at me and he said I'm sorry I didn't answer you, I was praying. That was his religion and it was very deep. But he was not a church goer. But he accomplished miracles as you will later find out. And I'm sure it had something to do with his relationship he had with the higher being.

Q: And were you baptized?

A: I was actually baptized. And you know I was young child. No, no I mean I wasn't a toddler or an infant. I was already, I can't remember how old I was. Maybe five, something like that. And they decided that I should be baptized. And we went to Pastor **Neemuler**'s church but he was not there. Someone else baptized me but with water from

the **Rubes spray** in Berlin. And I remember we came home from that and my mother had a close Jewish girlfriend who heartily disapproved. She thought it was just terrible. And she told them that. But then she invited them in for coffee and cake to celebrate.

Q: So this would have been in 1933 about.

A: Probably. Or a little later. I don't know whether I was, I cannot remember what age I was. I might have been older than, probably they might have done it a little later when things were beginning to look really bad. 33 was still fairly early, you know. I wasn't aware of what was really happening.

Q: But some persecution had started in 1933.

A: Yes and you know you have these roving bands of Brown Shirts, singing anti-Semitic songs and torch parades. A little bit awesome and scary, that sort of thing.

Q: So you had a baptismal certificate?

A: If I ever had one, I don't think I ever saw it. Honestly. My mother must, I don't know. I just, I've never seen it.

Q: Do you think that if you were baptized that one existed.

A: This being Germany, you can be darned sure. They had documentation for everything.

Q: So you went to school.

A: Yes.

Q: To a public school?

A: A public school until a certain time period, later in the 30s. When Jewish children were no longer allowed in public school. And under the logic of the Nazis they had me figured out as being three-fourths Jewish. So I went for a time, only for a time cause then we left Germany, to a private Jewish school.

Q: You said they had you figured out. Who—

A: The Nazis.

Q: The Nazis. And how did they know that you were –

A: It would be like city hall. You know.

Q: So they would have traced who your grandparents were.

A: Yes, mm hm, well anything is documented so they knew exactly everyone's, they knew my roots better than I did.

Q: So you had to leave the public schools. Do you remember that?

A: Yes.

Q: And what was that like for you? To have to leave?

A: Distressing. Scary. All of a sudden I was taken out of my, although I must tell you, that the public school was no longer a pleasure. There was one teacher who was very anti-Semitic and was perfectly beastly to us Jewish children.

Q: What did the teacher do?

A: Oh it was just her sharpness and her nastiness. I don't remember details. Very quick to slap faces, things like that.

Q: Do you remember your face being slapped?

A: Yes, mm hm.

Q: And did you tell your parents?

A: Well it was the custom in Europe for the teachers to do that. It wasn't, I mean, now it would be a shocking thing, but in those days it was done.

Q: There were other Jewish children in your class?

A: You know that is vague to me. I don't really remember any particular Jewish, none of us children really paid attention to our different religion. We were just kids together. And I to this day I could not tell you who was Jewish and who wasn't. I think there probably were more non-Jewish children in that class. There may have been a handful besides myself.

Q: Did you think of yourself as Jewish?

A: I always thought of my, thanks to the Nazis, I thought of myself as three-fourths Jewish and one-fourth Christian.

Q: And what did you think that meant, being Jewish?

A: Being three-fourths of one religion and one-fourth of another religion.

Q: So what did Jewish in particular mean to you?

A: I wish I could really explain it to you. Later upon maturity, I realized much more about what it means.

Q: But as a child.

A: As a child it was just a religion that for some reason wasn't popular at that time in that country. I was just a child.

Q: So you had to leave the public school.

A: Yes.

Q: Did the Jewish children in your class go with you to the same Jewish school.

A: No. I remember going to this Jewish school which was in a nice suburb there, called **Rosentav**, which means valley of roses. And not really now wait a minute. That may not have been there. But the lady, my mother's best friend whom I stayed with for a while, she lived in **Rosentav**. I remember having to take a bus in the mornings to get to the

school. I can't tell you to this day where it was. But it was a very nice school and everyone there was Jewish and they were all new faces to me. So.

Q: Was the curriculum very different from the public school?

A: The one big difference was that I had to learn Hebrew, which was very difficult and of course, I never really learned it. I just learned some of the symbols and how to pronounce them and how to read them. But you know that time period could not have lasted very long because I didn't do that very long. And it was must be shortly thereafter that we left. That means in other words, that I didn't leave the German public school. Well I left Germany in 39. Probably 38.

Q: That you left the public school.

A: Yes.

Q: So you were about ten.

A: I think I was nine. I was ten when I left. Yeah.

Q: What else do you remember from that time about what your life was like?

A: Well there was one little instance. I was down, I don't know if it was **Vonnzee**, that great big bathing resort, outside of Berlin. I was at the beach. And playing in the sand and a little girl came over and she said may I play with you. And I was just about to say yes when she added but not if you're Jewish. My mommy doesn't let me play with Jewish children. So I said well I am, or you can't or something. And that was the end of that. But I remember it to this day. And I'm now 67. But you must admit that that is, others had much worse experiences. And, and even though this was a small thing, it was a pin prick that lasted. Let me see what else. Well you just wanted me to tell you about things that went on around me and my reactions to them.

Q: Sure

A: Well there were Hitler's speeches on the loudspeakers in the streets. I would hear this male voice shouting and of course his Austrian accent. I never was able to understand a word that the man was shouting. He could have been talking another language. I didn't understand what he said. And there were all sorts of things in the newspapers which of course I didn't read but I heard my father and my mother discussing them at home in the evening. And he would you know furrow his brow and be very worried and he always thought that this couldn't last. This was just something that would go away.

Q: This is your father.

A: My father. Sorry, my father. And he just couldn't believe that this madness could stay and they would be talking. There was a current joke that went around in Berlin that it ended with the Jews and the bicyclists. And the question would be why the bicyclists. And then the answer would be why the Jews. And that time it was one of the current jokes. It sounds better in German. And let me see what else. It was just a general feeling of, I don't know, something dark surrounding us. And of course, shall I go on about when my father left or do you want to ask me that later.

Q: Well before we get to that, what was your father's occupation.

A: All right. He had his own export import firm and then he hired a new secretary and this was my mother to be. And, they, she was his secretary for about four years and it was a one man company. And of course no, he had people that worked for him but they were salesmen. It was export import and it was doing quite nicely.

Q: What export

A: I, I remember he had British Yardley's so and things like that. All sort of different things. And everything went along well. My parents got married after they had known each other for four years. I was born the next year. By then it was 1928. And his

business folded. Times were bad. Horrible. And he ended up scrounging around for all sorts of different jobs.

Q: Now was the business folding, was that a result of persecution.

A: I believe so. I don't know. I think it was the economic climate. I don't know if it was a depression that had touched Germany. As well. I'm not clear about the economic reasons. I just know that before I was born, or while I was still an infant this business was no longer supporting him.

Q: If his father was born Jewish, was he considered a Jew?

A: You mean his father.

Q: No your father's father was born Jewish. So was your father considered a Jew by the Nazis?

A: Yes. For the same reason that I was considered three fourths Jewish, he was considered one half Jewish yes.

Q: I wondered whether that –

A: He had been in World War I. He had gotten the Iron Cross, second class and he had been a patriotic German and he was 40 when I was born. He had had a very happy young manhood in Berlin, enjoying himself. Enjoying life in Germany. And all this came like a bad dream and he couldn't believe that it was going to last.

Q: So backing up a bit, there was bad economic times and his business got into bad trouble and so then what happened?

A: Oh he scrounged around. He sold vacuum cleaners. He was a wine salesman. You see his great gift was salesmanship. He used to, his nickname was **Fredl.** They used to joke **Fredl** could sell refrigerators to Eskimos. He really could. And so he kept us afloat with that. And my mother, when I was older, she went and got herself a job at something called the **Palestina Unt**. The office for Palestine, a Jewish organization, near where we lived. And she had a regular office job there, secretarial. And she had that job actually until we left. Oh, but before she got that, she tried everything. And I'm going to jump ahead and say when my dad left.

Q: Ok.

A: She took on a job as a housekeeper for a very nice well-to-do Jewish family and it was really nice because there was a young woman there who she became very good friends with. And her grandfather, the young woman's grandfather and her mother who

seemed to be a little bit retarded. Some kind of emotional problems. Her grandfather was a marvelous old gentleman and they sort of adopted me as the child of the house, and spoiled me. And my mother did cleaning and cooking and it was something she'd never done before but she was really great, very adaptable and hardworking, just to keep us going.

Q: So she was doing this to support you.

A: Yes and also we started out in a lovely apartment when I was born. Then we went to a slightly less wonderful apartment. And finally ended up in a furnished room. Things were really, really bad. We were poor.

Q: So going back to your father leaving. How did that come about?

A: All right. This was still before Kristallnacht. But things were bad and he was struggling and one day a letter came from City Hall to present himself in the next day with his passport. And he knew something was up. He was very intelligent and aware, even though he couldn't believe that this would last but he knew that things were getting dangerous.

Q: What did he think that was all about?

A: Well I'll tell you. At that time my mother was already employed at the **Palestina Unt**. Yeah, I get confused. He called her at work. And he said Edith, come home and help me pack. Tonight I have to leave Germany. And he explained that they wanted him to present himself with his passport at City Hall and he knew what that meant. They were going to put a J in it for Jew, which would mean that his traveling would be severely curtailed if not made impossible. And he decided he was going to flee that night. Get out of there.

Q: Before they put a J on his passport.

A: Yes, yes.

Q: And so how did he leave?

A: Well. I think he went to his great aunt Matilda and borrowed some, she was the Christian part of the family and quite well off. And she lent him some money and he, I think he took a train to um, somehow he found -- there was two places he went to. He was in Amsterdam and he was in London, trying to find a stepping stone. I'm a little confused where he went first. And then eventually he ended up briefly in New York to gain a foothold. But in order to enter legally into the United States, he needed a quota number, visa. And so in those days, people in that position would either go to Canada. Some ended up in China. In Shanghai. And he opted or maybe it was the only choice he

had to go to Havana Cuba, to wait for this and so that's what happened. In the meantime, we had a year without him. And I must tell you he was a marvelous cook. He was a great cook and he had made a bouillabaisse his last day and I remember after he had left, he had left in the evening. And I don't quite know what mode of transportation. He must have taken the train to Hamburg, to take the boat over to England, something like that. There we were with his soup that he had left. And I remember my mother and I eating that soup and the tears were just rolling down our cheeks. And for many, many, many years, I couldn't stand bouillabaisse. I just couldn't stand. Then much later on I developed a real liking for it because we were together again. That was something. It was a terrible shock to have him gone all of a sudden. But he saved himself and he saved us. By that action.

Q: So when he left you had some awareness of what was happening.

A: OH a great deal of it. In fact fear was our constant companion. Because then we had Kristallnacht. November ninth wasn't it? 1938. I believe. And my mother was a real Berliner. There's an expression in Berlin. If somebody comes at you all excited, we say **Nabublensten** (German) which means oh so where's the fire? You know. So at 4:00 in the morning or at 4:30 or 5 there's a pounding at the door. And my mother gets up out of her sleep. This is some time after my father left. I don't' know how long. And all grumpy and she goes to the door and opens it and she said so where's the fire? And the person knocking on the door said the temple across the street is on fire. The Jewish temple. This

was **Fazanemistrasse**. The corner had hotel **Kampinski** at it. That was the last address we had in Berlin. And kitty corner from us across the street was the, a Jewish synagogue, which is now by the way the Jewish Community Center. I saw it in 1978. They did something very smart. They saved the front of this temple. It had been a beautiful building. They saved the doorway and made a modern building for the Jewish Community Center, and put the doorway there. It was a striking and very beautiful thing. And the strange feelings come back after so many years and see that. But anyway to get back to that horrible night or morning. My mother must have gone out the door to take a peek at it. I don't' remember. She left me upstairs in bed or maybe I slept through all of this. I don't know. And I remember. She stayed home that day. And I remember saying oh how nice. You don't have to go to work. You're staying with me. And I remember her sad smile and she said but what a reason. I was too young to understand the horrible things that were going on around me. And another really nightmare moment was we at this time lived in a furnished room. And I in fact slept on a cot in the kitchen. It was a nice big old Berlin apartment and the lady who lived there was a wonderful old lady. Her name was Mrs. Moses. I think her first name was Martha. I'm not sure. She had a retarded daughter, a little shriveled lady, must have been in her 40s or 50s, scared me terribly because I didn't know about retardation. But she was kindness itself, very old and tired looking. And she was very good to my mother and myself. She had some other tenants there too. She had her son living in the apartment above her. And I think it was the day after the fire or very shortly thereabouts that there was talk of Jewish men being searched for by hordes of SA men. You know those were the Brown Shirts. And there

was a brass door sign next to the apartment door. Outside the front door and it said Moses on it. That was her name. And some very smart person across the way said, you know if I were you, I would unscrew those screws and take that sign off. It's a very Jewish name. They're bound to come to you. And my mother was real feisty Berliner always, said oh that's not necessary. She didn't want to do that. And the reason prevailed and they did it. And it's a darned good thing because later on we heard these boots on the stairs. My mother and I were inside the pantry. With her arms around me, shaking like aspen leaves when we heard those pounding boots coming up the stairs. And we heard somebody say "Oh, don't ring there. There's no Jews there" and they went on up. I believe they got her son, either that time or later. And I don't know. She and her daughter must have ended up dead. It was just dreadful. Anyhow, that is a moment that is probably the most frightening moment of my life. And we crept out of the pantry. The Nazis had gone. And then shortly thereafter it must have been that word came that we should go to H—from my father who had at this point reached Havana. And, and he said, he wrote, go to Hamburg. Go to the Cuban consulate and get all your documentation and soon I'll be able to send for you. And so my mother and I took the—and early morning train. It was still dark, from Berlin to Hamburg.

Q: Now this was right away, the next day.

A: No. As a child your sense of time is really non-existent. It's fueled by events. I simply cannot tell you. It must have been shortly thereafter. I'm sure. And so there we were. I

thought it was the greatest treat in the world to sit in the dining car, a little ship. No, white table cloths and silver and waiters. And I remember eating a soft boiled gg and looking out the train window. I took my enjoyment where I found it you know. (laughs) I thought that was great. Well then we trudged through Hamburg and we went to the consulate. Everything was fine. It was lunch time. And I was getting hungry. And my mother, everywhere she saw a restaurant it said Jews aren't wanted, forbidden to Jews. And she was a mother first and she decided the heck with all of this. She had young child here and she was going to see to it that that child got some lunch. And so we just walked into one of those restaurants and ate. And of course it didn't mean much to me but you can imagine her feeling. And then shortly after that I was able to leave the school and happy word came that –

Q: Wait a minute. You weren't—did you go back to Berlin or did you stay in Hamburg.

A: Oh yes, this was just a trip to get documentation from the Cuban consulate. And then shortly there—

Q: So you went right back to Berlin?

A: We went right back to, to Berlin.

Q: How long was the trip from Berlin to Hamburg?

A: You're asking me something I don't know. I'm not, I can look at the map here. How far is Hamburg from Berlin. Maybe—let's see Hamburg.

Q: So you did it in a day?

A: Oh yes, oh my yes. It was several hours.

Q: So you didn't have to stay overnight in Hamburg?

A: I don't remember that. It must have just been a day trip, yes. And so then the wonderful word came that we would be able to leave. And do you want to ask, I mean anything else. Or should I go on to that now. Word came and my mother got ready. Prepared everything. You know now I have to go back to childhood memories, before I continue with this. Let me delve back. You know we started moving from one nice apartment to one less nice, to one less nice, to a furnished room. I remember a lovely place we had. **Geisenhimerstrasse** is the place. It was outside of Berlin and it was a little apartment with a balcony but it was on the ground floor. And I remember, at that time I was four years old. And I was just starting, having this impulse to draw pictures. And so I remember sitting at a little table, on a little chair on this balcony. It had a hedge around it to separate it from the road. And I would sit there with paper and pencil and scribble and scribble happy as could be. I remember that clearly. The first apartment I

remember. In fact, my first memory was waking up from a sleep and my parents were in the next room packing and we were going to Denmark the next day for a little trip. That was my very first memory. I think I was three then or something.

Q: So that was a happy time when you were a very small child.

A: Oh yes, my parents were my world. I had no siblings and they were always absolutely wonderful parents. We had a happy relationship. Trouble free. And that, why did I go into that-- oh later on when I came back with my mother in 78, we visited this apartment because that was the only place that held happy memories for me. It was raining cats and dogs and the apartment, the whole neighborhood was now filled with Turkish labor immigrants. They, you know you've read about the Turks that, and they were having a very hard time and foreigner hating Germany you know. And there were these Turks in that apartment. We couldn't make ourselves understood that we used to live here. That we wanted to see it. It was a blank. And it was rainy. I felt heartbroken. I don't know why but I felt so sad. Anyway that was—I'm digressing here. I went back into the past. Now this, why did I do that now. What was I trying to tell you?

Q: You started to talk about leaving Germany and then you went back to your early childhood happy –

A: It's not, leaving that neighborhood. We had to leave that apartment because we just didn't, we didn't have any more money. And that's when the furnished room life started. And no I think there was one more apartment, high under the roof, which wasn't too bad. And then came the furnished room. But anyway, the day that we had to leave **Geisenhimerstrasse**, there was neighborhood Punch and Judy show. In German it's called **Caspela Teata** and all the neighborhood children were getting ready to sit and watch it. And I had to leave. I had to drive away with my parents. That very time. And I felt so bereft, you know. So that was a sad thing.

Q: So it was in many ways difficult for you to leave your home?

A: Well that home, yes. But then later, leaving **Fazanemistrasse** to go on the boat to Cuba was unbelievable happiness. I was not sorry to leave that Germany.

Q: Talk about that leaving.

A: All right. I had to, I was never one for dolls but I had a lot of stuffed toys and particularly I loved a white stuffed cat, beautiful little white stuffed cat with green glass eye, a little pink nose and a moustache. I loved it. And for some reason, with all the excitement of packing and getting ready to leave that got left behind. And I don't know whether we were in a taxi to the train or in the train or what. All of a sudden I remembered and I said oh **Mutti**, I forgot the cat and can we go back and she said no, oh

no. I mean can you imagine in her mind going back and being snapped up. Of course not. But you know to this day I have regrets about that stuffed cat. And other than that.

Q: Let's stop here because I have to turn over the tape. (pause) This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial museum volunteer collection interview with Ruth Harvey. Tape number one, side B. When we stopped you were talking about leaving your animal behind.

A: Well, it was not a living animal. It was a stuffed toy animal.

Q: And how upsetting that was for you. To forget that and then you were telling me about a painting that you did which you now have in front of you and the title of the painting is.

A: Childhood memories. It is so strange. My art teacher suggested a subject because I was at a standstill. She said why don't you paint your childhood memories. And it unleashed a torrent in me and it had a very odd result. I had been planning a trip through the Rhine country, a picturesque German towns along the river. When I got through painting this painting, I had gotten so closely back into my childhood self, that I was totally unable to go to Germany. And I changed my travel plans and went to Greece instead.

Q: So you had a lot of very strong feelings.

A: Oh my lord yes, and you know it was catharsis. It just came out.

Q: To do the painting?

A: As I did the painting yes.

Q: Could you describe some of the things in the painting?

A: Yes, I'd be happy to. Down here you see this cornucopia with the colorful objects.

Q: This is in the lower right hand

A: The lower right. I'm going to go from the lower right hand. Now in Germany when children reached school age their loving families present them with these cardboard cornucopias filled with candy. This is a German tradition for your first day of school. I remember mine was just somewhere, I have a photo of myself with that in my arms. It was like this big. And it was filled with candy, and but this year symbolizes. It's lying on the ground with all these colors spilled out of it. And I think of that as my spoiled childhood.

Q: Spoiled childhood?

A: Yes. Spilled, spoiled yes.

Q: What do you mean spoiled childhood?

A: Well instead of having a normal childhood, going through the normal schools in the normal way, it took all sorts of odd twists and turns and humiliations and scares and that sort of thing.

Q: And what else in the painting is especially important to you?

A: Now you see there a little girl with her arms outstretched floating after a white toy cat. That's the story I told before, that to this day I'm searching for that.

Q: Over here and you can speak into the microphone.

A: Thank you, yes. So that is there. To the right of it is the Punch and Judy show. If you look at it very closely there's a devil with a pitchfork and horns. These are all red. And there's **Caspela** or Punch as he was called in English with his stick and his pointy cap and his red nose. And later on when I was all filled anew with, with fury at what had

happened, I somehow thought of the Punch as a typical stupid German and the devil mainly Hitler or Goebbels leading him on. I thought of that later, with an adult mind, fairly recently. As a child I just thought of it as Punch and Judy but somehow it fits into that painting. You know, for that reason. Now to the left of this you see a black rectangle, with a white bulb on the top and you see two shapes. A large female shape and a small female shape. Clutching each other. And that was my mother and I in the pantry clutching each other in deadly fear. Behind it you see gray steps going up and a large red swastika behind it. That was the sound we heard of the Nazi boots on the stairs. Now if there's anything else in here that you want to ask me about.

Q: Is there anything else that is particularly emotional for you?

A: Well all right. Emotional. It's both good and bad. Here you see a gray ship going through the ocean, bravely headed in a new direction. And that was the German ship the **Orenachal** and my mother and I were lucky to get tickets on that. We were in fourth class, steerage. We were down in a down below in a huge room shared with many other women. I think there were 40 of them and lower bunks and upper-- my mother and I of course were together I think it was a lower bunk. And what she had done, brave lady, we had a wonderful oil painting. It's right over there. It's a self-portrait of a great, great grandfather of mine who had artistic talent. And he did this painting of himself in the earlier part of the 19th century. And so she took it out of the frame because this was the one true antique that we had of great sentimental value, a self-portrait of an ancestor. And

she rolled it up and we slept with it between us in a cardboard roll. That was the one thing she managed to get out. You know. And now it's hanging there. Anyhow that was a pretty unpleasant trip. I mean the sleeping conditions – the food wasn't too bad. It was simple but good. And I as a child enjoyed everything. The adults of course are worried sick and uncomfortable.

Q: You were on a German ship.

A: Yes and in fact there's something in there I'm going to tell you about, yes, because the first – ok, this here what you see here is –

Q: We were talking about the painting yeah the upper right hand corner of the painting.

A: And I'm still in the middle here. There's a black and white tile floor. There are tables with white table cloths, an elegant French door, palm trees, or palm bushes in pots. Very elegant salon. Well there was a lady on the ship who was a very well to do Jewish lady and she was traveling first class. My mother and she were acquainted. And one day she invited us up to first class for tea. Now we had been for quite some time down in the hold. And here I am a little girl. And when we went up there I heard violin music playing and waiters scurrying by with trays. And I saw all this luxury and it made a very deep impression on me. It really did. The next picture you see is a man, my father, wearing his blue bow tie, white shirt, and gray pants with his arms raised in the air, and he's standing

under a palm tree and bidding us welcome. Very welcoming figure. And were we ever happy to see him. And then it goes on the painting swirls up to the right above and there's little girls floating around. Those were the little girls I became friends with once we settled in Cuba. And they were very lovely. And of course I didn't speak Spanish and they didn't speak German. But I managed to learn both Spanish and English, at least starting to while I had that year and a half in Havana. And the end of the painting at the upper right, you see these white towers, skyscrapers. You see the stars in the sky turning into the stars in the American flag and this was the land of our dreams, which I didn't' know yet. And I saw these miraculous skyscrapers up there and we had to get there. And that was the idealized version of it. That pretty well describes everything.

Q: Oh that's a very interesting painting.

A: Thank you.

Q: Can we go back and fill in some of the details of your trip. You and your mother were in the taxi cab going to the train.

A: Or whatever conveyance, yes.

Q: And then you got to the train station in Berlin.

A: Oh that is no, I don't' remember those things.

Q: You don't.

A: No, I just remember I have never had a terribly good memory. I just remember the emotional parts or the dramatic parts. How I got somewhere, how long it took, this is all gray area. It's something I honestly don't know. At that time I was about nine years old.

Q: Do you remember on the ship, the Oronoco, it was a German ship and I think you had said it sailed from Hamburg?

A: Yes, to Havana. Oh and we stopped in Antwerp once. All I remember there are houses with blue tiles. We stopped there shortly.

Q: Do you remember on the ship whether you were treated differently being Jewish?

A: The German crew for the fourth class were very decent. Nobody ever was rude or nasty. They were very decent and in fact my father always had high regard for the German navy. Men who were at sea. He had wanted to become a naval officer but his astigmatism kept him from that. And no, no there was not one instance of any kind of rudeness or mistreatment. They were other very interesting Jewish people who were professional people who were also down there in steerage and we enjoyed each other's

company. And I had photo of that little girl with a scarf and a little sailor doll. We must have bought on board, looking as happy as could be.

Q: Were most of the other passengers Jewish?

A: The people down at that level certainly were.

Q: The trip was as you described it before. Do you remember anything else about the ship?

A: Just a terrific contrast between our steerage and that first class salon with the violin music. It was unbelievable. I stood there thunderstruck. I thought I was dreaming it all you know. And of course I enjoyed seeing the gray north Atlantic. I had never been at sea be—I mean no I was at **Vonnzee** which is a huge lake. I had never been by the ocean. I loved it, I thought it was just wonderful. I've loved it ever since.

Q: You arrived in Havana.

A: Yes, I have a cute story to tell about my father. Shows you what kind of a man he was. First of all he boarded the ship with a pilot, somehow he wrangled that. Greeted us all (inaudible, outside interference) It was heaven. It was so wonderful. I had always adored my **Popi** and it was just shear heaven to be with him again and I'm sure my mother felt

the same. And then of course he couldn't' take us right off because there was a sort of Cuban version of Ellis Island called **Tresconia**. I think it means three horns in Spanish but I'm not sure. And again with a child's different look at things, I thought it was fantastic. And it was this ancient garden with palm trees. I had never seen palm trees before and they were so wonderful I thought. And we had the, really unpleasant conditions. There were no mattresses. And we slept right on the metallic springboards with a sheet over it, but it was the tropics. It was very hot and it wasn't too uncomfortable to me. The only thing I remember eating there was sweet black coffee and red beans. I don't remember anything else. I thought it was great. I enjoyed it. And my father got us out of there within two or three days.

Q: You and your mother stayed there, not your father.

A: Yes, yes, yes. He had already made living arrangements so he came to get us much quicker than we had anticipated. Other people were still there. I remember saying goodbye to them and out of sight, out of mind. I don't' even remember anyone in particular there. So my father confronted my mother and he said Edith you have to be very brave. Now you can imagine that I couldn't get something very good and you know we don't' have any money and you have to be brave. It's a bit of a slum but at least we're together. And she said oh **Fredl** it doesn't matter. We're together. It's so wonderful. We all happily drove to whatever horrible place awaited us. Well he had had his little joke, because he had rented half of a two family house, typical Cuban with gorgeous tile floor,

lovely veranda. Rented furniture. We had rocking chairs. The one thing I remember inside was a tray with tall glasses from Woolworth's with big red dots on them. And a decanter and this, these are the tropics. It looked so good and so inviting and the house inside was cool. And these wonderful old tile floors. Well we couldn't believe it. He had totally tricked us. We were so happy, we didn't know what to think. He had his little joke. He was so happy too to have his family again. And I must tell you. This is where my guilt complex comes in. While others were having this great sorrow and this great pain in Europe and they were going to ghettos and concentration camps, we were having this little idyll lasting some, over a year or so of pure happiness. Of course my father had money worries, but the important thing is we were together and we were safe and Cuba at that time long before Castro, was a wonderful place to be.

Q: Were there particular people back in Germany that you were concerned about?

A: My grandparents who were our only close relatives they had gone to South Africa through the help of my mother's younger brother who was five years younger than she. He in his youth had been a communist, idealistic, and he saw the writing on the wall in the early 30s. and he had he lit out from Germany. And he went to South Africa, established himself as a businessman and he became quite well off. He's dead now. And he got his parents out. They lived there peacefully.

Q: Did they leave Germany before you and your mother?

A: I wish I could tell you for certain. Probably, probably. They didn't—I was not close to them. They were good people but they didn't have a knack with children and it was the same with my mother. They were her parents, but they were not really close. She appreciated them but there was no closeness. And so I'm not quite certain. They must have left before we did. Yes, they must have because there wasn't much later after 1939 you know.

Q: Were there any people back in Germany that you –

A: There was the Christian side of the family who we ourselves didn't know too well. My father was the contact there. They were doing all right. I mean I don't know what they suffered under the Nazis but they were not in any imminent danger. My mother, my father's mother's maiden name was **Vogt**, V-O-G-T or maybe it was V-O-I-G-H-T. I'm not sure. It was pronounced **Vogt**, which in German means abbot. And so they were the Christian side and Aunt Mathilda the great aunt, she had married an Abel so she was Christian so but her, the man she married came from Jewish family. So anyway it was one aunt much later in fact just about two years ago I learned that my very glamorous older great aunt, she was my grandmother's sister, her name was Ida, Eda and she married wealthy im, she was married and she had married a Jewish gentleman. And I learned recently that she had ended up in **Thereiseinstadt.** I had not known this before. I was very, very sad. She was – I wasn't close to her either but I knew she was an elegant

lady, very unhappily married. And I remember a stained glass window in her dining room when we visited. They had one of those phenomenal Berlin apartments you know. But being an only child, we did have some relatives in Dresden who were non-Jewish. The boys went into the army. I think they both died. They were an odd family. Do you want to hear another childhood memory.

Q: Sure.

A: When I was in Dresden. Two, two come to mind. Neither one of them pleasant.

Q: I don't think you have mentioned why you were in Dresden or when you were in Dresden.

A: This was obvious, ok this was when my father was between jobs. He was struggling. And he wanted to put his wife and child someplace. There was – so he decided to leave us with his relatives in Dresden. So we went there. The lady was an eccentric. She had about 13 cats or more and this big old rambling country house in Dresden. She had two sons. I remember one of them was called **Reiner** and I can't remember the other one. They were much bigger boys. I was just a little kid. And they played two tricks on me. They gave me something that looked just like honey and they said this is good, Ruth. Why don't you eat it. I was such an ignoramus. I ate it and it was laundry soap. To this day I can remember the taste. It was so awful. The other thing they did which did not

endear them to me, they would take, put me in a potato sack and move me around the garden. Just drag me you know. That wasn't too good. I was scared to death of them. Not having any siblings, particularly brothers you know. And the other thing is I developed a typical childhood cold and some German families had some peculiar ideas of how to raise children. This woman's idea of curing me was to tie me hand and foot in bed and put a lot of blankets on me to sweat it out of my system. Well my mother was horrified. She felt like she was very vulnerable. She was there because she didn't have a penny to her name. Her husband was struggling in Berlin to find a job and a place to live. All she had were these people. She didn't want to offend the lady but she didn't' want to desert me either. So while I was lying there sweating and pleading for her to release me and she was sitting there crying. But she didn't' have the nerve to untie me. This was a very unpleasant memory. And remember this was not done by a Nazi. This was done by what was considered a good German **parentsega**, not my mother but this lady who was related to my father by marriage. It was her husband who was a cousin of his. And so my memories of Dresden and it was also ghastly winter weather and depressing and I was cold most of the -- it was just simply a horrible memory

Q: So that was a difficult time

A: But let me throw in how Germans think children should be raised. I told you how close my father was to his father. And his father was a darling man who had been widowed much too young. He was well off. They had a lovely house. And he had my

father woken every morning by a housekeeper coming in and putting ice cold sheets around him to wake him up and toughen him up. Can you imagine a little boy, half orphaned, waking up in the morning and being wrapped up in these icy sheets. Well this was the German way of bringing children up. I'm so glad that my own parents didn't' have those ideas. I just wanted to throw that in.

Q: Let's move ahead to Cuba. You said that you were very happy

A: Oh it was unbelievable

Q: With your family there for about a year. Did you go to school in Cuba?

A: Yes. I did and this is a very interesting thing. I went to a place called Miss Philip's school and it was a private school. My father had done some fund raising for the American Joint Committee and helped many Jewish refugees. And they were giving him an allowance. That's who we managed to live. And I don't know what the financial arrangements were for me to attend school, but I went to this lovely American Miss Philip's school in Havana. It was a lovely tropical building in a nice part of town. And I was learning both Spanish and English and I –

Q: The school was conducted in English?

A: There was a Miss Sema. I think it was English and Spanish. Yes, it was, I had an American teacher, Miss Martha Jane Pruitt. No, Martha, Martha Jane Jones. She married a Mr. Pruitt later. She was a darling young girl. And it was, I remember there was an older teacher with white hair. Mrs. Morris Sema. And she must have been Spanish speaking. But I managed with all these limitations in language to be the second best in my class and I got a silver medal. I still have it. And a gold medal was earned by another refugee boy I remember. A nice plump Jewish boy with a marvelous sense of humor. And he got the first one which was gold. So these refugee children were really outdistancing the local kids.

Q: Were there many refugee children in this school?

A: No. But there were many refugees in Havana. Yes.

Q: And at home, did your family still speak German?

A: Yes, that's probably why I am now working in the historical division doing translations, because my fundamental German is very deep seated that I have not really forgotten it because even in this country, until my parents' deaths. My mother died in 1984, my father much earlier, we would intermingle English and German.

Q: So German has for you the memories of being with your mother and with your father

A: I know some very embittered people who have suffered greatly and who when they came to America, refused to speak German. And I respect that and I understand it. But that's a different situation.

Q: Well maybe we can talk more about that later.

A: Yes.

Q: What else about Cuba?

A: I thought the Cuban people were so different from anything I had seen before. I remember pale faced northern Germans or worried Jewish Germans and great deal – I was always cold in Germany, it seems to me and everything seemed to be gray. Berlin seemed to be gray. And all of a sudden I was on this golden island and with royal palm trees. I thought I'd never seen anything so beautiful. The sunsets, this tropical skies were something I'd never experienced before. The music, the people. They were very warm and charming. And at that time, happy.

Q: And did you feel any special treatment as a Jew?

A: They couldn't have been nicer to us. They were so good and hospitable and welcoming.

Q: How did you happen to leave Cuba?

A: Oh that was because our quota number came up. We had done our wait. I was heartbroken. I remember the day we sailed away. My parents had locked me into a cabin because I had been asleep when they left and they didn't want me to be in any danger. And I remember waking up as the ship was sailing away and I was looking at the **Monicone.** It's that great stretch of road that's the first thing you see when you come to Havana harbor. And the lights twinkling like pearl necklace and I wanted to go on deck. And I couldn't. The door was locked. And I remember standing at that porthole and sobbing because I didn't want to leave Cuba. The people I knew. My little girlfriends. I was distraught.

Q: So you did make friends in Cuba?

A: Oh in fact just a few months ago, I visited one of them who is now a lady my age in her late 60s. Living in Florida. That was my dear friend Hilda whom I had met then. She was then a very beautiful little girl with her own problems. Her parents had divorced. But she was a well upper crust Cuban. I mean a very well, they were wealthy.

Q: So she was not a refugee?

A: She was an only child like myself and I fascinated her because I was a refugee and so we became friends and it's a lifelong friendship.

Q: So it was hard for you to say goodbye to Hilda and it was and your other friends.

A: It was agonizing. Yes.

Q: Why did your parents want to come to the US instead of staying in Cuba?

A: Oh because there was no future for us in Cuba. It was a marvelous resting, stopping off place, better than we ever hoped for or expected. But it was not a place to remain. There was no way you could make a living or anything. We were set to become Americans.

Q: Did your family have contacts in the United States?

A: Well he had had connections with this Joint Committee and we quickly found work but it was a terrible struggle. I once wrote an essay about my father. And I gave it to my children in which I explained how it was for him. Here he was at this point in his 50s,

and he looked for any kind of job. Salesman. He worked at the Savoy Plaza Hotel in the basement as sort of janitorial working. There he was once a well set up gentleman with his little fortune. And here he was now practically a janitor and guys half his age who referred to him as hey Al, you know. And it was a great come down or I don't know but he was very gallant about the whole thing. He got used to it. He struggled with it. He put up with it. He fought and he finally ended up creating his own position with a German language newspaper, the **Stats Sanctunk und Herald** (German), a Knight Ridder paper and he found a job in their advertising department. And with his contacts back in Germany and his knowledge of German, he became the advertising director for the ads from Germany, big industry ads. And I wanted to explain how it was possible for him to go back to Germany on business trips after all that had happened. And this was of course after the war when Germany was being built up again. He knew the high commissioner and he had contacts from business before. And he managed to get some fabulous ads for the paper and he did this twice a year for seven years until he died of lung cancer. And the way that he could do this, as I explained before is that he had had 40, almost up to – no more than 40, mid 40s. He had had a good life in Germany. This was a nightmare that came upon him in middle age and he had had to adjust to it. He had to understand it wasn't going to go away. That he had to get away from there. He had not been in the camps. He had not had the experience. And so he was able to come back and deal with the post war Germans. He was not eaten up by hatred or revulsion like so many rightfully were. You know. And so he could do this.

Q: Can we back up a bit to your arrival in the New York. Do you remember that?

A: Oh yes. He had a good friend in New York. His name was Eric Goodall. For a while he was a political cartoonist and he, the very first night, he took us around in his car. I remember drove us to Little Italy where all the lights were lit and oh first the skyscrapers down Fifth Avenue. And I was a little child. It was an open convertible and I laid back and just looked up at the skyscrapers and the bright lights in Little Italy and all over. And I remember falling asleep, leaning back with my mouth open. That's my first night in New York. My father, as we were going down Broadway on that first day, stopped at 77th street and Broadway. At the corner there was a hotel called the Benjamin Franklin. I looked recently and the building is still there, but it's no longer the Benjamin Franklin. It's been rebuilt as something else. It was a residential hotel and he rented us a nice large room with kitchen privileges for that first night. And we lived there for some months. And so our arrival in New York was very pleasant. I had my parents with me and my father had his good friend there. And getting acquainted with New York. And then I went to public school and that of course was a little frightening but I got used to it.

Q: So you were about 12?

A: 11 I think. Wait. We arrived in 1940. I was born in 28. 12.

Q: And how was your English by this time?

A: Oh it was so good. I remember being in public school and I asked what is a bra. And this girl's laugh and said imagine Ruthie Abel not knowing what bra means. I didn't' know that it was a brassiere. I was still too young for that but girls were talking about it. And there were words I just didn't' know yet. I had to learn them and eventually I realized that I was beginning to think in English and that I had really gotten good at it, but it took a few years. Not too long because I was young. My mother although she had a very good knowledge of structure of the language. Had an accent that is so thick you could cut it with a knife. She never mastered the T-H's.

Q: was she home during the day

A: She worked.

Q: She did

A: I was sort of a latch key child for quite a while.

Q: what did she do?

A: Secretarial mostly. She was a very good secretary. In those days secretary was not a dirty word. Now it is.

Q: So she was out with the public and had to use her English every day.

A: Yes, oh yes, but she also managed to work for many refugee firms where they all spoke German

Q: She used German at work a lot of the times.

A: Yes, different jobs yes.

Q: So you went through school in New York. What schools did you go to in New York?

A: It was a public school in the neighborhood there and I was just getting, I was getting adjusted to the American way of life and –

Q: How was it making friends?

A: I made a few good ones, not too many. Kindred spirits and in fact one of them, Vera, was a refugee. In fact she's in Chicago now. For many years she taught heart at the University of Chicago and her father came from Danzig. And Russian background. Lovely girl. I became very good friends. And then there was a darling Irish American Jill

McConnell. She became my best friend. She was from the neighborhood. She in fact she's the one who gave me my middle name.

Q: Which was?

A: Andrea. What happened was after five years my parents had the opportunity to get their citizenship. In fact we went and swore the oath and they made a big dinner afterwards and celebrated. I, as their child. Automatically became a citizen. And I was told that when you become a citizen you can have a choice at what name you want and well I have always been upset at the fact that I had one name only and that was only one syllable. **Rutt.** It just wasn't – that's how it was pronounced in Germany, **Rutt.** I didn't' like it. It wasn't enough for me. I didn't feel like just Ruth. You know or Ruth and so she and I took a walk on Riverside Drive because I told her I wanted to get a middle name. And I realized that every American I knew had a middle name. I only had one and it was only one syllable so I said Jill will you help me find a name. So we walked and we started with the A's naturally. We didn't get very far because when she said Andrea, I said say that again. And she said Andrea. And I said I like it.

Q: What did you like about Andrea?

A: The sound, the soft three syllable sound. And so I became Ruth Andrea Abel.

Q: Did it have any national connotations for you? I mean was it definitely –

A: No I was always, I always went by sound rather than rule. Later I learned it meant something like gift of God or something. I'm not sure. I'll have to look that up again. And of course Ruth Andrea became Randy. That was my nickname for many years. Now that I work at the Holocaust Museum, I feel Randy isn't right, so I go as Ruth.

Q: Where you named after anyone in particular?

A: Well that's the strange thing. My parents when they were waiting for me, apparently never had discussions about names the way my husband and I did. And here's my dear mother, recuperating from having had me in bed and my dad hot foots it to city hall and says he wants me named Ruth. He had never even consulted her. She wanted to call me Ellen, but then she thought Ellen Abel doesn't sound good so she hesitated. So he comes back with a fait accompli. Here I was Ruth. I didn't like, she didn't like it. But there it was.

Q: Do you know why he selected Ruth?

A: I wish I knew. It would be interesting, wouldn't it? I haven't a clue. I don't' think he ever had a girlfriend named --- used to have many girlfriends before he got married. In fact he was married before. And never mentioned Ruth.

Q: we're almost at the end of this tape so let's stop and turn it over.

(Tape 2 – RG-50.106.0089.02.02; duration: 51:55)

Margaret Garrett: This is a continuation of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Ruth Harvey, conducted by Margaret Garrett on August 22, 1997 in Bethesda, Maryland. Tape number 2, side A. During the break you were talking about your father's first marriage.

Ruth Harvey: Yes. He had always been a stage door Johnny, a man about town. He really was. He once had a violent love affair with a young actress named Helen Richter. And he was so jealous of her, he was all set to shoot her. He was a very passionate young man. Well he got over that. But he did marry an artist as his first wife. She was prima ballerina of the Berlin Opera. Her name was Elizabeth **Grube**. She was non-Jewish and she was a very good dancer. They were married about four years and then she ran off with a stage designer, a Greek stage designer. (background crashing noise) and then he was a divorced man and I think it was a very good thing when my mother-to-be walked into his life. As his secretary.

Q: So he had no children from his first marriage.

A: No. And she later married some titled German and barely escaped with her life when the Russians overran the estate that they lived on, barely escaped. She later died. I met her once. She's a very charming lady.

Q: Ok. Let's go back to New York and you went to high school where?

A: I went to the high school of music and art which had always been a fund project of Mayor LaGuardia, Fiorello LaGuardia. And you could, and only go in there by passing certain tests. And I'm happy to say I passed them. And there were two categories in those days. Now it's the high school for the performing arts, but in those days it was just music and art. I belonged with the artists.

Q: And—

A: It was a regular high school but they were these two different things that we concentrated on, a career for music or a career as an artist, in addition to high school subjects.

Q: So you graduated from high school in what year?

A: I think maybe 48. I was always one year behind because of my having been a refugee. I believe I graduated in 48 if I'm not mistaken.

Q: And then what happened?

A: Well I went to Cooper Union for a time. I did not graduate from there. I was all, that's another thing. You had to take an exam to get into that. I passed that for the day courses. And then my parents took me aside and said Ruthie, there just isn't the money there. You're just going to have to take a day time job, go to night school. Well I was very upset about that. All my friends who were able to go to Cooper Union were going in the day time. And it was very hard for me to work at jobs, sales jobs. The worst job I ever had as a very young person, oh this was ghastly was in some horrible neighborhood downtown where we spray painted little monkey masks. You know the little faces on little monkeys. We spray painted them. Every time I sneezed I'd get out a different rainbow color. It was unhealthy and unpleasant. It was I would say factory work. It was just ghastly. Well I did, the jobs I got in those days were not very good. And it was a great strain to work at that and then go to night school. And after a while I, I just dropped out. And much to my regret, really. And then I, eventually after many lesser and less enjoyable jobs, I found a lovely secretarial job with Paramount theaters in the Paramount building in Times Square where I stayed for four years and I really enjoyed it. I was ordering candy for the theater chains and doing secretarial. Candy was bigger with them than the films were. They got more revenue from that. And I stayed with them. Oh I must tell you how I got the job at the State Department in Washington. Would you like to hear how I got that?

Q: Were you in New York when you got the State Department job?

A: Yes. I'll tell you how. My parents went for a vacation to Nassau and it was February and I was alone in the apartment and feeling a little woebegone. Things were not going terribly smoothly in my life. And late at night I had the radio on and I heard an announcer say would you like a career in the foreign service? If so, apply to the State Department at Center Street downtown and get your form. Well I took off from work the very next day and took the subway all the way down to Center Street, near Wall Street, and applied for form 57, for employment with the State Department in quintuplicate.

Q: Why were you interested in applying for the job?

A: New York was not a healthy environment for me. I had been there 16 years and I was not flourishing. Things were not happening well for me. And I felt that I needed a change of life, life style, surroundings, everything.

Q: What was not happening that you wanted to?

A: I met a lot of people who I felt were rather neurotic. There was something unhealthy about life in New York, if you were not well cushioned by money. If you had to struggle, it could be downright depressing at times. And I felt that I was young enough, that I owed it to myself to go someplace else and try something new. So the very next day I got the form. My parents were still on vacation. Every night after work I would lie on the floor, on the carpet, on my stomach and fill out some more of this huge, positively endless form

in quintuplicate. You had to go back to your very first beginnings of life. Everybody you ever knew you had to go get references and schools. It took a week to fill it out conscientiously. I did that and I listed references here and there and what not. And I mailed it off and this was February. And I forgot about it. In May I'm sitting in my office at the Paramount theaters when the phone rang and it was Washington, offering me a job. Well my father was so pleased because he had always had a high regard for diplomats. The diplomat's life. And here was this little Ruthie entering, true at the very bottom. But still it was the State Department. He couldn't have been more pleased. So I gave up my job at Paramount and traveled to Washington.

Q: Now you had been living still in your parents' home.

A: Well at first in their home and then I managed to get a room in the same building above them. But I left all that quite happily and settled in Mount Pleasant and worked for the State Department for about four years.

Q: Did you know anyone in Washington?

A: I had had a boyfriend who had lived in Washington on and off. He was a flight engineer. And I visited him once and the first thing I saw from Union Station was the Capitol and trees everywhere I looked. I feel hook line and sinker. I fell in love with

Washington and I wanted to live here. So when the State Department job came, I thought this is wonderful. This is a wonderful way to get where I want to go.

Q: So you came down by yourself and you found housing.

A: Yes. My father treated me to my first night's hotel room and then at the State Department I went to the registry for housing and they found me a pleasant place on Mount Pleasant. Yes, it was nice. A group home with lots of other young women.

Q: And that job worked out pretty well for you.

A: Oh indeed, I had a wonder, I loved working for ( )The odd thing is I went as a, I wanted to go as a foreign secretary. And they offered me such a hideous assignment that I simply switched to domestic because I thought I'd be happier than oh what was this country. It was land locked. And I can't think of the name right now. But it was the least appealing country in Latin America. No ocean, no nothing. And I thought to myself to, to lose two years of my life in this boon docks. That didn't seem right. And so I simply and in those days you can get a second choice. And so I switched to domestic and I worked in the Latin American division with my previous knowledge of Spanish. And I had a very good time as a single girl in Washington. I enjoyed myself. And then I met my husband to be. And that starts another chapter in my life.

Q: And how did you meet him?

A: Very romantic. In those days the Park Sheraton hotel had a magnificent Olympic sized pool. Now it's been paved over as a parking lot. Can you imagine. IN those days it was a very refreshing beautiful blue green. Water. And one Labor Day, it was Labor Day 1957. It was very hot, my girlfriend and I decided to go to that pool for a nice swim. And so we went and that's how I met my husband. Sitting next to me.

Q: What was he doing?

A: Well this is so strange. He was also , he said he was also in the foreign service. And what he couldn't' tell me in those days, but I can tell now because he's been dead since 1972, he was with the CIA. I mean he didn't' tell me that of course. He just, we exchanged telephone numbers and he said if you call me and I'm not there, just leave a message cause that's the way it is. I didn't know that so he called me and missed me so I called him and he wasn't there and I wasn't going to leave a message so I just hung up. This way we never would have gotten together. But finally he got me at home because I had only given him my office number. My boss took pity on him and he said I'll give you her home phone number, god bless him. And then we saw each other every day for about nine months and then he was assigned to Athens, Greece. And that's when he asked me to share his life there with him, And we got married and we went to Athens. And live happily there for five years. And two of my three children were born there.

Q: Now when did you learn he was with the CIA?

A: He told me after much hemming and hawing months and months later. He had too because I was –

Q: Before you got married?

A: No let me see. No I was aware of what he was doing before we talked marriage yes.

Q: So before you talked marriage.

A: Yes.

Q: You knew that he was with the CIA. Was he Jewish?

A: Oh no. He was, he came from Milwaukee of Polish and Welsh stock. The Welsh or English part would have been Protestant, but I, Unitarian. And the other part was Polish Catholic. His mother was Catholic. She came from Polish peasants, maybe third generation and his father was first generation. They came over from England and went into real estate in Milwaukee.

Q: And what religion was he?

A: Well like his, like his, well he was not Catholic like his mother. He was like his father. Could you stop it for a minute. I'm trying to.

Q: Will you say that again. The tape didn't start when you spoke so would you just repeat that?

A: Yes, I had said Unitarian but I misspoke. He was Congregationalist. In fact our three children were baptized at Plymouth Church in Milwaukee on different home leaves when we came back to visit his folks. And he had them christened right there.

Q: Did you consider yourself at that point Jewish, not Jewish.

A: This is the story of my life. I've never figured out exactly what I am. I certainly feel more Jewish than anything else. And yet, I am not really a practicing Jew. I don't follow the high holidays or the customs because I was raised so differently. And so that is sort of a, a conflict within me as to what exactly where do I belong.

Q: So your children were christened in the Congregational church.

A: Yes, and they're fully aware that my background is Jewish, that some of their blood is Jewish and they know all this and they are simply, all three of them. I have tried to get them to go to Sunday school or have given them bibles, and they're just. They're wonderful. They've got good characters but they're non-religious totally. I couldn't get anywhere with them.

Q: Why did you try to get them to go to Sunday school?

A: Because we were in the foreign service overseas. There was a lot of people going to church. It was a social thing for the people to get together. Their children went to Sunday school. And I thought it would be kind of good for them to learn the stories of the bible. You know. But I couldn't get them. They didn't want to.

Q: In your home, did you celebrate Christmas?

A: Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving. And birthdays. That was about it.

Q: You were in Athens with your husband for five years.

A: Yes five years.

Q: You had two children there?

A: Well two were born there, yes. The third was born in Fairfax hospital later.

Q: How do you think having been a refugee and that entire experience, how do you think that affected your life when you went back overseas to Athens?

A: This is interesting that you should ask this because the Greeks, delving back into history have always been known to honor the stranger, to give hospitality to the stranger, to the visitor. **Xenos**, the stranger. They couldn't have been more hospitable or welcoming. It's in their blood. And I compared that to the German character of mistrusting instinctively the foreign element. The Aryan. Right away. And I thought to myself what a shame that people have to be so different.

Q: So the Greeks were hospitable?

A: Oh yes.

Q: How about other people in the foreign service and in the CIA?

A: Well those were the days when there was a very idealistic bunch of people there like my husband and his friends, very good sort of people. And to patriots, and risking their lives and we have a very high opinion of the people we worked with. In fact, I didn't

realize. You know in those days I didn't' think about liberal or conservative, Democrat or Republican. In those days in the 50s there were so many moderates on both sides and they sort of melded. It wasn't really until the 80s and 90s that you see this really ugly tooth and nail attitude between the Democrats and the Republicans, the ultra conservatives and liberal has become a dirty word. This is something that didn't exist then.

Q: Did you feel there was any discrimination about you being Jewish?

A: I just say no. No.

Q: So you were in Athens for –

A: However excuse me for interrupting. Had there been anything like that, I would not have hidden. I would have spoken out but I was fortunate in that, that never came up.

Q: Do you think that's because of your previous experience that you would have been more likely to speak up?

A: Oh definitely, of course. Yes.

Q: What about having children? Was that for you do you think a different experience because of your previous life in Germany and—

A: I would not wed these two ideas together. It was something entirely different. A totally different trip. Had nothing to do with religion. Or, or past or anything. It was something new, a new world I was going into.

Q: And so that was—

A: The best thing I ever did or went through and gave meaning to my life. I mean this is what I had been born for and raising the—and then later when my husband died, fairly early. We had only been married 14 years, and left, leaving me with three children and their ages were at the time, 11, ten and eight. And fortunately the government provided pensions and we didn't' suffer hardship, but still I was the one to raise these three and may, this is interesting. Maybe my past experiences in dealing with hardships gave me the strength to endure this terrible shock of losing him so young and being in charge of three young lives. And I must say they had such good character. It was so easy to raise them. I thoroughly enjoyed being a parent and I must say they didn't give me much grief at all. They were good kids. I raised them instinctually. All of us do and there's no handbook for being a parent. And it came out well.

Q: You have boys and –

A: I have two boys and the girl is in the middle. Well of course they are men and a young woman. Jenny just went, moved to Brooklyn to follow her man who got a job there and she is a clinical social worker. She just got her masters last year, a year ago. And Michael is an honors, the oldest boy is an honors professor in Milwaukee at University of Wisconsin.

Q: What is his field?

A: He's teaching an honors course which will be up next year and then he has to struggle to get another job. It's not easy.

Q: An honors course would cover a number of different subjects?

A: Yes. Arts, politics and those things are only for three years so when that's over and with the present problem with teaching and professors not having tenure, he'll be lucky if he gets another teaching position, although he's very, the students love him. And my youngest is working here in Washington. He's got a nice job, just got married recently and nice young couple, very happy with life. So I can gratefully say that I would say the most creative thing and the most constructive thing in my life would be raising these three children. Having gotten them in the first place born healthy and I'm very, very

grateful about that. And that's what helped me through my widowhood, having them to take care of.

Q: Did you work after your husband died?

A: Yes. I remember that I had worked at, had a little part time job at an insurance company when Johnny was still working for the agency here and then he left and a month after he left, I got the death notice and struggled for a little bit longer at that job. And then they replaced me with somebody who had been there before and like a homing pigeon I fled to the agency that he worked for and told them my story and they gave me a part time job which I kept for eight years while raising the children. I couldn't take a full time job. I had a part time job. I was home when they came home from school. And then I switched to full time for a few more years when they were bigger and then I took early retirement. Now I'm retired and it's amazing how full one's days can be, although retired.

Q: And so have your friends been some refugees, not refugees?

A: Well there's still Vera, although she's far away and I've had friends from all over. Refugees and native Americans and Cubans and oh yes, I just take people as they come. I don't have groups.

Q: So you haven't felt limited to having other refugees who have had similar experiences?

A: That is a feeling I had in New York when I was a teenager, about 13 or so and those days all the poor frightened sick people who had survived Nazi Germany had all come to Manhattan and all settled on the west side. And it was, I remember how terribly depressive it was as a young teenager to see these poor old pale gray shadows of themselves walking around Broadway, each one a tragic story. There were so many of them. I remember the feeling I had at the time, how tragic this was and how I wanted to get away from it.

Q: So that was part of your wanting to come to Washington.

A: Well by the time—yes, you know by the time that I was ready to leave, those people were still there. Oddly enough, many, many decades later I went back. They were all gone and their offsprings doing well and the places had been, bad neighborhoods had been made wonderful. And New York was totally different, a completely different stage set. All those poor, poor shadows had vanished. And you saw nice young people jogging along, healthy and it was just, just like it was when I went to Germany. I said this is a brand new country. New York was a brand new country decades after I left it. But at the time when we were all refugees there together, I found it very, very sad.

Q: But when you came to Washington, you did not have that feeling of refugees together.

A: No, in fact you know in New York this had this unhappy reputation for not being terribly polite or. Well I thought anyone in Washington seemed so healthy and so pleasant and I really enjoy the people here. I like it better. I must admit I had gotten fed up with New York. And consider this place a place to get my health back and I did.

Q: You went back to Germany when?

A: With my, oh after I became widowed in 72, my mother and I managed to plan to go back to Germany. I think it was 76 or 78. I don't remember which. And the sad thing about my husband is he died in Viet Nam and when he left here, we had decided that when he had finished his tour which was supposed to be 18 months, we would meet in Germany and I would show it to him. He was going to come straight from Viet Nam. I was going to come straight from Washington. We were going to meet there and I was, I told him we were going to paint the town red. And I was so looking forward to that.

Q: He was in Viet Nam with the CIA?

A: Yes.

Q: And how did he die?

A: Well there are several versions which I don't know that I want to go into. One is that he died in a swimming pool and the other one's a different version that somebody got to him from North Korea and so not knowing the full truth it's best not to. I don't' know. I'll never know the truth so I can't really tell you. But anyway the idea being that when he had finished his tour, we were going to reunite and I was going to show him my home town. So you can imagine the state of mind I was in when I went years later with my mother. I remember being very unhappy and very unpleasant and very crabby and I apologized to her. I said Mutti, I'm sorry, but I'm just so sad. I pictured this so differently. And she said apologies are not necessary my dear. I fully understand. But then after I had gotten there and discovered that it was, everything was so different from what I remembered and people were pleasant. And this was before the return of the skinheads. At this point, I thought oh my this is marvelous. The new Germans are great. This is a democracy. How nice. And it was only later when I was back home a few years later and I read about these outrages against the Turkish laborers and the skinheads you know setting houses on fire. And just being generally nasty to the alien labor forces that they had. And skinheads with swastikas and what not and I got so fed up and so disgusted you know. So as you can see, I've always had a roller coaster feeling about Germany. It'll always be with me. My daughter said maybe you should see a therapist and I don't know. I just don't know. Should I or shouldn't I, I don't, she thinks I should.

Q: Let's talk about your experience with the Holocaust museum.

A: Yes. It's funny. People had always told me through the years, Randy why don't you be a docent, maybe at the Smithsonian or something. And I'd say yeah, yeah. I didn't' really want to. I had no desire to. I think –

Q: Think that you needed an interest or you had too much time.

A: Yeah, something besides I'm garrulous and I like people. They thought it'd be terrific. And I said nothing tugged at me. And then I read an article in the Washington Post about the new holocaust museum. And the idea that I adored, in those days they still had those pass machines when you would take a one of those ID book, cards or pamphlets from the machine and you would read you know people who had been through the Holocaust and you'd read their story. And in those days you would have to go to a different floor and get the second page and you couldn't just read the whole thing. As you went from floor to floor the fate of this person unfolded. They got rid of those machines because they were used to death, they died. They got rid of them. They were always breaking down. Now you get the whole little passbook and unless you control yourself and wait you can read the whole thing while waiting for the elevator. The idea being that you didn't know then would this person make it or would they perish. And that was rather dramatic. I thought the idea was phenomenal you know. And then I read that they were looking for volunteers and all of a sudden it was like bong. All of a sudden, I was interested. My heart was in this. This is something that I felt I could do so well with my background.

And so I wrote a letter and they replied. And I came for an interview and I was accepted. I was thrilled. I loved the museum. I love what they're doing and I enjoyed being a volunteer and were it not for my bad ankle and knee, I would be here much more often than I am. But fortunately they have an opening for me here in the oral history department and I'm very happy translating and shaking through these documents.

Q: You said that you love the museum and what they're doing. What is it that you love about the museum?

A: It's a learning museum. It teaches people, often, young people who otherwise might be totally unaware of the Holocaust that there was such a thing and that those flakes who keep proclaiming that it never happened are flakes. And that this really did happen. There's enough evidence in this museum to show that. I love that. That somebody took the trouble to build it and, and I love the architect who went to the camps and got the ideas for the architecture directly from the camps. James Engle Freed. And I love what he did. It's a magnificent building. And going, the strange is when I applied, I said please don't put me near scenes of horror. I don't' want to see it. And put me anywhere. Well sure enough, they did just the opposite. And I found myself walking through the permanent exhibit. But I learned to live with it.

Q: What was your first assignment there?

A: To walk, to be a walker through the different floors of the permanent exhibit. Make sure everything was going along well. You know as you come out of the elevator you see a horrible thing on the fourth floor, against the wall and all the corpses of, I mean this is what I had tried to avoid. And somehow they got me into that.

Q: Did you ever ask to be transferred?

A: No once I was there, I decided that having seen it once, I could live with it and do the job that they wanted me to do. And of course there's many others. You don't, you're not constantly walking through the permanent exhibits. Many other areas. So I do it. And unfortunately because of my bad foot now, I don't go as often. I intend to go perhaps once a month on a weekend when they need people. Keep my foot in so to speak, but concentrate more on oral histories and transcriptions.

Q: You said that when you read about the need for volunteers something –

A: Oh my heart just jumped. I said to myself god if anybody can show the public, it's me and I think every one of those volunteers must have had that same zing when they read about this, don't you think?

Q: Can you say more about that feeling that you would be able to show the public –

A: I had a feeling that my life, remember now that I was a middle aged retired woman without a husband in her life, children grown up, life a little empty. And all of a sudden here is something that totally engaged me, my mind and my heart and I said this is what I was put here for. I was taking, I was in the skilled complex because I didn't' suffer as much as the others. I said this is maybe how I can atone for that. I can tell people what these people went through and where they ended up and, and I can be more dramatic perhaps than somebody who wasn't as close to the subject, you know. And I, I had a feeling that this museum gave more meaning to my life.

Q: We have to turn over the tape.

Q: When we stopped you were talking about your work at the museum giving meaning to your life. Can you say more about that?

A: Oh yes, yes. First of all when I was an only child and shy I didn't' know that I really loved people. But as I got more mature and more worldly I discovered that I really liked people very much and it's wonderful working with the public. You meet so many different people, different outlooks on life. I'm able to use my two foreign languages on them. When I speak Spanish to some people, bewildered family from Argentina, their faces just light up and I can convey to them the things they want to know about the museum and when Germans come to visit, and this is a strange thing. I've seen young German people come in and they have the strangest expressions on their faces. Maybe I

read more into it because of my background, but maybe not. There is a mixture, sort of fear and shame and more. It's a combination of impressions, when I look at the young faces. They know what their country has done and I'm sure they feel terrible about it. And they feel embarrassed and guilty but eager to see this and afraid to see it. It's a fascinating expression. I've seen it at various times. And I try to put them at ease. I mean they didn't cause this.

Q: How do you do that?

A: I speak their language to them. And look at them kindly. I am gentle with them. But I say how happy I am that they are here. Then I emphasize but you of all people you have to know this and that's all I say. And they nod. And I have a feeling I'm getting my point across.

Q: Do you think any of the visitors pick up that you were a refugee?

A: Oh, this is interesting because one of those minute suggestion was, the minutes from the meeting of the survivors, that the survivors ought to have special badges saying survivor. Some people want that. Others, myself included, do not think it's such a great idea. But whenever I think it's appropriate to a particular group of people in a given situation, I'll mention. There is one place, my favorite in the whole museum and it's a remember the children Daniel's house. That is my favorite exhibit because that is partly

my youth growing up in Germany. Many of the things in that exhibit it's like walking through a series of stage sets. Remind me of my own childhood. Although it didn't have the terrible ending that are pictured there like the ghetto and the camps. I left before them. But every often when I have a nice family who brought their children, I'll put the emphasis on look at the children and they'll say that's just like my childhood was I grew up under those circumstances and then I say but I didn't' have the sad ending. But I says basically remember my own childhood there and this, the children look at me with big eyes. It's very useful to be able to do that convincingly because it's the truth you know. And I do that when I like a given group and I want to add to their knowledge. I don't feel that I want to go around with a badge that says survivor though you know. I don't want to do that. Was anything else on this subject that you wanted to know. Oh my interaction with people. The sweetest little peasant woman from some East European country talking Yiddish came. She had misplaced some object, had lost something that her grandmother had given her and it had been found in the lost and found and I got it for her and handed it to her. And she didn't speak the language. She grabbed my hand and kissed it and I thought that was the sweetest most touching thing. And I was smiling the rest of the day. I'm embarrassed but also touched. And you meet so many different people. Sometimes you see a lady middle aged, totally overcome. It was like we would come out of the hall of remembrance and she was just standing there and her shoulders were shaking. She was leaning against the column, her face to the column and I just gently. I know we're not supposed to touch the public but sometimes a human touch is sort of instinctive and I just gently patted her shoulder and stood by her and she calmed down.

You had the feeling that you are an ambassador between the museum and the public and, and you try to be a good influence and help and represent the museum and all of that. Many other stories.

Q: How has it been working with the other volunteers?

A: I met the nicest bunch. First I went on Wednesday afternoons and then Larry asked if there were anybody here who would be willing to work on weekends because that's when they really need help. So I decided sure if that's what's wanted. And I work on Saturdays, first in the afternoons and in the morning. Every second Saturday. And that worked out very well. As I said everything was fine until I got my trouble with the knee and the ankle. So I hope it will improve so I can do more. But I found it very challenging and very nice. There's always the odd pill in every crowd. There was one that was particularly odd but she's no longer there I'm happy to say. And on the whole, I found them very pleasant. Not everybody was pleasant but most of them are. And some of them have stories to tell. Again which makes me feel guilty because I didn't go through what they went through. It's always that conflict.

Q: You mean the other volunteers?

A: The volunteers, yes.

Q: Survivors had stories to tell. And how does that come up?

A: Well I know that Nessy Golden for one, she's legendary. When we had our training she was the speaker. She told us about when she was young child, when she was 15 and she was in on one of the worst camps and told of life in camp and, and you know ever since, whenever I see her, my arms around her and hug her. And compared to her I feel guilty. It's not my fault mind you. I know that. But the interesting thing is I discussed this with another volunteer and she looked at me. She said you have the same feelings. She said I thought I was the only one and I said oh thank god there's more and it's a common feeling for those of us who had not had the utmost pain that the others did.

Q: Have you had more contact with survivors and other refugees through your work at the museum than you had before as far as opportunity to talk about –

A: Opportunity arise there which I didn't have before. Yes.

Q: Has that been helpful to you to have a chance to talk about some of these things?

A: Absolutely. I mean it's' fascinating. There are some such dear people I look at them and I listen to their past as very young people in the camp and I say to myself, how can this man be so pleasant and so normal what he went through you know.

Q: Are those things that you didn't think about before or –

A: Well those are things which I thought about before but had not been confronted with in the flesh. And you meet these people actually and you wonder about the human spirit, how much it can take and stay normal.

Q: Overall would you say it's been more upsetting for you or it's been more helpful to you to have the volunteer experience?

A: Oh it's been heartwarming. It has filled an empty place. I wanted to do something important, something necessary. I was feeling too comfortable here, a little isolated with not terribly much to do and I think that the, for the rest of my life, until I am no longer able to, I want to be involved with this museum. I just love it.

Q: You started as a volunteer?

A: At the very beginning when they were first open, I was there before they opened they museum to the public the day before. There's another little story. I went with my very nice mature daughter Jenny. And we went through the museum and she went you know where those boxes are where adults look down at a series of clips below, pictures and film clips about the really horrendous things that they don't want kids to see. And that's the experiments and beatings and that sort of thing. It's kind of sad how many people are

always eager to look down at that. Jenny came up to me and she said mom she said, don't ever look at those. And I knew exactly what she meant because I'm the type if I see an animal being treated cruelly, I can't get over it. And you see some of these things it sears your soul. You can't forget it. She did me a big favor. And I've been working there since the beginning and I have never gone and looked at those things. Never. And she warned me. I'm very grateful to her. Had I looked at that, I probably couldn't continue working at the museum. You would have to shield yourself against the utter horror. There's limits to what you can take. In fact I'm going to travel to eastern Europe in the late fall and on the way there will be a chance to go to the camps and I'm not going to go. I don't' think I could face it. It's enough that I go through the permanent exhibit. It's not because I don't' care, but maybe because I care too much that I don't want to go.

Q: Now you are working less with visitor services and you are spending some time doing translations –

A: The purple folder is full of a document which was on tape, a videotape in German. First I took it down wordy by word in German. 39 pages of it and now I'm translating it. From the German to English. Unfortunately I'm not ready yet for word processors and things like that. I understand the museum might give courses on that. I'd like that. I'm doing it by hand. It would be lovely if I could just sort of tick it off like this.

Q: So you do this in longhand?

A: Oh yes, that's why it's taking me a little longer.

Q: Do you go down to the museum to do this?

A: When it's done, I'll go down. In the meantime I have a sufficient amount I'll mail it to Ms. Rubin. Amy Rubin, I work for her. She's a lovely girl and I want to have her know that in working on this, it's taking quite a while.

Q: I wanted to understand the process. The museum lends you the video.

A: I could do it all there in the library. But I've chosen to do it at home. It makes no difference to me.

Q: So you put the video –

A: I do the, I take the information from the video at the library of course with their machines. And then when I have the document I go home and I translate it.

Q: I see. And what is that like for you?

A: Fascinating. For instance, I'll tell you there is this wonderful video on. It's called "Weapons of the Spirit" and it's about the wonderful French Huguenots mountain village of **Le Chambon** and they're legendary for their aid that they gave to Jewish refugees. They're famous for it. In fact if you'd like me to lend you this, it's wonderful. It's called "Weapons of the Spirit". Ad it's this very stirring which I've always been so moved by that this particular translation is of a man who was a French Swiss who worked at **Le Chambon** during the war, helping numerous children, carrying for them, nourishing them, helping them escape. And how they village of **Le Chambon** worked with him. And it was a very famous priest. Father **Trocmé**, legendary and he's mentioned in this manuscript. So I have been so thrilled to be working with this material because even before I knew of the museum, I was touched by the story of **Le Chambon** and how they helped the Jews there. They were all Huguenots, not Catholics. It's very thrilling material. First I did the story of his wife, and now I'm doing his story and it's absolutely thrilling work. And it shows you the heroism that people are capable of. This is a particularly, this is not the story only of suffering and victimization but it's what one man with good will can do to prevent horrors from happening and to get, he always emphasizes in this report that he didn't do it by himself. He had the help of the village people and other priests and many others. But he had this gift of networking which is a gift. And he used it to full advantage to save many lives. And you can imagine how honored I am to be working with this story.

Q: You said some minutes ago that working with the museum is heartwarming for you. Could you say how that –

A: Maybe that's the wrong phrase. I just have the feeling that it engages my heart, my emotions. I'm fully committed to bring out the best that this museum has to offer and share it with the public. I have had no dealings with creating it or furnishing or anything but what I am able to do as is be in between the museum and the public and convey to them some of what the museum is about. And I feel that I am uniquely qualified to do that. And that is satisfying.

Q: And what do you think is the best that the museum has to offer. What is it that you want to convey?

A: It teaches the world about the Holocaust. That is its purpose. And it's, sometimes I look through the book that visitors leave data on, their thoughts about it and it's marvelous, wonderful what they have to say about it. You get the occasional oddball that says something horrible, but fortunately they are few and far between. The majority of people are absolutely enthralled by it.

Q: What kinds of things do you remember people saying?

A: How wonderful for you to be here and show the world or this sort of thing must never happen again. And God couldn't, may God prevent this from happening again. Thank you so much for showing the gratitude and astonishment and you know it's marvelous. It's just fascinating. I don't know if people know that they can go up to the second floor and look through these books of what others say about it. At the, you know at the end of the exhibition that crosses the Hall of Remembrance and then when you go through the little corridor there these big books that you can write in. And it shows you that the public really does appreciate it.

Q: Do you feel that your work is appreciated?

A: Definitely. I've had numerous, we have one little gimmick that's very satisfying. Each one of us receives every month, ten tickets. Now you know the tickets are free but you have to wait in line for a long time. And it's very convenient to be handed a ticket. Now I don't always have ten family members or intimate friends that I give these tickets to. So I keep them in my purse and when I'm at the museum. And when that hour finally arrives when there's no more tickets, and I see some desperate young visitor from a far off country, I'm so glad I could slip her ticket or him and oh, right after the Oklahoma bombing, I had the Attorney General of Oklahoma. He was in the news just the other day. I forget his name right now. It's **Boswerson** or something. Very nice man. And he looked at me. I had no idea who he was. And he said oh what a shame. He said I can't get any ticket and I'm only here for a day. And I said where are you from. He said

Oklahoma. He said I'm the attorney general. No, he didn't' say that then. He just said he was from Oklahoma and I liked the way he looked. He seemed like a nice human being so I reached into my pocket and I said here let me give you this little pass. I hate for you to be here for nothing. And he thanked me so much and dashed off. Hours later he found me where I was collecting tickets or something and said I want to thank you so much for making it possible for me to see. He said I'm the Attorney General of Oklahoma and I said oh my god, I said your poor state. I'm so sorry for what you had to go through. And it was just like instant friendship. We never see each other again. But I don't' think we'll ever forget each other. And it's that sort of human story that is so enriching you know. And many other instances that I can't remember of a direct contact with another life, brief but you don't' forget it. I just said I can't remember. But you know what I mean. Different various instances remain in my mind.

Q: What else would you like to talk about?

A: Well I ok, let me say that I appreciate that the museum gives us folks a chance to voice our experiences from where we came from and where we are and how it felt and how it was. This is a wonderful thing that you're letting us do and it's always nice to have a voice and to be counted and to be heard from and I appreciate that and I want to repeat that I really love the museum and I'm terribly glad they came to the city. And I think that's all. Don't you.

Q: Well you've told us quite a lot and your story has been very important. Thank you very much for sharing your testimony.

A: Thank you very much and you're very welcome.

Q: This concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Ruth Harvey.

[end of interview]