Continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Helen Luksenburg This is tape two, side A. And you told me that you came to the United States in 1949, but I want to go back to clean up a few details. I wanted to ask you if you followed the Nuremberg trials and what you knew of at the time about the Nuremberg trials.

Yes, we knew all about what's going on with the Nuremberg trials. We were watching, listening to it. We didn't have television. We were listening to the radio. And there were a lot of people who were called as witnesses. I wasn't one of them. And we were following very close every day what's going on, and being angry many times that they didn't get punished enough people and how they punished them.

At around that same time frame when you were still in Europe, I want to know if you were aware of the issue of Palestine and how it was treated by the UN.

We also followed that very closely. I remember the day. We stood by the radio listening when they announced-- I will never forget the day in 1948 in April, when Paris and when America-- and Russia actually was the first to recognize Israel as a state. And after came America. Truman agreed to it, but Russia at least was the second who recognized.

And now I know more about the details, because it's history. It recently was on television even for the 50th anniversary of Israel's independence. It was on television, everything with all the details about Truman, how and what. And I was very surprised that Marshall was against it. And Bevin said-- Bevin, when they approached him with the exodus, how people are living in Israel they arrested on Cyprus, he said, they waited 2000 years, so they will wait longer. That was his statement.

So we were very involved in it, because my dream was to go to Palestine. Did you participate in any way with any protests or any demonstrations for partition of Palestine?

Yes, in Germany we were very involved. Bricha was an organization what was bringing people illegally to Palestine. We were very involved. I knew about the exodus and everything else. We're were very involved with the Zionist movement in Germany.

Can you tell me about your reaction when Israel finally did declare independence-- statehood?

We were drinking liquor and we were singing. We got drunk. You can't imagine the joy when we heard that Israel finally would have a home-- a Jewish state. I can't even describe. We were dancing the horahs in the streets, and we had a big Jewish Community Center and a Cafe [? Vice. ?] And I remember American soldiers-- tall guys. We didn't know they were Jewish, but they were behind me singing the Hatikvah. It was really a big, big celebration. And the soldiers, the occupation army, participated-- the Jewish soldiers with us.

You had told me a few moments ago that you came to the United States in 1949. I wanted to ask you what organizations helped you in Europe and in the United States? If there were any Jewish organizations or Red Cross organizations, who helped you?

Actually, when he registered in Munich and they called us, we didn't know. I have still the papers. And we didn't know who was sponsoring us at all. We just went to Hamburg. They went through is all the X-rays to check us out. Because if you had tuberculosis or so, you couldn't enter the country.

And from there they sent us to Bremerhaven to the port, and we came on to General Stuart's boat-- a ship. What with the ships, we didn't pay. We didn't have any tickets, but the ships that were sending the occupation army to Europe came back. Displaced persons-- DP, were brought to America on the same ships.

It wasn't a luxury ship. The men and women were separated. We were higher. The men were on the lowest levels. The only cabins-- there were a few with mothers with small children-- with infants, what they gave it.

And many people got sick. It was a 9-day voyage, but the weather was very beautiful. It was at the end of August, and we arrived here on September the 2nd.

I remember arriving at night, on a Friday night at the port, and seeing the Statue of Liberty. I will never forget the sight. And the next day they embarked us, and they gave us papers. Oh, they didn't give us any papers. They took the papers whatever we had.

And to my surprise, a friend of mine read in the paper that we were arriving, and she waited for us in the port. That was really a big surprise.

And I remember going alphabetically. Tables were set up, and we walk away. They gave us tickets on the train for Washington DC, and my husband goes back, and he says, but I don't have any papers. In Europe, you have to always carry ID card or something. He said they told him if you don't get in trouble, you don't need papers in America.

And this was Labor Day weekend. So she lived with a woman-- Etta lived with a woman, Mrs. Warsaw. The woman was-- I never met her even-- was very nice, but Etta told her that her friends are coming from Europe. She went to stay with a friend-- good lady, the landlady-- and they give the apartment to us with Etta.

And I remember she tried everything. We got on the subway. So we had some change. She didn't let him pay. You will need it. It was 10 cents to get on the subway. She was the big shot in paying for us.

She took us to a movie, Blue Lagoon, and I came to a double feature. We were so tired from the long trip. I didn't understand any English. And people-- I was very annoyed. I'd never seen-- in Europe, the movie was so nice and clean. Here it was upstairs. People were smoking, throwing papers. I said, I wasn't used to it coming from Germany. I lived for three or four years in Germany. Everything was so nice and clean. Nobody would dare drop a piece of paper. So that was my welcome to America.

And she immediately called all the people that we knew who were already in America, and we got a big get together. And after on Tuesday, she had to sign for us. She took us to Penn Station, put us on the train, and we came to Washington DC.

Who helped you when you got here?

When we got here, we had accumulated some things. So we had 2 crates that we sent. And on the crate, we wrote Jewish Social Services. That was our address, Spring Road.

And unfortunately, when the crates arrived, we got immediately-- we took a taxi from the station, and we went to the Jewish Social Services on Spring Road in Washington DC. And they welcomed us, gave us a key. Right around the corner was Mr. Himmelfarb's building, who was a landlord. And he was a very generous man. He helped a lot of people.

And he gave us not an apartment but an efficiency room on the first floor, with a Murphy bed in the wall and a kitchenette. And Mr. Himmelfarb, on every holiday he used to give $30 to each newcomer.

And my husband said, I'm young, I want a job. They sent us for three months-- he went for three months to Americanization school. I went for six months the Americanization school. Later he said, I'm young, and I want a job.

Because I was ashamed. I never went to the Jewish Social Service, because they were giving us $30 a week for living expenses. When we came in the beginning, a social worker was driving us around and explaining everything.

And they gave us some furniture. They wanted to give us used furniture. I started to cry that I don't want somebody's junk. I was poor. We had $20 to our name when we arrived, I was very proud.

And so Mrs. [? Rigorsky ?] was her name, the social worker-- took us on Indiana Avenue. They used to sell the furniture-- cheap furniture. So they bought us a studio couch, two chairs, and a little table that collapsed. And a straw

rug, and we lived there until I became pregnant.

Because I didn't want to have children in Germany if I could help it, because we didn't know where we would end up. And to drag a baby and things under these conditions-- a lot of people had-- a 1,000 children were born every day of the war among the refugees, because they wanted to multiply. What we never can keep up-- to catch up.

And so when I became pregnant there, I got a job after. I worked for Lansburghs. I was doing alteration, and I didn't know much. I had a hard time finding a job. Finally, at-- Lansburgh-- that we used to be a department store here. They gave me a job, but I didn't know how to put a zipper in. I had to do alterations, and I was afraid I couldn't afford if I spoiled something to replace it.

So it was a tailor, an old man. He was so nice. When the superintendent left the room, he said to me, I show you. He taught me how to do alterations actually. I knew how to sew on the machine, but I didn't know how to-- a Mr. Brillo. He couldn't even write, but he was a kind man, and he taught me how to do the alterations. Whenever she walked out, he put into zipper for me and he taught me how to do it.

I wanted to ask you what your expectations of America were before you came and how you met these expectations in the States. Were you pleased or were you disappointed?

I really didn't know much about it. Once as a child, I remember my mother's cousin came for a visit with his wife and children. And I remember my father's remark. He looks like a hard working man. He's hands were so--

We lived much better in Europe, some of us. I don't say they were not poor people, but I came from a middle class, and I went on vacation every summer, and I never had a need not to have things, and so on. I went to private school. In the beginning, I went to public school. We had Jewish public schools, and after I went to high school, but just for two years. That's all. The war broke out, and we couldn't go to school anymore.

So I didn't really-- I knew that people, remembering that cousin, how my father spoke about him, that he works very hard. You could tell in his hands and so on. And I expected more. I was a little bit disappointed when I arrived in America, because I realized that who in America is important is people who have money.

People didn't know how to read and write, but if they had money, they very respected. So this was a great disappointment to me. That I know from where they come-- most where refugees, came here as running around from Russia, and under what conditions. Now we have live under much better conditions.

I know that America was very-- after the Depression there were hard times. I also was angry that people didn't know anything about what was going on in Europe. And I couldn't understand. Didn't they read?

Now I am more-- I mellowed. And I feel that they work very hard after the Depression. They didn't have the things. Some maybe didn't know how to read and write. They didn't have televisions. They worked very hard in grocery stores and so on.

During the war, a lot of people got very rich, but before the war, when I listen to the stories, we lived much more comfortably in Europe than the people who lived here. Some of us. I don't say everybody.

When you came to this country, did Americans ask you about your experiences during the Holocaust?

First of all, the experience was-- did you read the book about-- I have it here. About the how they brought-- he's a psychologist in New York, and wrote about the welcomes, what the survivors got when they arrived in America. They didn't believe the stories.

I didn't have any relatives here. I didn't know a soul when we came to Washington. I didn't know the language, I didn't know anything. I didn't know anybody. One grocer, we could speak Yiddish to him. He was speaking, I didn't. He couldn't speak English either.

So they didn't believe us. They thought they are sitting and reading, and they didn't want to listen even. I had this tattoo number on my arm. I had people ask me if it's my social security number, if it's my dance number, my laundry number. I put a Band-Aid to cover it up. You couldn't open your heart to everybody and tell them the story of your life. Was very disappointing.

The first people we met, he was in a higher class-- had a different teacher. And his class was-- became friends of ours. Her name was [? Leo Barjanek. ?] And she came here to family, so they in the beginning took us in. They had family circles and meetings, and they took us in. She had a very large family here, they are very rich-- Smith Cargo and so on. That was her family.

But they didn't want to listen even to us. Some said they feel like they are watching a movie. And it was very difficult, and I was very disappointed how people didn't participate and didn't do anything. If they would be more aware of what's going on--

They were almost well, why did Zygielbojm commit suicide in London? To prove to the world what's going on in Europe. But they didn't know. A lot of people, my contemporaries, now say we didn't know anything. Everything comes from the home. That's the foundation, and if they don't know anything about it--

I'll tell you another incident. We were here the first Thanksgiving. So Rabbi Levinson invited all the survivors. One man was here with triplets. And I have some place in the article how they are holding the turkey leg. That was our first big thing with Americans, and we had the first Thanksgiving. They looked at us like we were from another world.

You had mentioned the Americanization school, and I was wondering if you could tell me what that experience was like.

They were very kind. The teachers were very kind, and they tried very hard. And the pronunciation was-- I had one year of English in high school, and I remember they were teaching us the English from England. Because I remember the professor-- we call them professors-- said to us, you have to sound like you have a hot potato in your mouth.

So it was very hard. I still have an accent. I can't help it. And the pronunciation, the th. I had a friend whose mother always corrected me how I said birthday. She couldn't get through that I can't pronounce it.

When you came here who were your friends?

We didn't have any friends when we came. We didn't know a soul here. But most of our friends were Americans, because how-- I know. They gave us tickets for the first Rosh Hashanah Yom Kippur. Because we came in September, it was a week or so before Rosh Hashanah. So they gave us tickets to the old age home, which was on Spring Road, too, right next to the Jewish social center.

So I am sitting there, and it was Yizkor. And I cried, so somebody was watching me. And the woman said-- she was sitting with her sister-in-law. And she said to her, this woman is not American. American people don't cry like that.

She approached me. We were sitting during a break outside in the garden, and I had the number on. And I spoke. They were from Vienna, and we spoke German to them.

So she approached me, and she right away they invited us for break the fast on Yom Kippur. They were both from Vienna. And through them we met five other American couples, because what happens in Washington, they were all graduates from New York. And they couldn't find a job in New York, so they came. There were two teachers, two advertising, one a government worker, and they were young couples. And they all belong to the Jewish Community Center.

So the Rosenblatts took us once with them, and we met all these couples. And they took us under their wings, and they started to teach us. So we Americanized much earlier, because every Sunday they used to come pick us up. We didn't

have a car. And they'd take us to Hains Point and picnics and so on. They taught him how to play baseball, and they were all our age.

So they picked us up. They taught us a lot, English and everything. We used to get every weekend together and go Dutch. Hot dogs and so on during the summer, and picnics-- so really, they took us under their wings. And we still are friends with them. One is coming next month here. On the way from Florida she's staying with us, so we keep still in touch.

So I really didn't meet many of the survivors, because they always used to pick us up and do and things. And so I don't know too many, really, even today.

I'd like to ask you about your children. Specifically, I'd like to ask when they were born and how you chose names for them.

We decided to have a child. I wanted still to work and have furniture. And we went to visit Willy's cousin in New Jersey, and they came with a little boy who was a year old. After he saw that boy, he said I don't wait anymore.

So I became pregnant. And I was throwing up every day, and I opened the kitchenette and the cockroaches were running around. So it was very, very hard in 1950 to find an apartment in Washington. We had to get $200, which was a lot of money for us, to save to be able to get an apartment-- a one bedroom apartment, Brentwood Village in those days.

So he was born on October 20, 1951. I chose the name after my father and his father. His name is Harvey Simon, after my father's name was Haim and his is Simon-- [? Shiman, ?] no, Simcha his father. So his name is Harvey Simon.

He was very bright. I lived in a one bedroom apartment on the third floor. In the beginning I had diaper service, but we wanted to save money, so I remember we bought at that time-- it was a small kitchen-- semi-automatic washing machine for the diapers, so that we could save.

When I was in labor-- I have to backtrack a little bit-- I couldn't afford to go to the Jewish doctors. They were charging at that time $300. That was a lot of money for us. So he asked me how long I was working. I bought a bedroom set, because I got a discount in this department store. I bought a sewing machine. And I wanted to work longer, but we decided to have a baby. I worked in the night, almost a week before he was born.

So I found a doctor. I found I met here somebody who was American. She was going to a Seventh Day Adventist doctor who charged just-- she was a gynecologist, obstetrician-- $75. So I went to her, because I couldn't afford any expensive doctors. Thank God I didn't have any complications, and soon everything was the bris.

He was born on a Saturday. This is a funny story. So my husband calls Rabbi Williamofsky said I have a son, and I know it's a mitzvah to have a bris on Saturday, and I would like to have the bris on Saturday. So he said I don't drive. So my husband says, I pick you up. He was Orthodox man, he didn't drive on Shabbos. So I have to tell that to his son. I know his son, Ben Williamofsky to tell him this story.

So there was a neighbor across the street. We had that pidyon haben, because it was the first born. And she was a very nice lady. Mrs. [? Weiner ?] is her name. I think she's still alive. They had a liquor store, so they brought all the liquor for us. People were very kind to us, I have to say. Really everybody was very helpful.

So after he was born, to make some extra money, I used to do alterations at home a little bit. He used to play with the spools of thread and unwind them. So I wanted to have another child.

He was very bright. At 22 months old, he was reading. He used to go to the 5 and 10, for 10 cents or so bring him something. He worked as a plumber. He will tell you that story. And he had the truck, and eventually we bought a used car, because he was always on call, and I wouldn't have what to eat or anything. So I learned how to, when Harvey was a year old, we almost got a divorce, because he taught me how to drive.

I remember practicing in the back of the Catholic University-- was a big lot there. But he couldn't teach me how to park. I had to take parking lessons, because I almost divorced him with the park-- you know, everybody goes through that with the teaching how to drive. After Harvey was 3 years old--

We're being paged. We're going to take a break for just a moment.

OK, we're back. I had asked you about your children-- when you had them, when they were born, and how you chose their names, and you told me about your first born, your son.

When Harvey was about 3 1/2 we were thinking to have another child. And he was very bright, Harvey. He read-- I remember he was at thumb sucker, and he said he wanted a typewriter. We couldn't afford to buy a typewriter, so we bought him a toy typewriter where he could punch the letters.

Harvey started to read. Willy used to come home and bring him always something from the 5 and 10-- for 10 cents, for a quarter. So he brought him blocks with alphabet-- little blocks with the alphabet. He taught him the alphabet, and he caught on on that.

He was watching television. Finally we got the television, because we had to stay home with the baby. We couldn't afford babysitters. So once I heard him banging against the screen. I said, Harvey, what are you doing? He said he saw a hakenkreuz, a swastika on a book. And he knew already about Hitler. He was reading when he was three years old.

So I mentioned that to Dr. [? Khan, ?] the pediatrician. I said, I'm surprised that they have stories like that in children's book-- the Golden Books. He said it's history. You can't help it. It was in the child's version. He was six years old. He read Exodus. Dr. Khan once came. He was sick, and he had a bed with a bookcase. And he said to him, Harvey, is that the latest literature? Greek mythology he was reading. Really, I don't exaggerate. When he started school kindergarten, he was reading the newspaper, and the teacher said my god, he's reading this? But he will be bored here. But as long as he had something, even comics to read, it didn't matter what it was that he was reading.

So I remember he was, and I wanted him to stop sucking the thumb. So the next day, I went in always before I went to bed to check him. And I said to him the next morning, I said you know, Harvey, you were sucking your tongue again in your sleep. You didn't know. So he said please put a Band-Aid on that I can't suck the thumb.

He once started Hebrew school, and the teacher told me. She said who are the most history from the Bible? So he knew Haman. And they were talking about Haman. It was before Purim. And he said and Hitler. Yeah, he still is a very, very-- he is a walking encyclopedia.

So Stanley was born. It was 4 1/2 years difference between them. Stanley is a different completely child. He wants-- he is happy go lucky, but he went-- I didn't have any problems with all three of them. They never gave me problems in school.

How did you choose his name?

His name was named after my husband's brother and my brother, Shlomo Abram. And his is Stanley Allen. And things were getting better for us. Stanley-- really, they say every child brings his own mazel-- luck. So he went into business. He worked as a plumber for six years for Jewish men, but he was treating him like-- Christmastime, everybody got a bonus-- a gift. He never got it, because it wasn't his holiday. But he never got it for his holidays either. So I wouldn't mention even the man's name. Let him rest in peace.

And the first time we got bought $2,000 from the Germans-- reparations. He said, I don't want. I can never get ahead working for somebody. He was very ambitious. He was working in people's houses, and he was dreaming if he ever would have a house. And so he went, read the paper, and bought a station for $2,000.

I didn't know what happened to him. He was working in a station before to get acquainted. The man promised-- wanted to go away on vacation, how people take advantage-- and said that he would take him as a partner. When he came back

from the vacation, he said I don't need a partner. So I didn't know what happened. He went to work there, and I didn't see him the whole day, didn't hear from him.

So at 11:00, he comes home. He said I bought a station. Looked at the paper on Blair Road, a Sinclair station. Had $2,000-- he didn't want to touch my part in case it doesn't work out, that we have something to fall back.

And he had enough money to pay for a lot of gas, and he was in business. He was there for 1 1/2 years, worked very hard from 6:00 in the morning until 11:00 at night. I used to wait and make him dinner at 11:00 at night. It was hard.

The hardest part was when we came here it was not knowing the language. There are funny stories. I tell that a story. We used to walk. It was the Jewish section on 14th Street. We used to walk on 14th Street. And I saw a building with stained glass and black limos in front, and I didn't know. I read funeral home. I didn't know what it means. I thought it's a nightclub. It was a Danzansky funeral home. That's how green we were.

How many items I bought and didn't know just from the labels-- and cans. Didn't know what it is and then threw it out when we couldn't afford it even. So it was very difficult. The beginnings were very difficult. We were walking, we didn't know anybody until we met these people, and they were nice to us, kind. We met a few survivors.

But we didn't have a car we didn't know how to. Everybody lives in a different section. But he finally bought a car-- a used car in 1950, a year later. He registered to buy a new Chevrolet. Our friend Sam talked to him that it's a good value to buy Chevrolet. It has a good resell price, thing.

But he was draft age, and Korean War broke out. They wouldn't give him a loan for a car. So eventually after a year we bought a car, a used car from a Seventh Day Adventist man, and he was a very decent man. We used that car for many years. I learned on that car-- how come?

Let's stop. We'll stop for one moment. OK, we're back now, and all of the phones are now off the hook. You were telling me about the car that you purchased.

We purchased a used car, and having a car-- we used to go, even Harvey-- we used to build up the back of the car. We used to go often to New York. That was our outing. We couldn't afford to go anyplace on vacation or anything. We used to go visit Etta to New York. And today, we really wanted-- we put boxes, and he had like a playpen in the back of the car. Today on the plane even, my daughter has to come with the seats and things-- the car seats. We didn't know better, so everybody was doing it.

And so we bought the car. And after Stanley was born, and I named him after Willy's brother and my brother, things were getting better. He went into business, like I said before. Every child brings its own good luck. Things were getting better, and I could afford to send Harvey. I never could afford to send-- he was so bright, but I couldn't afford to send him to a nursery.

Stanley went already to Town & Country Nursery, and we decided to have another child. Things were getting better.

I have to interrupt you. We have change the tape. Just one moment, and we'll start talking about the other child.

This is a continuation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with Helen Luksenburg. This is tape 2, side B. And you were just about to tell me about the birth of your third child.

We decided to have another child. We could afford it. Because if things would be better before, we would have more children, but I was getting too old already. Unfortunately, it took me a long time, because it's 15 years difference between my oldest child, Harvey, and Amy, and 10 years difference between Stanley and Amy. Because I had a few miscarriages after.

But the doctor told me forget it. You have two normal children. Forget about it. So my husband said who's he to tell me? And I didn't have any problems afterward becoming pregnant with Amy or anything. It was like sunshine came to her.

When the doctor told him in the hospital that it looks just like daddy, he thought it's another boy. He said no, it's a girl. I started to cry when they told me it's a girl. I really expected a boy.

So she was really the-- but people were so-- today it's a different time. She's 31 years old now, but 30 years ago, people were asking me if she's my grandchild. Today women at 40 have their first child-- older. But that's how the times were. So she was really a joy to us, and still is. And it's unfortunate that she lives so far away. Maybe in a way it's better.

How did you pick her name?

Her name is after my mother and Willy's mother. We have plenty of names that we don't run out. Because I wasn't even angry that my daughter didn't pick the name she couldn't and can't understand. I wanted her to name after my father. And she said she doesn't want to have a brother and a son the same name. She doesn't understand. In Jewish religion, it's allowed to do that. I have many aunts who had the same name that I have. We were named after grandmother, great grandmothers. But I couldn't get through to her. She couldn't.

So she named after his grandfather, and the middle name has a name after [? Yair ?]. They picked just a Hebrew name. And the last one she named after my sister, Benjamin. Her name was Bluma, so she picked the B after my sister.

When your children were growing up, what did you tell them about your life in Europe? We were telling them always how much they could understand. We never went overboard. And I would have to tell you when my oldest son Harvey-- I'll never forget it-- was a freshman and Johns Hopkins.

He came home for a weekend, and I happened to have at the time Helen Epstein, who wrote the book Children of Survivors. Before the book was published, there were excerpts and in the magazine section of the New York Times.

So I remember Harvey came home for the Sunday, and I said, Harvey, I want to talk to you. I sat with him in his room on the bed, and I said to him, I want you to read this. Because in that article, she was describing how some parents told the stories to the children, and one girl was afraid to take the subway-- that the train would take her to Auschwitz.

So I said, Harvey, I'm not perfect. Tell me. I'm sure I made many mistakes. But tell me how you feel. He was already 18 years old. He said we know about it, we talked about it, but we don't live with it every day. That's how we raised the children.

Tell me about your children's education.

As I said before, Harvey was very bright. I remember his third grade teacher sent me a note home that I'm wasting his time, if I could send him to Sidwell Friends School. I told her I can't afford it. I didn't have a car even to drive him. Who could afford to send him to private school?

He always was-- he was reading constantly. He still is reading. We try to give them. My husband worked very hard, and we tried to give them the education, if they were capable.

So Harvey started with Johns Hopkins. After two years, he transferred. And he was accepted to Columbia, but I was glad he didn't go to Columbia, because at the time they had the riots-- the time with the Vienna War. So he went to University of Chicago, undergraduate. Graduated, was the dean's list, and he always was a very good student.

He's not ambitious enough. He's not a showoff. I remember once in classroom was for parents visiting, and the boy's name was Joel. I don't remember his last name. Was sitting with him at the bench, at the thing. And he the teacher asked a question. Joel leans over to Harvey, asked Harvey the question, and raises his arm. And here's the answer. That's Harvey.

He graduated, applied to medical school-- Pritzker Medical School-- was accepted on early acceptance. He is going this weekend for the 25th anniversary of undergraduate school to Chicago. He did a residency, and he was six months in London in a hospital.

And when he came back, they didn't match him to any place. So he is the dean of the medical school-- asked him. There was an opening in Oregon-- in Portland, Oregon-- in the health something. It's a government, I guess a military-- what was a very good experience for him, because in private hospitals, the intern doesn't have much to say or do. But over there he had to make the decisions already, so it was a good experience.

He did the internship and residency and decided to come back. He was missing-- it wasn't intellectually enough for him in Portland, because mostly it's basketball and skiing. And he is not in sports at all. He doesn't know much about sports.

So they didn't have a symphony. They didn't have an orchestra and things, so he came back to Washington. So we bought him-- at that time a building on 16th Street was going co-op, so we put down a down payment and bought him a condo, what he paid out later himself. He still owns it, and he's renting it out and working.

And he actually is in Georgetown, but DC General lost accreditation. So he used to be in DC General under the Georgetown Hematology. A few years ago, they recognized his ability, and they took him. He is in Georgetown now in the Oncology, Hematology Clinic.

Stanley is very short. None of my children are tall. They say every generation is taller, but it didn't happen. Stanley is just 5'2", and he had a complex with it really. And he wasn't as good a student. He was all right, but not as Harvey. So it was competition here.

And he decided that he wants to go for podiatry, so he got into podiatry in Cleveland. He met the girl and in Cleveland, and he married her. She was from Cleveland. After he graduated and got married, we brought them here. We thought maybe we could help him to open a practice and things.

But she was homesick. She is-- autistic children, she's trained. So now she went back to school and took courses, and she's special education in the school system-- the Shaker Heights. Because she's so petite-- she's 4'6" or 4'8", and the kids were much bigger. And I think it was very hard with autistic children to teach. And so they live in Cleveland. They have two children, Stephanie and David.

Harvey doesn't have any children. He got married in Chicago, and the faculty dining room was the wedding, the dinner, and so on. So he's the only one who lives here.

Amy was a very good student, very conscientious. She was used to come home and cry if she didn't get an A. And her brother said, what's the big deal?

So she applied. She went to Brandeis and met her future husband right at the freshman year. And he's two years older than she is. He went to law school at Boston University. She followed him to Boston University. She's a lawyer also. They settled in New England, because he's from Framingham, Massachusetts. | they live now in Providence, Rhode Island. She has three children. She became very Orthodox. It's a little bit of a problem here and there, but I try my best.

And so they're good kids. They never gave us any problems. We tried to educate them. We tried-- we paid for the education. They didn't have anything, no-- we felt if we did for one, we have to do for the others. And they're on their own now.

I'd like to go back over the years in this country and ask you what your thoughts were about various historical events. And I want to start with the Eichmann trial. Did you follow the Eichmann trial, and what were your thoughts?

Yes, I followed very closely the Eichmann trial. And I remember being upset with the Israelis, because during the trial, the young Israelis were blaming us that we went like sheep to slaughter.

And they could not understand. We didn't have anything to protect ourselves, to fight back. In Warsaw ghetto, the little bit of what they were buying from the Poles, so most of the arms what they gave them, they didn't give them bullets even. We didn't have the condition to be able to fight.

We were too young, some of us. Some people were fighting. It's a miracle how for one month they could fight, exist-- the Warsaw ghetto fighters. And some organizations-- I belonged during the war to a Zionist organization, youth organization, HaNoar HaTzioni. And after the war, I found out that some of them helped and they got them to Romania.

One friend who still lives in Germany, I spoke to him recently. And he said, you know how hard it was to live among-- he was working in Germany as a Pole. He said I wasn't afraid of the Germans. The Germans treated me very well. I was working on the farm. I was afraid the weekend, Sunday, when it comes-- how to behave. I had to learn how to swear and how to behave among the Poles, because they could recognize me that I'm a Jew. It was much harder. It was very difficult.

And I was very angry that time, how they were thinking about us. They didn't realize really what hard times we had to survive, and how they were murdering and slaughtering them. So I was angry at the time, because how they felt the young Israelis that we didn't fight back. With what? We didn't have the things with what to do.

And I was 13, 14 years old. What did I know? I think that for that age, I was very involved. I used to be. My father was afraid to go out, and I used to go and one relative had a restaurant during the war. I used to go and listen to politics and bring the news to him. We didn't have radios. We didn't have anything.

You were in this country during the Eichmann trial. What was the reaction of your American friends to the trial?

Some of my friends, one particular one, told us a few years ago. He said, it's about time. It's 25 years. That was a long time ago-- 25, 30 years. Stop talking about it. I got very angry at him. This is our life. You can't wipe out a whole life. That's the only thing we have is the memories left.

When the Holocaust Museum was open, he gave in our honor $1,000 to the museum. He realized. Now each time he sees me on television, because the Board of Education keeps repeating, he calls me up. Helen, I just saw you on television. And his wife gave him-- she called him up when he said that to us. And said how can you stop? You don't have to listen. You don't have to ask me questions if you don't want to hear, but we can't wipe it out. That will remain with us the rest of our lives, because that's memories of our parents, what happened to them.

The only one who really-- oh, one couple, the one from Vienna that I mentioned before, one year they went to-- they didn't want to listen either. Oh, no. She came in 1940. He came through China. And her parents, she lost her parents. They lived in Vienna, and they were Polish born. So they sent them out when Hitler came out to Auschwitz. And she came to America, but her parents never made it anymore.

One day she tells me that they used to go to Europe and bought a car, and they were driving. And she drove, went by, and saw Dachau. So they went to Dachau. When she came back, she cried and apologized that she didn't realize what we were going through. And these are people who suffered from the Nazis, too. So most of them they listen, listen, enough that they say it's enough.

I wanted to ask you about some of the other events that you experienced in this country. After you came to this country, the United States became involved with wars in Korea and Vietnam. Did you react in any way to those conflicts?

First of all, Korean War, I got very upset. I was afraid that they would draft my husband. He was draft age. If he wouldn't married, he would be-- across the street from me was a guy who came to this country who was single. He was drafted. He was in Korea. So he was lucky that he was married, that they didn't draft him.

Even the Cuban crisis, I was very upset. Because I was afraid. I don't go to 4th of July fireworks. Once I went. Because it reminds me of the war-- the thunders and the shooting and everything. I can't get rid of it. After so many years, it still haunts me.

So I was always very upset about if they talked about war broke out and things. I get very upset. I don't want to live through another war. And if something like that would happen again, I would commit suicide. I wouldn't go through it

again.

The same for my children. My son, when he transferred from Johns Hopkins to Chicago, he had a student deferment. But with transferring, they didn't apply. He became class A. When I got that in the mail, I got hysterical, and luckily he had a high number, but I didn't know until the end of December. 125, and they didn't call the 125.

But you should see. I went to lawyers and everything, because I would move if he would have to go to war. That's how frightened I am of wars. It left a deep mark on me.

Israel fought several wars. What was that experience like for you, knowing the visuals of war?

That's why I didn't go to Israel, because I was afraid he was draft age-- that he would be in the war. That's why I waited. I didn't want to go. I told you before that I knew we just got out from one hell. I didn't want him to be, and I don't know if today he would be alive.

But sitting here in this country and knowing that in Israel there's a war, what was your reaction to that?

Oh, I remember 1967 war. They called me. They were collecting money, and somebody called me up if I would give some money. I said yes. Come in a man, he said you didn't know who would come to the door. I gave him $1,000. He said, you didn't even know. It happened that I knew the guy-- Bernie Rosenberg-- when he came to the door to collect. We did everything possible. We were sitting where I have a friend in the neighborhood-- middle of the night, we were talking, going back and forth, listening to radio and discussions. The same man just two weeks ago, he got upset. I came home, there was a message. And Henry it sounded so bad. I called, I said what's the matter.

Because how could Albright give an ultimatum to Israel to Netanyahu? They are country. He was so upset. He called three different reporters in Israel to find out. So we take it very, very seriously.

We had a friend who worked in the State Department during the '97 war, and he assured us that Nixon already sent the planes and everything-- was on the way to Israel. He knew. He worked in the State Department at a very high position, unfortunately died many years ago. But he was calming us down. Said help is coming, not to worry.

Was that for the Yom Kippur War?

Nixon] did a lot for Israel.

You mentioned that you were also upset with the Cuban Missile Crisis. What were your thoughts when the United States had such a conflict with the Soviet Union in general?

I was always afraid before. I really did. I read two newspapers a day-- the New York Times and Washington Post. I know every day what's going on. I don't understand-- I play cards with some women. I don't understand how they don't know anything. One's stupid-- said to me, sometimes I can't make it. And she said, you know, we'll miss you Helen. You always have such interesting stories. They don't know anything that's going on.

You were in this country during the Civil Rights movement in the '60s. Can you tell me as a Jew with your background, what was your reaction to what was going on in this country?

I felt that they have the right to be equal. They are human beings. My husband doesn't feel the same way. I feel that way. I always fight with him about this. I said, they're human beings. They have rights. He works with them, everything. Sometimes how they behave, he goes on [INAUDIBLE]. But I said not everybody is like that. There are some very nice. I remember having a maid. She never would sit with me at the table to eat. I insisted. I said no, you sit and eat with me. I solve it. I know what it means to be pointed out. I forgot the expression. And it's prejudice. I am not prejudiced. I consider everybody. When I talk to kids, I tell them we are God's given children, and everybody has a right to be treated right.

You were also here for the Women's Rights Movement. What did you think of that?

Oh, once I went to march with them. Yes, I consider that women are much brighter than men. My daughter-in-law, everything, every time. She's a feminist. She goes, oh. We have sometimes discussions, and we mention something. She gets so upset and things because she's a big feminist.

You were also in this country during the turbulence when the Kennedys were assassinated and King was assassinated. Again, with your background, what was your reaction to what was going on in this country at that time?

I just don't believe how people murdering and things. A Kennedy-- I have the records and the books. I can't bring myself even today to listen to it. I remember what I did at the moment. It was Friday, and I was cleaning the Venetian blinds. And the neighbor came in and said, did you hear that what happened? And I couldn't get over it.

I have Jackie's stories and everything. I keep it. And it just-- and Martin Luther King the same. We were the ones who tried. We were always involved, I mean, as Jews. Goldstein-- what was his name, Goldstein? The boy who was killed marching for the civil rights? So I agree that they have the same rights.

Have you experienced any antisemitism in the United States? Once when somebody said-- my beautician once said to me-- some day she asked me about if I know somebody. I said no. Oh, I knew that you people know everybody. I didn't like how she said that you people.

Except that not specifics that I could pinpoint, just what I read and I know it's going on. But my kids had friends what they would know. I never grew up with having no Jewish friends, but that was Poland. And here I don't have too many friends non-Jewish either. I try to be nice and friendly to everybody when I worked in the museum and in the beauty parlor and places like that. I try be kind and nice and understanding, and I treat everybody the same.

In the years since the war, did you actively try to learn more about the Holocaust?

Yes, I didn't know much. Talking to people, listening I learned much more, because I didn't know everything about every camp. And so I tell you how I feel. Just last week I made something, a child calling from Memphis, Tennessee. The mother used to live next door, so they know me.

And he was doing-- he read a book, something about Sweden. And he had to do a project on the Holocaust. So he called me if I had something personal that I could send to him. I said Jason, I don't have anything personal, but I will try to give you. So I sent him a picture of my husband holding the jacket, because you know the story about she gave the jacket. No? He will tell you about it-- this striped jacket, his prison jacket.

So I sent him the picture. I went in the museum to the education department, sent him all the brochures about it. And some day he called me that he received it, and how grateful. The mother got on the phone.

And I said, when she mentioned Denmark, I said, I have a letter from Denmark. When King Frederick died, I planted trees in his memory, because I was so grateful that there was one man who protected us. He saved 7,000 people that were Jews. And I got back a response from the Queen Margarethe. I'll show it to you. The Queen Margarethe's secretary sent me a letter thanking me for sending condolence in the memory of the King. I planted trees in his name. And I fazed him a copy of it. I made a copy and I faxed it to him for showing at school.

I'd like to ask you to please tell me about the work that you do with the Holocaust Museum here in Washington.

I'm in general. When my children started to go to school, I had more time on my hands, and I am involved in everything. I am involved in UJA. For the last 25 years or so. And when the Museum-- they talked about Museum. I told Mark. I was once-- so Mark Talisman, and I told him about the jacket with my husband and the prison jacket, years before they opened. And he gave it. Maybe he's the only one alive. Are many jackets, but we don't know if the people were alive. Maybe they got them from Auschwitz and other places.

And before the museum was open, I was involved. I worked on L Street in the temporary offices. They used to have a model there of the museum and a picture of my husband there. And I used to-- Rita Segerman, every time she brought a group, she wanted me to be there and explain. [? I ?] [? had ?] [? doubts. ?] Always I belong to Hadassah. I belong to every Jewish organization. I've been a life member of Hadassah. I belong to B'nai B'rith Women, Zionist organization. AKIM I support. You know what is AKIM in Israel? An organization that helps retarded children. And what else-- I think everyone to the synagogue, sisterhood, every place.

Are you a member of ORT?

Oh, yes. I'm a member of ORT. I'm a member of everything. I'm telling you.

What do you do for the Museum now? Actually, I like to do more, but they don't call on me. I promised to go with Fannie Mae. I would go for three months to Florida. So I guess that interferes.

And I am sitting at the donor desk-- collect membership and donors. Yesterday was a slow day, and I made $300. I feel I contribute something. And whenever they need me, I'm there. They can call on me.

What has the experience been like for you to be a survivor working in this museum?

Some of my friend survivors say how can I do it. On the contrary-- I feel is maybe I was left for purpose. Maybe I'm naive, because I feel through education maybe we can wipe out sometimes ignorance. Because antisemitism, the only thing what it is is ignorance. Yesterday I spoke just to a group of kids, and I feel I contribute something for the next generation-- that we can educate them.

A young boy came over yesterday, maybe 15 years old-- became a member, gave me $25. And I feel that I get across to people, that I can educate them. A young woman once came in with twins-- seven-year-olds. She cried. I told her many people when they come over to the desk, I said, usually they come after they see the exhibit-- the permanent exhibit. I said, so how do you feel about it? What did you learn? And they said, oh-- they start to talk. I said, I know. I was there. So they take pictures of me. They hug me. They kiss me.

And she came and went to the bookstore, bought two books. I had to write in something for the seven-year-old kids. And she wanted for the kids-- each one she bought the book. And I had to write something and what it means for me to be a Holocaust survivor-- that they know.

So this is really a lot of gratification that I can get-- if it's 1 in 100, it's worth the effort to be there. I hope I can continue a long time.

How do you respond when you hear about the Holocaust deniers?

Oh, Farrakhan was there when I was there, and I was so angry, but after I was told I was giving an interview to a reporter who recognized me and said how I feel about it. Later I found out that I'm not supposed to do that on the grounds of the Holocaust. I was very angry. I was ready to scrape his eyes out. But it's a free country-- free speech.

When we were sitting at the dedication, we heard a certain amount of yards or meters, whatever they were allowed to be there-- the skinheads. And I heard them denying it, but what could I do? In America it's free speech. I get angry, and I respond very angrily, but we can do nothing about it. I don't support it.

Have you ever gone back to your hometown since you came to the United States? I was right after the war seven years ago, eight years ago. Rabbi Simon, our rabbi, was leading a group from UJA. And he said I wasn't ready to go. He said, Helen, I think it's time for you to go. And when you go to Poland, you need a spiritual leader with you.

So I was the only survivor in a group of 25 people. And when my son heard it, he said, maybe being a doctor-- he was if I have high blood pressure, that he wanted to be with me. He came, and Amy was a junior at that time and Brandheis. So she said she would take off. It was Thanksgiving time, so she was four days off and took off another couple of days.

She didn't continue to Israel, but she came with me to Auschwitz, to Poland.

Rabbi Simon talked to me that I should go a week before to see my home and things with the kids. I said, Rabbi, a week is too much, too long for me. It's too painful. So I went four days before. I arrived in Warsaw, stayed in a hotel with the kids. After I took the train, went to their father's place, because it's just by streetcar 6 kilometers, or 8 kilometers.

Went to my hometown, showed them where I live. I have pictures. I have all the pictures from Poland. After, I met the group in Krakow and went to Auschwitz. And Auschwitz was I really was afraid that I opened my big mouth and they will arrest me, because I didn't let them.

Oh, yes. Went at the mass grave-- not grave, the monument in Birkenau. It says 6 million Poles died here. I got so angry, and I started to scream. And I said, on the my parents' birth certificates, says [NON-ENGLISH SPEECH]. That means they were Moses' religion. And here they became Poles? They were never recognized as Poles before. She didn't know what to say.

After the friend, Seymour [? Evanson ?] was the president at that time of UJA. He calls me over, and he said come on, Helen. Let's go with a group of students standing in Auschwitz and Birkenau. Because we walked, you know, the tracks. And then we walked the two kilometers.

And I listened to what that teacher was telling the students. They were high school kids. And I burst out, and I said, that's a lie. He was telling them about the prison, that only Pole lost their life there-- political Poles. I said, that's not true. I had an uncle who lost a life. Mostly Jews were there. They were punishing them, and after they killed them.

So I spoke up. I didn't let them get away with anything. The same was in Warsaw. In the synagogue, a man comes over to me and says that and somebody said he is a Jew and we had dinner with them. So she switched seats with me that I can talk to him, and he said to me that he's Jewish and said he has a son. He lives in Warsaw. I said, how much do you support the [? Jew? ?]

He said he takes out his ID that it doesn't say on his ID that he's Jewish. He doesn't have to admit today that he's Jewish. I said, but you want the support from the Jews from America? They all stood there to give them money. I said, why didn't you? Oh, I am lucky one said to me, because I left. I said you had the same opportunity to leave like I did. Nobody kept you. Oh, I intermarried and I had a non-Jewish-- I said, that's your problem. You caused the problem yourself. You had the same opportunity to leave like I did. So I didn't feel sorry for them at all.

I'm going to pause now and I'm going to change the tape. Just one moment.