

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Oral History Volunteer Collection

Summary of Interview with
DORRIT OSTBERG
RG-50.106*0132

Date of interview: July 29, 2000

Interviewer: Gail Schwartz

Note: This summary follows the order in which the interviewee relates her story and thus does not necessarily present the interviewee's experiences in chronological order.

Tape 1 of 3/Side A

Dorrit Liane Ostberg (née Dorrit Liane Reisner) was born in Vienna, Austria, on September 29, 1929. Her parents, Fred and Stella, were college educated. Her father was a businessman and had served in World War I. Her family had a chauffeur, laundress, cook, maid and governess. She and her older sister, Renée, had private piano lessons and French and English tutors. She felt more Austrian than Jewish and spoke German at home. The family only observed the high holidays. After Germany entered Austria, Dorrit's father fled to Paris. Dorrit, her mother and sister prepared to follow him there.

Tape 1 of 3/Side B

When Dorrit, her mother and sister reached Paris in 1938, Fred Reisner had left for Yugoslavia. Several months later, the family joined him. They obtained Yugoslav citizenship, bought a house in Slavonski-Brod, and later moved to Zagreb. After Dorrit's father was arrested by the Croats and then released, the family fled to Cirkvenica, on the coast. A few months later they were deported to an Italian internment camp on the Yugoslav island of Rab.

Tape 2 of 3/Side A

Living conditions in the camp were adequate. Dorrit attended school with Jewish teachers until she contracted hepatitis and was put in a hospital for four months. The camp was liberated after Italy's capitulation in September of 1943. The family fled in a fishing boat to Italy. There they lived openly as Jews in Bari, and Dorrit and her sister went to a convent school where they learned Italian and Latin. In July 1944 her family was part of the refugee group to go to Fort Ontario in Oswego, New York, sailing on the ship Henry Gibbons.

Tape 2 of 3/Side B

Dorrit and her family lived in two rooms in a barrack and used common eating and recreation halls in Oswego. She attended junior high school. Her father did not work, but her mother worked in a hospital. Dorrit's sister began living as a Catholic and hid the fact that she was Jewish. After one and a half years, Dorrit and her family moved to New York City.

Tape 3 of 3/Side A and B

Dorrit attended universities and became a math teacher. She married three times and has a son. She has a sense of displacement, feeling European in America and American in Europe. She is petrified of policemen. She does not belong to a synagogue, but she observes Yom Kippur and has always liked being Jewish.