

**Interview with Dorrit L. Ostberg
July 29, 2000**

Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: This is the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Dorrit Ostberg**, conducted by **Gail Schwartz** on July 29th, 2000, in **Bethesda, Maryland**. This is tape number one, side **A**. Please give us your full name.

Answer: **Dorrit Liami Ostberg**.

Q: And what was your date of birth?

A: September 29th, 1929.

Q: And where were you born?

A: I was born in **Vienna, Austria**.

Q: And who were the members of your immediate family?

A: My immediate family consisted of my father, **Fred Reisner**, my mother **Stella Reisner**, and my sister, **Rene Reisner**.

Q: And was your sister older or younger?

A: My sister was three years older than I was.

Q: How far back in **Vienna** can you trace your family? Were they there for previous generations?

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A: Yes. I think both my mother's and my father's family, I can trace them back to the grandparents and maybe even the great grandparents. I'm not sure about the great grandparents.

Q: Do you know where those previous generations then came from?

A: No.

Q: Okay. What kind of work did your father do?

A: My father was the head of a factory. He was awa -- thint -- the -- the actual title was **Centrale Directore**, which means main manager, or main director of the factory. It was a factory of enamel, but it was a conglomerate and there were factories all over **Europe** by the same conglom -- owned by the same conglomerate.

Q: And you said he was the central director?

A: That's correct.

Q: Did your mother work?

A: No, my mother never worked. She -- we had a lot of servants and we -- she was active, she went to the university for some courses, she played a lot tennis, she belonged to several societies and she didn't work.

Q: What kind of education did your father have?

A: My father had a business education. I think it -- it could be -- it -- it wouldn't be a university degree, but it was probably equated to a business background and business kind of schooling.

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Q: Did you have many extended family in the area? Aunts, uncles, cousins?

A: Okay. My mother had two sisters and a brother. One of the sisters at the time lived in **Czechoslovakia**, and the other sister did live in **Vienna**. In fact, we were very close with that sister -- with that sister's children. She had two daughters and my two cousins were -- one was three years older than my sister and the other one was another three years older. And one of the sisters always -- the younger one, **Susie**, who now lives in **Israel**, went every year with us to a vacation.

Q: So you had close relationships with your cousins.

A: Yes, with that -- with only that cousin. My mother's brother had no children, my mother's other sister had no children, so these were our only cousins. From what I recollect, I had two grandmothers, both grandfathers had been dead, and I think one of them died when I was probably about four years old. My other grandmother, which was my maternal grandmother was very -- she was with us a lot. She went away with us every single summer, and I saw quite a bit of her.

Q: Tell me about the neighborhood that you lived in in **Vienna**.

A: I lived in a -- it was called the fourth district. We -- we had -- we rented -- I don't think we owned it. We rented an apartment which was huge. It -- it went the whole length of the building. I was lucky enough to get a picture of the building, I forgot to bring it. And --

Q: Remember what street it was on?

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A: Yes, the name of the street was **Winnervallstrasse**. I forgot the number now, but I was able to relocate the number through some of the documents that I found in my mother's portfolio, where my mother -- where my mother kept all her documents. It -- it looked out on a little plaza. So when I went back to **Vienna**, I -- I tried to find it and I -- actually I couldn't recognize the house because the bottom of the house had been changed. It -- it became more commercial now, they have like shops and shops' windows on the bottom, but the top floor seems to be the same that we lived on. And we probably had approximately, I don't know, about 15 - 20 rooms. It was a very extensive -- because our -- some of our staff lived with us and the rest of the staff used to come in, like the laundress and the seamstress and the tutors, they just came in and left.

Q: And what other kind of staff did your parents have?

A: Okay, we had a cook and we had a maid and we had a governess and they lived with us. The chauffeur did not.

Q: So you also had a car.

A: Yes, we had a car.

Q: Sounds like it was an upper class family that you were born into.

A: I guess so. I would say so, yeah. Actually, the real upper class was my -- my grandmother's brother, who had -- who was the president of the southern railroad at the time, and he was really what we call, almost like an aristocrat. He had an

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incredible apartment that he used to have guided tours in because it was full of beautiful, very precious paintings and furniture and so on.

Q: What was his name?

A: His name was **Gustav Fall**, and he had a monument erected in his honor in front of a hotel that the railroad owned, which was on the bu -- mountain outside of **Vienna**, it was called **Zemmering**. I don't think the monument exists any more, I know the hotel does not and I know that they have some kind of vaca -- rec -- recreational facilities there now.

Q: How religious was your family?

A: Not very religious. We did -- we -- we -- we were part of the Jewish community and we did go to temple, but only on high holidays. On the other hand, we did have a Christmas tree, supposedly for the staff, to honor them. I remember going to temple. I tried to find the temple when I was in **Vienna**, but the only temple that we located was one that was closed. And later on when I talked to one of my distant relatives, I was told that there were several temples and that probably was not the one that I attended as a child.

Q: Mm-hm. Did you celebrate any Jewish holidays at home?

A: No, we did not have Friday night candle lights or anything like that. The only -- we did in a sense, Yom Kippur, because he -- my father always fasted on Yom

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Kippur, this was one thing that he did. And so did my mother and I guess so did we as children. Later on, of course, that was no longer done.

Q: Did they come from religious families, your parents?

A: I don't think so -- I think the Austrian -- I -- I don't know. I -- I don't think so. I don't remember my grandmother being -- bringing up religion in any way. We did have religious training though, but the religious training came because in **Vienna** at the time religion was part of the curriculum, and since we were Jewish, that was not given in the schools. So I remember we had a Hebrew teacher coming to the house, teaching us Hebrew and religion.

Q: Did you exchange Christmas presents among yourselves?

A: I don't think so. I think the presents were mostly for the staff. But I also don't remember any **Hanukah** big gifts. Frankly, I don't remember presents as such as part of a traditional festivity. I know I got my first gold ring because I ate some meat, which I refused to eat previously. And I remember that whenever my parents went to **Paris**, because my mother bought most of her wardrobe there, they would bring us back -- and clothes were always uppermind -- in my mind, even as a little girl, and I remember that. But I -- I -- I don't remember any presents as such that were particularly meaningful to me. I remember as a little girl I had little dolls that I liked. And I think when **Hitler** came I could take a few with me, I don't remember. But somehow they disappeared. But I don't remember like having had a specific toy that

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I was attached to, like my little granddaughter now is with -- with **Minnie Mouse**. I -
- I don't remember that. Maybe I blacked it out. I -- I can't remember.

Q: Did you have a Passover **Seder**?

A: No. And if we did, I don't remember it.

Q: Let's talk about your schooling. What kind of school did you go to?

A: Okay, we went -- we did not attend private school, we attended the public school, and I remember the greatest embarrassment was that we were brought there with the car and the chauffeur and I was very embarrassed about not being able to walk to school like the other children. I was never allowed to even cross the street by myself or walk any place by myself. My biggest pleasure was that my mother once took me on the bus. That was a big excitement for me because the car I -- I kind of disliked riding in the car, because I used to get carsick a lot.

Q: Would you say that your parents were overly protective, or was this the usual way?

A: That -- that was the usual way that the governesses and in the circle of friends that we grew up with. But y -- then most of the -- I -- I can't remember why we did not go to private school, but most of the children of my fr -- of my father's and mother's friends did attend private school. We did go to a private dancing school, and we did have piano lessons in the house with a piano teacher. But I -- and I also remember coming to the house, we had the governesses that were supposed to instruct us in

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French and English, but we also had some kind of a tutor come to the house for the languages. But nothing much came of it.

Q: What kind of relationship did you have with your sister?

A: My sister was very domineering, very bossy, and my father clearly always favored my sister, which was a big problem for me as a child because I felt he was very unjust. And in **Vienna** the oldest child had a lot of privileges that the younger child didn't have. So I was very annoyed at that. She was allowed to go at night to the opera, I was not. She was allowed to go to bed later, I was not. She was allowed a lot of fe -- also, I had a lot of hand-me-down dresses from her, which I terribly resented. And I always wanted to have the same clothes as she did, I was dreaming of her being left back in school so we could be in the same grade. Things like that.

Q: What -- how would you describe yourself? What kind of a child were you? Were you quiet, or more outgoing?

A: I was a very, very noisy child. The way we were brought up, we were not allowed to speak at the dinner table. I was not allowed to come to the big dinner table ovi -- until I knew how to cut my own meat, or -- an-and use the fork properly. I -- my father even got a record once because we were not allowed to talk unless talked to, and he once made a record on the phonograph saying, **Dorrit** eat, **Dorrit** eat, **Dorrit** don't talk, **Dorrit** don't talk. And that's how it was. And I had endless hours as a child that I remember of eating in my room. I hated to eat and I would push the food

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from one cheek to the other. And I had an uncle who always touched me at the cheek and said for me to eat. And I would forever sit and eat, from morning to night, because I was underweight, I had asthma -- I was an asthmatic child, and the governesses were told that we had to eat, that I particularly had to eat. So they kept me at the table s -- what seems to me still hours and hours. Like breakfast went into the snack, the snack went into the -- the midday meal, and the midday meal went into the afternoon meal and so on.

Q: What -- be-because of your asthma were you on medication or anything?

A: Yes, I was on medication. I had what they call an inhaler and I wasn't allowed to run, and I wasn't allowed to exercise too much. As a privilege therefore, in the summers my mother just took me to the baths, the spas and I had all kinds of -- of these mineral water baths and mud baths that were supposed to help me.

Q: Who were your friends? Did you have friends in the neighborhood?

A: No, there was no such things as friends. We had friends that were my mother's and father's friends who had children. We had -- the only set of friends that I remember were two boys, and I absolutely detested the younger one, because he was my age, and adored the older one, who was supposedly my sister's friend. But the only friends we really had was my sister had my cousin as a friend. But I was always relegated to my grandmother and to the governess and I don't remember any play dates or playing with any friends.

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Q: Did you know you were Jewish, and if so, what did that mean to you?

A: I definitely knew I was Jewish. It meant to me that I went to the temple, it meant to me that I had to have the private instruction. It meant to be -- to be excluded while the -- while the other children in the elementary school had their Catholic instruction. And I knew I was Jewish. It didn't mean a great deal, I think, as far as tradition. And as a child, until the **Hitler** came to **Vienna**, I was totally unaware of the antis -- anti-Semitism that must have existed at that time already.

Q: What did you do in school when the other children went to their Christian education?

A: I don't remember what they made us do. I don't remember. All I know is that we did not participate, and therefore we had to study Hebrew at home.

Q: Did you sense anything among the teachers or the other students about your being different?

A: No, No. I -- I remember -- a-as I said, I was not -- I was a very vivacious child, I was a very talkative child, and I remember being reprimanded for that. And I remember that I -- I had friends in the class. I don't remember them as such, but I remember sitting with them and wanting to be with them.

Q: Were your parents Zionists?

A: No, neither my father nor my s -- my -- my mother were Zionists. The closest I came to the Zionist exposure was that I knew that my older cousin, not my younger

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cousin, started being in that group just before we left **Vienna**. I'm not totally sure that I knew of it while I was in **Vienna**, or whether it was told to me later.

Q: Were your parents a-active politically?

A: No, no, not at all. Not at all. Not that I know of, anyway.

Q: Had you heard ab -- preceding 1938, had you heard of a man named **Hitler**?

A: Before that?

Q: Right.

A: I don't remember. I must have, but I don't remember. I know we -- in the group of friends that my father had, we identified ourselves as Austrians. My father was very proud to have fought in the first World War as an Austrian -- I think he was a captain or a lieutenant or something like that, and he had many decorations. And he was very proud of being Austrian, much more so, I think, than being Jewish.

Q: And that infiltrated to you? You felt more Austrian than Jewish, a-as a young child?

A: I think as a young child I didn't feel either way. I really didn't. I was much more preoccupied of what was happening at home with my sister, with my cousin, with -- with the governesses, who really f -- always favored my sister because she was quiet and I was very noisy. I still remember my father saying, we can only hear one child in this whole house and that's me. And I -- I remember I was very grega -- gregarious. I know we were re -- presented when -- whenever my father and my

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mother had big social affairs in the house in the evening, we were all dressed up and presented, and I loved that, because everybody made a fuss over me. And then of course, my sister hated to go and she was forced to go. And I also remember that my sister was allowed to have long curls and I was not because my mother felt all the attention went to me and not to my sister.

Q: What was your relationship with your mother?

A: Very close. I'm -- since my father favored so much my sister, my mother favored me. But truthfully, while we were in **Vienna**, we were very little involved with either parent. We were strictly with the governess and there were maybe not -- just maybe at the mealtime, the main mealtime at noon, that we sometimes ate with them, not always. And on Saturday and Sunday, I remember a little bit of my father playing with us, maybe. A very little, very little interplay. And then the summer we hardly ever saw them because they went on trips from the place where we always went to for the summer, which was a small estate where we rented a villa.

Q: Where was that?

A: That was near **Salzburg**. It was in **Unter achem artazay**. It was a lake. And it was a beautiful, what I recollect as big estate. My sister later -- later told me it was a small one. And we had a boat house and my father had a cousin that owned a house further down the lake, whom we saw also, socially. But my parents were there not

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that much. They usually took off on their own vacation, and we were left with my grandmother, my cousin and the governess.

Q: Did you have any favorite songs as a young child?

A: As a young child, I don't remember. I don't -- oh yes, I -- I remember my uncle singing to me, but it wasn't necessarily my favorite song. He used to sing to us one of -- of the -- of the **Schiller** poems, the -- it's called the **earl** -- the **Earl Kernik**, it's -- it's about a man that rides on a horse with a small child who's -- who is dying, but he always changed the ending and we always knew this wasn't the ending, because the ending goes that he has his son, he holds his son, who is dead in his arms, and my uncle used to sing and they ate together a bread of -- of butter and bread. And I hated that, because I knew it was fake.

Q: Can you sing a few lines?

A: I know the poem, I can't sing [**recites poem in German**] Something like that.

Q: What language did you di -- speak at home?

A: We spoke exclusively German, and the only other language my -- the governesses were supposed to teach us French and English and we knew -- we learned absolutely nothing. I don't remember anything. Oh, in English I knew there was a little girl that had curl right in her fi -- forehead, and if she was bad, she was very, very bad. That's about it.

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Q: All right. Now, you said you don't know if you remembered hearing about a man named **Hitler** before he came into **Austria**. Let's move up to that time. What is the first memory you have of that?

A: My first recollection is of terror, actually. We all went with that family that -- where I hated the two boys. We went in a -- on an afternoon -- actually no, the very first recollection is a radio when **Hitler** first entered **Vienna**, and the -- the reception that he got and the -- the ovation that he got entering **Vienna**.

Q: Did your family go to see him?

A: No, no.

Q: Did you know anybody who went to see him come in?

A: No, no. The second recollection was that we went to the **pratta**, which is the big amusement park and it's also a park where you can walk, and so on and so forth. And it was that the f -- the four of us, our family and the other family, we were just walking. And then we were suddenly brought into a -- into a line, we were lined up. I don't remember how they identified us as Jews, we -- it could be that we already wore the yellow sign naming us as Jews, but I'm not sure. But somehow we were put in that line, and my father somehow had his decorations from first world -- from the first world one with him, and I don't know by what miracle he convinced one of the men to let us go, our family and the other family. And we then heard that that -- that

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that whole procession had to go to a monument and clean the monument on their knees and then they were just deported. So it was a very frightening experience.

Q: How did your parents explain it to you, you were eight years old.

A: I don't think they explained anything. They explain -- my father then disappeared, he went we -- he -- he had to leave immediately, it's actually the chauffeur that was hiding him because they were looking for him, since he was a -- an important figure in the factory, and he went to **Paris**. And then my next recollection is that we were packing and we had these big trunks and my sister and I were playing hide and seek, and my uncle drew me out, stood me up and he said, you children, can't you help your mother, instead you're playing these stupid games, and she's -- there's a lot of trouble, and you really have to behave now. So that's what I remember, and the excitement of leaving, yet I was totally aware that when we left **Vienna**, which was maybe a month or two later, we got an exit visa to go to **Paris** --

Q: This was a month or two after **Hitler** came in?

A: I guess maybe if -- I'm not s -- exactly sure of the time, maybe two months, I don't know, as a child you --

Q: But -- but co -- soon after?

A: Soon after. I remember on the train --

Q: Okay, le-let's back up for a little bit --

A: Okay.

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Q: -- before -- before you leave **Vienna**. You said you had to wear something, a sign, a yellow sign saying that you were Jewish. Do you have any recollection what it felt like to wear that and what your first reaction was?

A: No, must be blocked out. I remember it -- again having to wear it, I think, in **Yugoslavia** when **Hitler** came to **Zagreb** where we were. So I think we had to wear it twice. I remember then being shocked that I saw it on baby carriages. I don't remember any reaction, we just wore it.

Q: Did you talk things over with your sister -- no, I'm talking about early on, when you're still in **Vienna** and **Hitler** had come in.

A: No, not really. I remember as a child -- the only real recollection I had was that I really didn't want to be different, that I know. And I was -- I was very unhappy having to be different. I was very unhappy to leave my room. I remember leaving the room, I went out on the balcony and I told myself, remember exactly what this place looks like because you may not remember it. And for years afterwards I would recall that picture in my mind, that's why I was so sure I would recollect my house, but I didn't. And I would recollect the exact position my bed was in -- in the room that my sister and I shared, and that was somehow comforting to me.

Q: Were there any other changes in your life while you were still in **Vienna**, after **Hitler** came in?

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A: Yes, we no longer went to school, we had to be -- be to -- we were taken out from school. We were taking of -- taken out of all the tutoring and all those schools, and I guess we just prepared [**indecipherable**] departure.

Q: What were your thoughts when they told you you couldn't go to school any more?

A: I ge -- probably I was pleased. **Hitler's** a big holiday. And then when we went to **Paris** we didn't go to school at all. We again had some French lessons, but it -- it was just a total holiday. And we loved **France** because that was the first time my mother was in charge of us and we drove her nuts, my sister and I.

Q: Were there any other restrictions in **Vienna** besides no schooling?

A: I'm sure there were and I'm sure that we were very careful where we went and what we -- what streets we went to or if we went out at all.

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Dorrit Ostberg**. This is tape number one, side **B**.

And you were talking about your recollections of restrictions in **Vienna**.

A: Unfortunately I don't remember too many restrictions, but there are certain events that I recollect vividly. One of them was that we could use my great-uncle's box at the opera, he had his own box, and we went out to an afternoon performance, while my sister was allowed to go to the evening performance. And I -- I remember ce-cer -

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- certain music li -- I remember a party that was given for my sister with -- where a whole slew of people came in with marionettes and they gave a whole -- a marionette performance, was a big party for her birthday. We must have had at least 50 children or so.

Q: Was this after **Hitler** came in?

A: No, all before, all before **Hitler**. But I -- I don't remember any specific restrictions. Maybe I blocked that kind of thing out.

Q: Then you said, soon after **Hitler** came in your father made arrangements to leave. What did he say to you that he would have to leave, why he would have to leave?

A: He never spoke to us about it, never explained anything to us. I don't re -- the -- there were never such discussions, neither with my mother, nor with my father. We were just told we had to leave, we had to behave because they were very difficult times and that was it.

Q: Were you upset when your father left?

A: No, didn't bother me at all because he was very often gone. We were really not taken care of by either my father, nor my mother. They were like visitors, I would say.

Q: Mm-hm. Yo-You described before that very moving scene of going -- of trying to remember your room. That was a very mature response for a young child, to realize that she may never see her room again.

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A: I guess so, but I was a very dramatic child. I -- I remember we were exposed to theater and many of the plays when we were up in the country, and I -- I remember the excitement of these -- in -- in the performances in **Vienna**, at any of the theater performances or operas, they had several curtains before they went up. And I vividly remember the excitement between the curtains and I couldn't wait for them to go up and -- and I even, as a child, had dreams of performances. Dreams of -- of theater performances, music performances. Of course, I was exposed mainly to classical music, but I loved, actually, the music that -- that -- Viennese music -- now I recollect, because you asked me before. An-And we used to go on -- in the afternoon we used to go on many of the walks where there was music played in the background and I guess little coffee shops or things like that. And I loved that, I -- I was very impressed with that, much more so than with the classical music.

Q: You said you were a dramatic child, what did the German uniforms look like to you when you were in **Austria**?

A: Not frightening, they were just uniforms, and I had seen pictures of my father in the uniform for the World War One, and th-the -- and I was exposed to many uniforms that -- that people wore, I guess. Passing by, or things like that.

Q: When it was time to leave and you were packing the trunks and so forth, did you take anything special with you?

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A: I just remember those little dolls. That's about all that I remember, if I took them.

As I said, we had no, that I recollect, I was not attached to a specific blanket, to a specific toy. It's unusual because I see my son carried his blanket for years. It's -- it's strange.

Q: And when it was time to go, what kind of arrangements were made? This was you, your mother and your sister?

A: Yes. The three of us went on a train, and I remember I -- at the time I already wrote a diary. And I wrote -- I -- I was looking -- I -- I stayed up as long -- we had sleeping cars, and I remember going through **Switzerland**, which I had never been, and I was very interested in how **Switzerland** looked through the train windows and I wrote in my diary that I was going through that. But I was terrified of being taken off the train, and somebody coming and not letting us leave. I knew that we had to leave, and I knew it was dangerous if we couldn't stay -- to stay.

Q: How did you know it was dangerous?

A: I don't know. Probably through listening to the reports, hearing the adults speak, hearing -- probably, I would assume now that most of our staff was let go before we left. I don't remember.

Q: Now, what about your extended family? They stayed in **Vienna** when you three left?

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A: My grandmother stayed, and my cousins were sent on a child transport to **England**. My two cousins. And my mother's sister, with her husband went to **America**. My uncle had a brother in **America** who sponsored him and gave him a visa and they went there. And that was my immediate family.

Q: So your immediate family seemed to get aw -- have gotten out of **Vienna** early.

A: Yes, yes, except for my grandmother.

Q: She stayed.

A: She stayed. She had to stay.

Q: Why did she have to stay?

A: Well, she couldn't come with us, and --

Q: Why not?

A: I guess my father couldn't get a visa for her. And I -- I know later on, when we were in **Yugoslavia** and my father had an opportunity to go to **America**, my mother refused, because she said she wouldn't leave **Europe**, because of her mother was still in **Europe**. And I do remember that I always wanted to go to **America** as a kind of savior. So I -- I was very much aware of the danger.

Q: Did -- did -- did it manifest itself, your awareness, in any way?

A: I guess so. I mean, when we went to **Yugoslavia**, first we went to **Slavonski Brod**, where my father took over another factory, and there we lived again in -- in great luxury, and --

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Q: Well, okay, let's talk a little about -- you were on the train, and you were going to **Paris**?

A: Correct. I'm skipping. And then in **Paris** -- my father was no longer in **Paris**, my father already had left for **Yugoslavia** to take over the factory, and they left my mother and my sister and I in an apartment and later on a distant cousin of my father's, who was much younger, she was at the time a young woman, lived with us for a little while.

Q: And what did you do and how long were you in **Paris**?

A: I think we were about six or seven months in **Paris**, and we did a lot. We went to the opera in **Paris**, we went to the museums, we went to the stamp market. My sister had an extensive, beautiful stamp collection, and -- which later was sold, and we lived off that stamp collection for a little while, it -- it -- but we also didn't go to school, we had private instruction in French. And we had a holiday, we didn't have to go to school, we didn't have to be tutored all day long, we had a very structured life in **Vienna**.

Q: In -- in **Paris**.

A: No, in **Vienna**, which was totally free, in a sense in **Paris**.

Q: Oh, I see, mm-hm. And your mother obviously had enough money to live in **Paris**.

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A: Oh yeah, because my father took over the factory in -- in **Yugoslavia** and we must have had plenty of money.

Q: Did your relationship with your mother change once you didn't have a governess?

A: Yes, as I said, we drove my mother crazy. We invented all kinds of languages she wouldn't understand, we were fighting who would have the last word in bed. We -- we -- we were just children, trying to -- feeling our oats the first time really that we didn't have the strict control, and the strict schedule that we were used to.

Q: Had you heard any more about **Hitler** while you were in **Paris**?

A: Definitely, yes. There were neighbors of ours that I remember, the neighbors were also Jewish and I -- from **Austria** and I remember the man saying, the only way I ever return to **Vienna** is with a big knife. And we certainly knew about all the advances of **Hitler**, but we left **Paris** before **Hitler** conquered **France**. We then went to stay in th -- with my father in **Yugoslavia**.

Q: So you said you were in **Paris** for approximately six months, which means when you left it was early winter '39.

A: That's --

Q: Is that correct?

A: That's about correct. Either early winter or spring. We -- we could have stayed about four months maybe, in **Paris** because we were waiting to get the entrance visa to **Yugoslavia**.

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Q: What kind of contact did you have with your father while you were in **Paris**?

A: None that I remember. None whatsoever.

Q: What did you think of **Paris**?

A: Oh, I loved **Paris**, I loved **Paris**. The first thing, of course, I got the beautiful hat, that outfit in **Paris** that -- I loved going to the **Louvre**, I loved going to the opera, I loved going to the markets, the -- when we left **Paris**, we both -- we came to **Yugoslavia** with two birds, with a big birdcage that we had.

Q: So birds that you had had in your apartment?

A: No, we bought them, I think, just shortly before we left.

Q: So now you are going to join your father?

A: Correct.

Q: How did you feel about leaving **F-France**? You had already left **Vienna**, this is the second leave-taking. Did that bother you?

A: I don't think so. I was just ready for a new adventure, a new scene. I -- I don't even remember being very excited about seeing my father. All I remember vividly is when the chauffeur picked us up in **Yugoslavia** in this little village, my mother said that she wasn't going straight to where we were living, but she wanted to see all the sights. And that poor man didn't know where to take us -- take us, so he took us to some little forest that was nothing, just a couple of trees, and those were the sights of the little village. But we then, before we had a house, we lived in the vineyards.

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Q: But what -- what was the train ride like from **Paris** to **Yugoslavia**, was there any difficulty?

A: None whatsoever, because I don't remember it, and I don't remember being frightened at all. All I remember is taking care of those silly birds.

Q: So then you arrived in **Yugoslavia**.

A: Correct. We lived for a short time in the vineyards, and it was great because in the winter -- so it probably was early fall when we got there -- in the winter it snowed so hard that we couldn't go to school, and th -- my sister and I used to ski on the slopes, and have a good time. And then after that my father either bought or rented a huge house in the village itself, where we lived.

Q: What was the name of the village?

A: **Slavonski Brod**.

Q: And what did you do?

A: I went to school there and I went to Jewish religion there also. And we -- my father had several friends -- a lot of White Russians were there, aristocracy that lived there. I don't know why, maybe they were connected with my father's factory or not, I don't recollect that.

Q: Now this factory was this enamel factory?

A: No, no. In **Yugoslavia** it was a factory that manufactured railroads. And my father was successful in selling it to the government of **Yugoslavia** and for that we all

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received Yugoslav citizenship. And I learned Serbo-Croatian very quickly and my sister and I made it a point to only speak that, because my mother and my father were quite slower.

Q: At -- at what point had your father sold the company to the government?

A: Okay, he sold it -- he was a very clever man in retrospect, even though I hated him as a child. He sold it shortly before **Hitler** occupied **Yugoslavia**. So it was to great advantage of the conglomerate. And the conglomerate really had in mind to bring my father to the **United States** and have him take over a huge factory here, which never materialized because my mother didn't want to leave, which was pointless, because my poor grandmother died anyway after being taken for interrogations and all kinds of things. And she died at home, but she died very unhappily.

Q: You are in this village, and you said you learned the language. Did you have a lot of freedom? Were you out on the street with other children?

A: No, we were never out on the street with other children, but I had more freedom. It was a little bit less structured than my life in **Vienna**. And since the teacher that I had in **Yugoslavia**, her husband worked in the factory of my father's, I got a glowing report how good I was, which my father knew wasn't so because I -- I always acted up in school.

Q: What -- were the non-Jewish children friendly to you?

A: They must have been, yes, yes. We had -- we had a good time, we used to go

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swimming in the river that separated the two villages. There was an identical village which was called **Bostian Brod**, and it was like entering another world. And that was like the **minarets**, and the woman in **Wales**, and it was just the bridge that separated it, but it was like two totally separate worlds.

Q: It was a mu -- Muslim city?

A: Yes, it was mostly Muslim. Flies, men sitting and drinking coffee, women working in the field. Very Muslim. **Minarets**.

Q: Were you still celebrating Christmas?

A: I don't remember. I don't remember.

Q: So you lived as Jews?

A: We lived as -- as Jews, yes, definitely. Before **Hitler** came we -- we went to the capital of **Croatia**, which was **Zagreb**. My father and mother took an apartment, and my sister and I were put into a boarding school.

Q: This was your parents' decision?

A: Was my parents foresight, because **Hitler** was already close to the border of **Yugoslavia** and my father was the only one who knew that **Yugoslavia** would very quickly fall into the hands of the Germans.

Q: N-Now that things were changing, were your parents -- and you were a little bit older, were your parents just telling you more about the situation?

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A: Never. My parents never discussed the situation, this was what -- what was done.

But we knew. I mean, I used to --

Q: How did you know?

A: Because I still remember a conversation. See, my father's friends, these -- this one couple who was ar-aristocratic, because I remember the woman had a maid wash her feet, which impressed me very much at the time. And she never in her life had even washed her own feet. And they were all sitting around and they were saying oh, the Yugoslav army is going to defeat the German army, and we are very strong and we are very powerful and nothing is ever going to happen to **Yugoslavia**. I remember my father saying this is ridiculous and they're going to invade, and they'll conquer **Yugoslavia** like every other country in a few days. So I -- I remember that, and I remember listening to that, and being frightening and really wanting to go to **America**. I -- i-it -- in my mind at that time that was the only salvation for us, and the only salvation to remain alive was **America**.

Q: Ho-How did you know that **America** was the salvation? What did you know about **America** at that young age?

A: Not much, obviously, but that -- that -- that was always in my mind. I remember being devastated in a sense that my father didn't take that position. So I must have been frightened.

Q: And again, did you s -- talk it over with your sister?

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A: No, no.

Q: What was the boarding school like? What kind of school was it?

A: I hated it, absolutely hate. I hated the discipline. We had to mar -- of -- we has to wash with cold water, which to me was a nightmare. My sister bribed the maid, but then I didn't wash ma -- to give me and her some -- my sister was very inventive -- to give us hot water, which we had for a little while until I didn't wash my neck properly and the people in charge saw that the water was hot, and we were both punished. And we had to go on endless walks in the winter, and we had to wear brown stockings, which I hated and refused to wear, and I got million of demerits. If we had 15 demerits we couldn't go to visit the parents on the weekends. Every week I had maybe 40 or 50 demerits. Also, I hated the food. We were supposed to eat all the food that was presented to us, and they had blood sausage and polenta, and those two things I hated with a passion and I wouldn't eat them, and I got demerits. My sister never got a demerit. I don't know whether she ate it or spit it out or -- or what she did, but she was the good one, so she always could visit my parents.

Q: So there were times when she would visit and you could not?

A: That's correct, I had to stay there. But I still -- I was very, very stubborn child. I would not wear those brown stockings. I pretended to be sick not to go on the walks. I -- I really did not like being in that -- in that boarding school.

Q: Was it a re -- was it a religiously oriented school?

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A: Not at all, no. Just a boarding school.

Q: So you lived as j -- they knew you were Jews --

A: Yes.

Q: -- and you lived as Jews?

A: Yes, that was my father's purpose. They were hiding us because when **Germany** invaded **Zagreb** they had the -- I think they had to give over some of the quarters to German officers, and they were hiding us, they were hiding the fact that we were Jewish children.

Q: Did you sense any anti-Semitism on the part of any of the teachers or students?

A: No, not that I recollect at all, no. Actually I liked wearing the uniforms. I liked the uniforms, they were pretty. At least, I thought they were pretty. And what I really liked is that my sister had to wear the same thing that I had to wear. That was a big plus in my life at the time.

Q: And how long were you at the school?

A: I guess several months. My father was arrested during that time. He was arrested by the uth -- by the Croats, which were then in control, and they were like the Nazis, they -- the concentration camps in **Yugoslavia** were much more horrible, even than the ones in **Germany**. And he -- he then pretended not to be Yugoslav. He was very, very smart man -- and that he was a German and that they had not right to arrest him, and somehow he got out.

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Q: Did he have false papers?

A: Well, he -- he never lost his Austrian citizenship, we were just given a second citizenship as -- as a big honor. And I -- I think that was the story, I'm not a hundred percent sure, but he got out of it. And then he got us out of the boarding school and the four of us went to the coast of **Yugoslavia**, which was occupied by **Italy**, and we lived there what they called **in liberal confino**, which means you are free, but you are not allowed to leave the premise -- the -- the -- the locality.

Q: Were -- I take it you were not upset about leaving the school, obviously. Were you upset about leaving the area?

A: No, not at all. I loved it where we went, because we lived in a villa, and it -- I think that's where my father sold my sister's stamp collection and we had some money because of that.

Q: This is a villa on the coast?

A: Yes, we were on the coast of **Yugoslavia**, we were quite high up. It was called **Sekwenitsa**. It was near the -- near **Fiume**, what used to be **Fiume**, and we went swimming the whole time and I remember my father gave me lessons in German composition and I had to write compositions for him, which I hated, but I had to do it. And I -- the first time that I had a friendship with a boy, who was my age that time and I guess I had maybe a crush on him, only I didn't know it. And we used to play endlessly in the water, go swimming. And my great uncle lived also there, he came

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down there with his daughter-in-law, who was a physician, who supposedly later poisoned him, which I don't know. And --

Q: This is **Gustav Fall**?

A: This is **Gustav Fall**. And I remember visiting him and enjoying him. He told me that -- I never forgot, he to -- I used to tell him that I was bored and he told me, intelligent people never get bored. And I liked him a lot, we used to go visit him, my friend and I. The -- th-the -- the young boy.

Q: What else did you do, did you go to school?

A: No, we didn't go to school, but I was elected, I had to go with my father up to the mountains or something that we could walk up and trade -- I don't know what he traded to get some eggs and get food supplies for us. Food was scarce, but we had potatoes, we had enough food, but let's say an egg was a luxury. And -- but -- and I hated going with him, but I was elected to do that.

Q: Did you feel that your life was in danger in any way there?

A: Not at all. Not at all there. I felt very secure there. I didn't think we were in danger there at the time.

Q: And you -- what did you hear about a man named **Tito**?

A: Nothing at that time, nothing. We heard later, when we were in the concentration camp, we -- when we were liberated, that was the first time that we heard about **Tito** and the partisans.

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Q: And so then how long were you staying in this house in the mountains?

A: Not in the mountains, we were on the coast.

Q: Oh, on the coast.

A: How long did we stay there? Several months. It was summertime, because we all went swimming a lot. And then suddenly one -- one day, we were just picked up, put in a truck and deported.

Q: And where were you taken?

A: Then we were taken to the concentration camp.

Q: And where was this?

A: That was on an island in the --

Q: In the **Adriatic**?

A: In the **Adriatic**.

Q: Which island was it?

A: **Rab**.

Q: And what was your reaction when you had to just leave suddenly?

A: Was a mixture. I -- I don't think I was too frightened. I tol -- I always told myself, this is an adventure. And I had no clue where we were going, so I played a game that this was an adventure and I had no idea where I was going and I was interested where I was going to end up. Of course where I ended up I wasn't too, too thrilled, because my father was separated from my mother at the time, and he was in a barracks with

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men and we were in a barracks with my mother and all the women and all the children. But later on, we had our own unit.

Q: Later on your father moved back with you?

A: I think so, yes, yes.

Q: Did you go -- you said you were frightened, did you question your mother, then?

A: About what?

Q: Well, about what was happening and why.

A: I knew what was happening.

Q: And why?

A: And I knew why it was happening. I know I was Jewish and I knew that -- that that was the fright -- that we were deported. I knew about the fascists, and I knew about the camps.

Q: Were you angry that you were Jewish?

A: Yes, for a -- I wasn't angry. I wished that -- well, I was blonde and blue eyed, so I couldn't wish for that. But I did wish that I could -- even in **Vienna** I remember I wanted to be part of the Nazi children, or something like that, just in order to blend in. But it -- it wasn't really a -- a si -- a thing that I desired tremendously. It was more like thinking it wouldn't be bad if I could be that.

Q: Wha -- what was the living conditions when you got to **Rab**?

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A: They were pretty bad, I remember. The food was very scarce. When we moved into -- at first we were separated, which was, I guess, frightening. I do remember sneaking to visit my father and him being extremely angry that I did that, because it seems to me -- later on I understood that some of the men were sneaking women in there, their own wives, just to be close to them, and my father was very strict and didn't want me exposed to any of that, so --

Q: Why -- why did you -- if you weren't close to your father, why did you go visit him?

A: I don't know. I don't know, maybe partially curiosity to see what he was like -- where he was staying and what his barrack was like, and it -- whether it was any different from mine. But that was one episode that I recollect. I also then recollect going into an own -- little house or barrack or something, where the family as a unit stayed. I remember both my mother and father had to work. They had to do manual labor. And I recollect that the -- the people in the camp organized some kind of a school where my sister and I attended.

End of Tape One, Side B

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Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Dorrit Ostberg**. This is tape number two, side **A**, and we were talking about your experience on **Rab** Island. And you said your parents went to work?

A: Yeah, definitely my parents --

Q: What kind of work did they do?

A: Manual work. Probably my mother had to work in a kitchen. I don't -- I don't recollect what my father had to do.

Q: Was that difficult for your mother, who had led a completely different life?

A: My mother was a very, very unusual, remarkable woman. She made the best of every situation where she was. And even later on, when we were in **Fort Ontario**, she -- she loved to work, she volunteered to work, and sh-she -- she was very remarkable that way.

Q: What kind of work did your father do?

A: I don't know. Don't recollect. I'm sure he hated it and found it very demeaning. That was very much in his character.

Q: And what did you do during the day?

A: We went to school, we were s -- and then I f -- I met my friend, a girl, and I -- I formed my first really close friendship wi-with another girl.

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Q: What was her name?

A: **Leah.**

Q: And what did you do with her?

A: Well, we -- she probably attended the school, but where I really got close to her is because we both were put in an army hospital, because we were both -- she had a heart condition and I must have had hepatitis. And we were put in an army hospital together where we -- where they kept us for a very long ha -- time.

Q: How was your asthma during all of this?

A: Strangely enough, better. And strangely enough, probably because of the terrain, which was mostly like a desert, the island was not full of vegetation.

Q: And how long did you stay there?

A: As I recollect, at least four months. And we got better food there. And we -- there was a little Italian orderly who called us sisters, and told us Italian and was very, very nice to us and even the doctors were very nice.

Q: And what was the living arrangement? You said your father joined -- came back and joined you. Were there other families in the barracks?

A: You mean in the -- in the camp itself?

Q: Yeah, mm-hm.

A: Yeah, I think the families then had like little units within barracks, or little huts or something like that.

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Q: Did you have any privacy?

A: As a family, I guess. I guess. I don't know because I was hardly there because very shortly when we got there, I was put in the hospital.

Q: So were you in the hospital for most of the time there?

A: Most of the time.

Q: And what was your state of mind?

A: I was very happy in the hospital. I know, sounds weird. I don't ever remember missing my sister or my mother. Well, at the time I was angry at my sister anyway, because the last couple of weeks that we were in -- before we were put in a concentration camp, she kind of stole my friend, and he was very, very impressed that an older girl was interested in him and he totally started ignoring me and I was not only jealous, but angry, hurt, and really wanted to have nothing to do with my sister.

Q: Did your parents talk about the future with you?

A: Never. Never discussed the future, never discussed the present. I don't recall a single conversation.

Q: Did you talk about your grandmother at all?

A: Yes. My mother was very sad. I remember that we were notified that my grandmother died and I remember my mother being extremely s -- she was very close to her mother.

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Q: And -- and how did you feel when you heard your grandmother died?

A: Very sad, because I lo -- I liked her a lot. She taught me how to play cards, she told me -- she told me stories, she read to me a lot. She -- I -- I liked her a lot. And then the summers I was mainly in her care, plus the governess, because my sister and my cousin took off, never wanted any part of me, except to -- to tease me and torture me. And my grandmother used to walk -- walk with me. We had a dog at the time, I remember having to count all the dogs with her and things like that.

Q: What kind of clothes were you wearing now?

A: Strangely, I don't remember. In the camp, you mean? I don't remember. I remember being very well dressed, or I thought I was well dressed when we were before we got to camp. Camp i -- well, m-mainly I don't recollect I think because in the hospital I had hospital clothes on. That's all I wore.

Q: Were you bedridden in the hospital?

A: A -- a length -- a great length of time because as I said, I proba -- I -- I know I had yellow jaundice, I probably had hepatitis, I may also have had bronchitis and asthma, I don't know. But I -- I was quite sick, otherwise they would have never had the permission to put me there.

Q: And had your eating habits changed as you got older?

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A: Not really. Not really, I -- I don't remember having bad food in the hospital at all. I -- I don't remember being hungry at all in the hospital, that came much later, I was very hungry.

Q: And then -- so you were -- you were in this camp for how long?

A: I don't recollect how long. I think it was over a year. It was up to when **Italy** capitulated.

Q: Were there many other children your age there?

A: There must have been, because they organized a school, so there must have been. That was really the only real education that I got after **Yugoslavia**, after the public school in **Yugoslavia**. So I really, as far as schooling is concerned have -- had a very sketchy schooling background. And later on actually, the -- the lessons that my father gave me in composition, in writing German, in reading German was probably a blessing, even though I hated every minute of it.

Q: What did -- what k -- how was the school set up in this camp?

A: Well, just probably another hut where -- where we all sat together and got some -- must have gotten some kind of instructions from some -- some of the Jewish people that -- that were very well versed in history and languages and -- and mathematics or whatever.

Q: Were -- were the people in the camp all Jewish?

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A: No, but a great number of them were Jewish, and a great number of them were politically against the Yugoslav regime.

Q: So the --

A: But I think we were separated. I -- I see -- at least I seem to recollect that the people we were with were all Jewish.

Q: Did they celebrate any holidays? Did you do anything in a Jewish sense?

A: I was sitting in the hospital. We were not doing anything in the -- in a sense of holidays.

Q: So were you in the hospital for a good part of that year?

A: Yes, for a good part of that year, at least four or five or six months.

Q: And did your folks come to visit you often?

A: Never. They couldn't visit. They couldn't get out of the concentration camp.

Q: Oh, the hospital was not in the camp, it was --

A: Not at all, it was like miles away. The -- the -- the camp only had infirmary, where my father was for some length of time. He was also ill. He had eczema and all kinds of complications. But the hospital itself was a veterans kind of hospital, a military hospital on the island, away from the camp.

Q: I see. So you did not see your family for months.

A: For months.

Q: What -- what is that like for a child?

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A: I don't know. Never missed it, not that I recollect. Maybe --

Q: Could they -- could they write to you?

A: Maybe. Maybe there was correspondence. I don't recollect it. Probably not, it was a concentration camp.

Q: And do you remember getting out of the hospital?

A: Yes, I remember returning, but very shortly after that the armi -- the armistice came.

Q: And what happened?

A: Suddenly all of the Italian army disappeared and we were free. And I remember not having shoes and running out of the camp just for the drama of being outside and no longer inside. And then we had two choices. The first choice was to return to the coast of **Yugoslavia**, whi -- which was still partially occupied by **Germany**. And many of the young men, including the boyfriend that my sister had at the time returned to fight, to join the -- the partisan and to fight against the Germans and against the **[indecipherable]**. Many of the people chose to return anyway, even those that couldn't fight and my father organized a very, very small group of people and we hopped from island to island renting small fisher boats, and -- with very little money and no food at all.

Q: Did you know why he decided to do this rather than st-staying in **Yugoslavia**?

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A: Yes, yes, I did know. I know that he wanted to reach the island that was sco -- occupied by the allies, which we finally did.

Q: So you went, you said, from -- you -- you were in these little fishing boats?

A: Little fishing boats.

Q: What was that like?

A: Oh, I loved that. I loved it. It's very adventurous. It's very rough. I remember everybody getting seasick but me, because I stood outside. I -- I could never be down in the cabin because I would get very seasick. But outside in the -- I love the ocean, I always liked the ocean. And I remember climbing with my friend all the mountains **[indecipherable]** that were there. I remember there were no -- no -- no facilities to go to the toilet.

Q: On these different islands?

A: On the different islands, we made in the fields with the goats around. I remember being starved to death and swearing to God that never in my life will I be picky again about eating, which I must say I did not adhere to. Being so hungry that I never thought of anything else but food. Being hungry to that degree. Eating the fruit of some trees which looked like a banana but it's dried. It's very sweet, but it's extremely constipating, I don't know, and having problems with that. And --

Q: But your health remained okay on these different -- on this boat trip?

A: I guess so. I guess so.

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Q: What about your parents, how are they managing?

A: They were managing. My mother was wonderful, my father -- we had to sleep sometimes in -- in a room and we would relieve ourselves in a bucket, and I remember once my father spilling the bucket because the men had to bring the buckets down. And I remember that that was the funniest thing I ever saw, and laughing and my father giving me a good slap and he was furious with me, but I'm still laughing about it, which is not [indecipherable]. But they always managed, we - - it was very -- actually it was an extremely dangerous expedition. The --

Q: Did you know how dangerous it was while you were doing it?

A: Yes, definitely yes. We knew that after we left the island, one hour later the Germans were there. We --

Q: So you hopped from one island to --

A: -- we hopped -- that's the right expression, we hopped from one island to the next.

Q: And who took you? Who was the captain of these boats?

A: Fishermen. Small fishermen that somehow my father had -- I don't know what he bribed them with, I don't know where the money came from, whether it was a ring that he was hiding and he had, I don't know how they did it, but the -- it was more than just us. It was probably a group of 20 or 30, maybe even 40, I'm not sure.

Q: Now it -- but you said your father was the organizer and the leader of this group?

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A: Part of the -- part of the organizer, the men were. The men got together and did it, and we just followed, the women and the children.

Q: And by that time what possessions were you bringing with you?

A: Hardly any. Hardly any.

Q: And then you e-ended up where?

A: We ended up on an island that finally brought us to -- to the i -- to the main island that was occupied by the allies. From that island they th --

Q: What was the name of that island, do you know?

A: Yes, I did know. I think I -- I --

Q: Okay. And then from there --

A: It was way down, almost near **Greece**. I did know it, but I can't -- I can't think of it right now.

Q: And then from there?

A: From there we were transported to the coast of **Italy**, and from there we were supposed to go to a camp in **Africa**, a holding camp. And the -- it was called **Brindisi**, the port. And again my father, I don't know how, but he convinced some -- an Italian guy to vouch for us and we got out of there.

Q: How long were you in **Brindisi**?

A: Probably not even a day or so.

Q: And where did you go?

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A: From there we went to **Bari** and I don't even recollect how we got there. Probably by bus or by train or by something like that. And I don't have no -- I have no clue how my father managed to get there. But we got to **Bari**, and I know that we were walking in the streets and we were picked up by two Italian women who brought us to their home, saw that we got food rations, organized us, got us in a -- put us up til we got an apartment, and then --

Q: Wer -- were these women that your father had known about?

A: No. We never knew them, the-they just literally saw us marching in the streets and picked us up.

Q: The four of you?

A: The four of us. And my mother for years afterwards was sending them packages and gifts and -- until they died. They were older women, they were quite old.

Q: So you -- you moved in with them?

A: We move -- first moved in with them, and then they got us some kind of an apartment. My father -- my mother went to work. She -- she and my sister, I think, worked in a canteen, n -- in a ma -- in an allied canteen. And th-that's when I told my mother, how could you ever get a job? You don't know what to do and she told me, she -- you will see what I can do, and she slapped me.

Q: And what did you and your sister do?

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A: My sister I think worked there too. I think she -- my mother and my sister worked there to get a little bit of money.

Q: And you?

A: And I was just home, I guess, and my father.

Q: Why is it your father didn't work?

A: I don't think he could get a job. You know, they wanted women in the -- in there. I mean, we had no permit or anything like that. We -- we must have got -- my father must have gotten us probably a -- a provisional visa or something. And very shortly we a -- oh no, I went to school, that's where I went. And my sister, too. No, my sister didn't work. My sister and I went to a school, a convent school. This is where I learned all my Italian. That's where we went, we went to school. We went to convent school, we learned it -- Italian, we learned Latin. That was the first four month schooling that I got again.

Q: And you went to school openly, as Jews?

A: Yes, definitely.

Q: And you were still going by your name, **Dorrit**?

A: Yes, yes, we went openly. But they did -- I remember they did, we did have to attend mass and we did because it was a convent school. And -- and they did si -- I think they hoped to convert us. Actually, we had changed religion twice, just to get out, but we never -- to us it was just a piece of paper.

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Q: So you had papers?

A: We had kind of papers that my sister, much later in life retri-trieved from **Yugoslavia**. I think we -- we changed religion twice, to -- to some kind of a Protestant religion, then some kind of a Catholic religion, just in order to get out.

Q: But did you keep your same names?

A: Yes, yes, yes. Nothing else. I do -- we -- we -- I -- I don't even think that we ourselves went to be converted. I think it was all done with falsified papers.

Q: How was it sitting during a mass for you?

A: Oh, I didn't -- I didn't mind at all. I -- it was just learning it the lat -- and learning. I love the singing, the singing is always beautiful. I love the church singing actually. I do. Just like I love the -- the -- to me the -- the best thing about a Jewish ceremony is the cantor, and I -- I just -- I adore the singing.

Q: And there was a camp on **Bari**. Did you ever go over there, did you ever meet anybody at the camp, the refugee camp?

A: I didn't even know it existed. We -- we had no --

Q: There are other refugees.

A: We had no recollection of a camp in **Bari**. I don't -- I'm not sure that my father even knew it existed.

Q: And what were your living conditions when you moved out of the women's apartment?

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A: Pretty good. I mean, not bad, but we had enough food, we had pasta, we had -- I guess my mother cooked. I don't --

Q: Was this a bo -- was this a boarding school or a day school?

A: That we went? Day school. Day school. Day school. And my sister even had a very close friend that was Yugoslav that also -- I guess maybe he was on -- on a transport with us, or just arrived in **Bari**, I don't know. But I remember we had a pretty nice life for the few months, and then we applied -- then we heard that President **Roosevelt** was taking 1,000 refugees to **America**, and we applied for it, as a family.

Q: How did your family hear about this?

A: My father heard about it. I don't know how, but all I remember is praying that we would be accepted and being terrified because we had to have a physical exam, that something would be wrong in -- in -- in especially me, you know, having been ill, that they wouldn't accept us. But --

Q: Now we're talking June '44.

A: Right. So -- and we were accepted, and I was as happy as -- as can be, finally to come to **America**. Was a big thing for me.

Q: It sounds like your father was very tuned in to what was going on all the time.

A: My father was a very, very astute businessman, and he was a very clever man, because he really saved us in all these positions. But he -- he was -- he was very, very

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strict, very Germanic, not at all interested in the things my mother and I were interested in. He had had very little training in -- even though he had a good voice as -- he used to sing, he used to like classical music. But literature didn't really interest him and many of the things that were very essential to my mother and I. I and all -- all throughout this I was reading, constantly reading. I don't know how my mother got me books, but I was reading in -- in -- in Serbo-Croatian, I was reading in German, I was later reading in Italian. I was an avid reader, I loved reading.

Q: So you appli -- did you yourself as a child have to fill out any forms for this **United States** journey?

A: I don't --

Q: Or was it just your parents?

A: I think just my parents. I -- I don't think I had to fill out anything.

Q: And did you go through a medical check-up?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: So you're in **Bari** and then you get accepted.

A: Right.

Q: And how much longer did you stay in **Bari** after that?

A: Several months, not much longer.

Q: For several months, yeah. You left **Bari** to go to where?

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A: I think we were transpond -- transported in -- in -- in trucks to a holding camp in **Aversa, Italy**. I still recollect lice going over us in that camp. We stayed, I think, only overnight

Q: Did you know anybody else at that point who was accepted for this journey?

A: No.

Q: You were -- so as far as you knew from **Bari**, you were the only people you knew in **Bari** who were accepted?

A: No, we didn't know anyone [**indecipherable**]

Q: You were the only.

A: The only ones that we know -- knew of.

Q: Knew of.

A: Right. No, none of our friends or anybody that we knew of.

Q: Were people jealous back in **Bari**?

A: We didn't have that many friends for people to be jealous. I think that one friend of my sisters had planned to go back to **Yugoslavia** anyway. He was older, he wanted to fight or do something. And I don't -- and I had lost my -- my friend **Leah** that had went to **Africa**, which I never heard from her again. So I had just -- I didn't form any friendships with any of the children in the convent school. So we had no friends there that we would say goodbye, except for the two women that were so kind to us. But they were older women there, they were not really part of my life.

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Q: Just as a side, when you were in the convent school, were there other Jewish children, or were you the only two?

A: I don't know. I don't know. Probably not, at that time.

Q: Yeah. Okay, back to where you were, a little farther forward. And so you stayed overnight, and then?

A: Then I think we were -- we were transported by train to -- to where the boat left.

Q: And was it confusion, con -- or controlled, or -- what was it like for you?

A: Very controlled, very controlled, but they -- we already started -- in **Aversa** already I -- I met several people my age, and several boys my age. One of them I loathed of course. And -- and I met **Corky** who was -- seemed very impressive to me. That is the -- the man that married my best friend. And he talked, of course, exclusively with my sister, but I remember being -- not going to sleep on purpose all during that -- that long trip to where the boat was, just in order to impress him how I could stay up. But that was about all.

Q: Now you are almost 15 years old?

A: Not quite. I would say about 14.

Q: Yeah, it was the summer before you were 15.

A: Yeah.

Q: And you were very excited obviously, about going to the **United States**.

A: Extremely excited, extremely excited and happy about going.

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Q: How did you all feel and your family feel about President **Roosevelt**?

A: I guess very positively. Very positive. He -- because he was our savior at the time.

Q: And then you get to the boat.

A: We got to the boat, we got on the boat and of course the food was fabulous there, for the first night.

Q: What -- what did the boat look like to you, the **Henry Gibbons** boat?

A: No specific impressions. I -- I wasn't even aware at the time that it was part of a convoy. I was not aware, unlike my friend [indecipherable] my friend **Elfie** says she was very much aware when the Germans attacked it or -- or -- or so -- I was not aware of that. I don't recollect it at all. I was just concentrating on making friends with -- with -- with my age group, not my sister's age group. And my sister then found friends in her age group. And I just liked being on the boat. It was exciting.

Q: Were you aware that some of the other people from **Europe** were in very poor condition, malnourished and not enough clothes.

A: I guess we were all in the same condition. We all didn't look terrific. I don't think I was aware that I looked particularly bad or particularly good. And strangely enough, I don't remember -- I guess we had almost nothing to wear, so I wasn't really conscious of -- of what I was wearing, because I recollect the things I wore in **Paris** and things that I wore in **Vienna** and then a lot of my clothes at that time, and definitely the brown stockings and the -- and the -- and the other -- in the school, but

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I don't recollect my attire at all at that time. I guess I looked like everybody else, pretty -- pretty bad.

Q: Did you know that there were wounded American soldiers on board also?

A: N -- I wasn't aware of it. I also never saw **Ruth Gruber** on the boat. Never did. At least, I wasn't aware of seeing her.

Q: What were th-the sleeping conditions for you and your family?

A: Probably just bunks. Probably nothing exceptional except that there were no lice to -- to -- to -- to crawl on us. I'm sure they weren't really plush, but I wasn't used to that anyway, so I don't remember being pleased or displeased about it. The only thing I do remember is being as much on the deck as possible, because I did -- the roll of the boat makes me seasick.

Q: What kind of activities did you take part in on the boat?

A: They had very few activities, not that I recollect at all. Just really talking to people, sitting on the deck and that's all I remember. And eating well.

Q: We -- did you speak with the other young people your age about your experiences?

A: Never about the experiences.

Q: Why not?

A: I don't know. Maybe -- not experiences. Geographically we did speak where we came from, which other camps. Some of my friends -- my friend **Jeanette** for

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instance, was sitting in a convent, and a lot of the others came from another camp on another island, **Verramonte**, I think it was called. And we did speak about where we came from, just in order to kind of identify ourselves. Never about the past, and at that time we spoke, I s -- I was exclusively with the Yugoslav group and I exclusively spoke Serbo-Croatian rather than the German. And our international language in the camp was really Italian, because my friend **Jeanette** was fr-from **Paris** and French and she -- I did -- I spoke very little French, even though I had been -- lived in **Paris**. So we spoke Italian. So that was kind of our common language, either Italian or Serbo-Croatian.

End of Tape Two, Side A

Beginning Tape Two, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Dorrit Ostberg**. This is tape number two, side **B**. Were there other -- did you notice any of the other young people had been from **Vienna**? Did you find anybody on --

A: The only other person that was from **Vienna** was **Elfie**, sh -- that I knew, that was in our in -- intermediate circle. She came from a very, very different background than I did, in the sense that her parents were quite religious and she came from a much lower middle class background than I did. And at the time, of course, I wanted nothing to do with her. We became friends much, much later at one of the reunions.

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She was -- to me she was the most beautiful little thing ever. She was much younger, so I figured she was very stupid. And the boy that I liked, liked her a lot and that made her of course, not very friendly, you know, very happy. So I had very little to do with her. But my main friend was **Jeanette** and then I had my o-other main friend was **Paul**. We were -- we -- we saw each other daily and we -- we went as groups and we did everything in groups.

Q: Did you have contact with any of the staff people on the ship?

A: No.

Q: American sailor, you know --

A: None.

Q: -- navy personnel.

A: None whatsoever. None whatsoever.

Q: What was the lack of privacy in living quar -- in living quarters like for you?

A: I guess none, because I -- I guess this is what I was used to, so I don't remember being pro -- that it was a problem to me, let's put it that way.

Q: It was such a tremendous change in your life, after leaving **Vienna** where you had so much space, then to be in such small quarters with your family. Was that hard for you to adjust to? For the first eight and a half years of your life it was a different situation, of course.

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A: Yes and no. You have to understand that as children, even though we had maybe 14 rooms, they were not our rooms. You know, like when I observe my little granddaughter, she runs through the house, it's her house, it's her car, it's her everything. She's only three. It's definitely her car, her house, her everything. We never had that sense. We -- our life was our room, my sister's and my room where the governess stayed with us. We were then escorted to the -- to the music room where we played the piano. We then went to the dining room to eat. We n -- we hardly ever entered my mother's and father's bedroom. And the -- the big salon, we were only there to be presented to the -- to -- to -- to people when they came. The servants' quarters we were never allowed to. The kitchen certainly we were never in. The bathrooms we were in, but we-we -- in that sense, we didn't lose the space.

Q: Mm. When you were on the **Henry Gibbons**, on the trip to the **United States**, were there any times when you remember where there were alarm bells, or you had to put on lifejackets?

A: Yes, I think so. I think we had alarm bells and we had life jackets, but I don't remember them as being frightened or that I -- that -- that it bothered me or anything like that. I'm sure they -- they had that.

Q: Is there anything else you wanted to talk about the -- the boat ride? **[tape break]**
On the ship there was -- there were some rabbis. Were you aware of that? Were there any religious services?

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A: There probably were, they probably brought us -- I don't know, don't remember.

Q: Uh-huh.

A: If there were, they weren't that significant to me.

Q: Uh-huh. And then you arrive in the **United States**. What was your first view of the **United States**?

A: I guess the Statue of Liberty and ge-getting into **New York** harbor was very, very exciting, and seeing my cousin who -- who c -- who came on the -- board. And --

Q: Did -- did people cheer as the boat was coming in, do you remember? Were you all lining the railings?

A: Yes, I do remember that. We were all on deck and we were all very, very excited. And he really was my cousin. He was -- he was the son of my father's s -- first or second cousin that had the same house where we used to spend our summers, and he used to come and visit. And my cousin **Susie** had a tremendous crush on him. At the time I met him, he was married to the daughter of a very, very close friend of my mother's. And I remember her vividly because she was a beautiful, beautiful woman and I remember her in the evening gown that was totally fru -- her back was totally exposed, and she was so elegant. I remember her at functions from my house and I was very impressed with the mother. The daughter I had very little contact with at that time. She later became a very close friend of mine, because she was much older.

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She was like, at least three years older than my cousin even. So that was f -- three, five -- about eight or 10 years older than me.

Q: When you got off the boat and you put your foot on American land, is -- was that a momentous thing for you, or did you just went off the boat?

A: We just went off the boat. I think the -- the -- just the idea that I was in **America** was fabulous, but I don't remember, you know, I'm touching American soil as being something significant to me at the time.

Q: And your parents reaction, do you -- did they do anything?

A: No, I think they were very pleased to have arrived. I think that probably my mother shared the same idea about **America**. I think my father, well, he was really never happy here. He wasn't happy in the camp and he wasn't happy later on when we lived in **New York**, simply because he never regained what he was, and he had very difficult time adjusting to being just an ordinary man.

Q: Did you feel bad about leaving the boat?

A: No. No, not at all.

Q: And then, when you got off the boat, where did they take you?

A: I guess we went on a train again to go up to **Oswego**, or I think we went straight up to **Oswego**, we didn't stay anyplace in between.

Q: Had they prepared you on the boat for where they were going to be taking you?

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A: No. Not -- not that I knew, probably my parents knew, but I didn't know. They probably didn't, because I know a lot of people were very, very disappointed with the -- with the fence, and not being able to -- to -- to leave **Oswego** itself, the -- I-I mean, **Fort Ontario** itself. Not me. I was happy in that camp. So I -- and then we as children went to school, so we -- we did go to **Oswego**.

Q: Now, when you first got up there, there was a quarantine, cause they didn't know what kind of condition people were in and -- and you couldn't leave. Was that hard for you?

A: We couldn't leave where?

Q: Th-The confines in the beginning. There was a quarantine. I guess they wanted to check peoples' health --

A: First.

Q: -- first, yeah.

A: No, didn't bother me one bit.

Q: And you lived with your parents in the camp?

A: Yes. We had two rooms. We had a barrack, in the barrack we had two rooms. One that -- room for me and my sister and one for my parents. They were connected. And then we had common mess halls, or eating places and we had common recreational pro -- facilities and that was it.

Q: And were -- were you near your friends from **Yugoslavia**, and -- living?

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A: Yes, we were all very near there, ye -- you know. Later on the boys devised some intercom systems or some kind -- that we could call each other. I don't know what they -- they were also -- were very inventive and they did these things and we could call each other on some kind of -- I don't know, telephone thing that they constructed, or something like that.

Q: And then you se -- yeah?

A: But mostly we just ran from one barrack to the other if we wanted to see somebody that we wanted to see, and then we all always met in that common recreational hall.

Q: And what about school?

A: We -- we were then assigned to school. My sister went to -- to high school and I went -- was delegated to junior high school.

Q: Now this is a school in the town?

A: In the town of **Oswego**. And of course, I hated we -- go -- having to go to junior high school because **Paul's** sister, who was my age was telling if she could go to the high school, but I think they didn't do it age-wise, they just did it knowledge-wise, and obviously I didn't know anything. But of course, I didn't know that I didn't know anything. But anyway, **Jeanette** came with me to junior high school, even though she was older, so I think the choice was mainly a choice of knowledge, rather than exactly age.

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Q: What was your impression of the American teenagers in your class?

A: We had almost nothing to do with them. We despised the girls because our boys later on fabricated all kinds of -- of stories about what the American girls would do that we didn't do, and we -- we were totally not knowledgeable about lipstick and -- and nail polish or any of the -- or any kind of cosmetics at all, or any kind of grooming, so we thought they were overdone and overdressed and over-silly, and we had absolutely no contact whatsoever. We really disliked them intensely.

Q: And the teachers?

A: I personally had no -- no recollection or no impression of any teacher that was especially nice to me or especially interested in me, so -- but there were very variant experiences throughout the camp, because many of the people in high school adored their teachers. I know my friend **Paul** loved his -- his shop teacher and he -- he used to make me all kinds of wooden animals after -- because of the shop teachers, and he -- he loved that one. And I know that my -- **Elfie's** sister, who went to elementary school -- in fact, we saw a letter that she wrote to her and she loved her. So it -- it was variant experience. But I think mainly I was so embittered of having to sit in junior high school, that was so much below my dignity that I really didn't take to anybody there.

Q: Did you notice a change in the appearance of the other people that came with you?

In other words you all were -- had been under such difficult conditions before you

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got on the boat, and I think you had said that you didn't realize it, it was because you yourself were not in good condition. Did you notice a -- a gradual physical improvement in the people?

Q: Absolutely yes, because I was always very conscious of clothes and appearances and so on. The first thing I knew is that my friend **Jeanette** got a whole wardrobe shipped to her by some relatives or some distant friends or something that was absolutely, to me the most beautiful, most fabulous clothes ever, and I was jealous as ca -- not really jealous, I just was very much taken by that. But we also had, I think, we got some money from some -- from my -- and my cou -- my distant cousin that then picked us up when we were released, and then we also had some visitors and I think some -- somehow my father got money, so when it was permissible, I remember going to **Oswego** and my mother and -- with my mother and sister and we bought dresses and we bought clothes and we bought some stuff. I mean, as far as I'm concerned now, they -- I'm sure **Oswego** was not a high fashion place for me. But to -- at me -- to me at that time, I'm sure it was fine, because as I see from the pictures now, we had nice shorts, we had nice blouses and stuff and we certainly didn't look like bad -- like -- like we u -- disheveled like when we arrived.

Q: Were there many visitors? I know **Eleanor Roosevelt** came. Did you see her?

A: Yes, I did, and she made a great impression on me. We also had this lovely, lovely young women from **Israel**, who organized us as the Zionist group, and who -- she

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was very -- I loved her a lot and she was very impressed with me and she liked me a lot, and --

Q: So you became a member of this group?

A: Oh definitely I was. Not my sister, she didn't want to have anything to do with that.

Q: And what did the Zionist group do?

A: Oh we -- we danced, we -- we learned all the dances, which I loved. We sang songs, we -- I guess what a youth group like that does, I --

Q: So this woman came and stayed with you?

A: Yes, she stayed in the camp for many, many months and she -- she -- she did all these things with us.

Q: Why do you think your sister was not interested?

A: Oh, because she refused being a Jew. She refused being a Jew later on in life. She only accepted that she was Catholic, and she pretended to be the ca -- a Catholic the rest of her life and died as a Catholic.

Q: Was that because you had been in that school?

A: No, no. I think it had to do with her other lessons, that she was older when all this happened to her and I think she turned the other way. Just as like my cousin, who was two years older than she was turned an extreme Zionist, went back to **Israel** and

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lived in the -- in -- on a kibbutz and raised her children there and became an adamant supporter of **Israel**. My sister just went the other way.

Q: Mm-hm. Because these things happened to her because she was Jewish?

A: Absolutely. But she -- she -- she spend the rest of her life hiding the fact that she was Jewish. And she and I had numerous fights about that.

Q: And she married?

A: Yeah, she married my brother-in-law.

Q: And he was on the boat with her?

A: He was on the boat with her, right.

Q: And he was Jewish?

A: Well, he also had converted. He never recognized the Jewish faith.

Q: So they both officially converted?

A: Well, no, because they both had ba -- they -- see, so many of us Jews converted in **Europe**, as a matter of total -- of -- of -- of paperwork. Some people recognized it.

The majority, I would say, in -- 99 percent threw it in the garbage.

Q: But your sister and brother-in-law just continued to live that way?

A: Right.

Q: Describe **Eleanor Roosevelt's** visit, what you remember about that.

A: Oh, I remember her as a marvelous lady, I loved her. I also saw her later at **Queens College** once. I -- I -- I was just crazy about that woman, I think she was the

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na -- one of the few people in politics that I loved, adored and liked everything she ever did. And the amazing thing to me was, because I'm -- always was very conscious of physical appearances, and she was not an attractive woman, but she was beautiful to me. In my eyes, she was a beautiful woman.

Q: Did she speak to you directly when you -- she came up?

A: No, I think she -- she addressed the whole group or something like that. She didn't speak to me directly on **Queens College** either.

Q: Now, did the group in **Oswego** get together as -- the thousand of you as one frequently, or was that unusual?

A: That was never. We stayed in groups. There was the Yugoslav group, there was the -- the other groups and -- and most of us were Jewish anyway.

Q: Then di -- what was it like the day that **F.D.R.** died, April 12th, 1945? Do you have any memory of that?

A: Not much, not much. Did he appr -- did he approve that we could enter? No.

Q: Did he approve that you could stay --

A: Yeah, th --

Q: -- after the war? No, he did not.

A: No, never.

Q: He wanted you to go back.

A: He wanted us to go back, yeah.

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Q: Okay, now, what were your thoughts? Did you think you'd be going back to **Europe** when the war was over?

A: I think I blanked it out. I totally blanked it out. I think I had this faith that once I was on American soil I was going to stay here. I just never, ever -- as much as I was frightened in **Europe** of -- of what was happening and that I could be captured and that I could be killed and that I wouldn't be living, I think the moment I got on American -- the moment we were accepted to go to **America**, to me this was an act of faith and I never, ever believed that we were going back.

Q: Apparently that first winter was a very hard winter.

A: Very hard.

Q: And some of the adults stopped working, you know, kind of revolted. Any -- any remembrance of that time -- of that winter?

A: Well, I know that my father certainly didn't work, and he was very unhappy, but my mother wasn't, she was -- she worked -- oh, she had like 10 jobs there, I don't remember. She worked in the hospital, she worked in the kitchen, she worked -- she was a member of every committee, she -- she loved it there. And -- I'm sorry f -- **Gail**. And no I don't remember particularly. We were so happy with each other, we -- we did so many things. We had theater performances, we had relay races, we had sports, we had -- we -- we really had amusement from -- all the time, and we went to school, and we had a wonderful time.

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Q: Now, did you take part in these -- any of these specific performances?

A: Every single one of them, you could be sure I was in that.

Q: What were some of them? Were they original performances, or did you do performances of well known plays and so forth?

A: They were all original performances.

Q: Who wrote them?

A: I have no idea, no clue, but they were written by them, the music was written by them. I -- I was in -- in -- we -- we were singing, I was a part of a choral society too, that **Leon Leevich** organized and directed and conducted. And we -- we -- we -- we had rehearsals, we -- we made our own costumes, we -- we did everything, and I -- and I really didn't care whether I had a major part or a minor part or whether I was -- I was clumsy or not. We danced, we did a lot of things.

Q: So for you morale was not a problem.

A: None whatsoever. None whatsoever. But not everybody was like that. I remember my friend **Jeanette**, who was much more reserved, and by the ti -- she was the most beautiful girl there. She was abso -- oh, every boy there was j -- was just crazy about her. And I remember going to her ho -- to her va -- barrack an-and she was ironing her dress she wa -- she was going to wear that evening. And I said, how can you just stand there an iron? Why aren't you excited? You're going to dance every single dance. And -- and she said, well it's -- it's just a dance. And I was hopping around,

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and I-I don't know why because nobody ever asked me to dance. The only time I danced was because they wanted to dance with **Jeanette**, so they took me, you know what, to get a dance with her. But I was so excited about the dances, I was just -- I guess I was very optimistic, I don't know.

Q: Now, considering all the difficult physical things you went through as a young child, did you physically mature on time? Did you menstruate on time?

A: Not at all. Not at all. I had great ri -- I -- my menstruation didn't start til I was 18, even past 18. When I got married at 19, I didn't menstruate for six months after that, and my mother-in-law was -- was dancing around that I was pregnant, but I was not. And th -- it -- it was never okay, it -- the only time it got regulated is after I had my son. After that I had no more problem.

Q: So do you credit that to your difficult situation that you went through as a young teenager?

A: Definitely. Malnourishment and all that stuff, definitely. My salvation, I always called it, was **America**, because I finally here got the correct food, and thank God, you know, I didn't remain short and **disformed** and all that stuff.

Q: Did you feel much older as a 15 - 16 year old at the time because you had been through such difficult conditions previously, or did you feel very f -- teenage-y, tee -- you know, 15 - 16 year old?

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A: I didn't feel older, but I remember when I first got to **New York**, I remember distinctly thinking, I stood still while the rest of the world went on, and I have to catch up to it.

Q: Now, this is when you got to **New York** after **Oswego** or before **Oswego**?

A: After **Oswego**, after **Oswego**. I have to make up for all this tremendous time that I lost. And I did. I finished high school in two years and went to college and so on and so forth.

Q: When you were in **Oswego**, were you looking forward to leaving, or were you just happy staying there?

A: Very happy staying, but I was not very disturbed leaving, because we all left.

Now, I lost -- a little bit I lost my friend **Paul** because he went to **Philadelphia**, but at the time he wrote me every single day a letter.

Q: Well now -- was this a boyfriend or just a friend?

A: Just a friend, I was ver -- we -- we -- I didn't date anyone.

Q: So you were in the camp for about a year and a half?

A: Yes. Yeah.

Q: And so you were about 16 and a half when you left?

A: Yes, right.

Q: And everybody left at the same time?

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A: Yes, everybody left at the same time. A lot of people stayed in **New York** area, like my friend **Jeanette**, and **Elfie** stayed and **David** stayed, and a lot of people. And we used to meet as ga -- as -- as a group that stayed here, and we used to do things together, for a long time.

Q: Were there any farewell ceremonies when people -- when it was time to leave **Oswego**?

A: I don't remember them. I don't remember them, if there were, I don't know, I don't remember. I don't think so.

Q: And you came to **New York City** --

A: We came t --

Q: -- and what di -- where did you go?

A: Okay, my -- my father's second cousin picked us up, took us to their apartment in the **Bronx**. We stayed with her. I only stayed with her a we -- a week or so and then my cousin picked me up and brought me to the **Hashara** where she was preparing to go to **Israel**, and I stayed with her about two or three weeks. And by the time I was -- I returned, my father already had found an apartment on the east side and we had two rooms, I think, and a kitchen, something like that. A furnished apartment.

Q: Had you thought about going to **Israel**?

A: Well, I was too young, I mean I -- I coul -- not in those terms. I didn't do so well on the **Hashara**. They put me in charge of eggs, I broke all the eggs, they pr --

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polishing eggs. They put me in charge of polishing the horses, the horse kicked me.

They finally told my cousin, we love your cousin, but let her be a visitor.

Q: What -- where was this located?

A: In **Jersey**. Was a farm on **Jersey**. My cousin was terrific. She was -- she was plowing the field, she was doing everything, and I -- I -- I lov -- I mean, I loved it. I danced all night with them, I -- we sang all the songs, that I was good at, but not -- not the cleaning of the eggs.

Q: And you came back to your parents' apartment.

A: Yes, yes, and then I went to **Julia Richmond** high school.

Q: And you said that you needed to make up time.

A: Absolutely. I felt that, you know, the rest of the world went on and I lost a lot of knowledge, and I was an avid reader.

Q: I assume your English was quite good by then?

A: No, it wasn't terrific, because you know, we spoke exclusively Serbo-Croatian and Italian and at home I spoke German. So I -- my English was rather poor, I would say, and I learned not very much in -- in the junior high school, because I really didn't want to learn. I mean, I -- I helped my friend -- some of my friends pass some of the tests, but I don't know -- but I must have not learned too much. My English was rather poor.

Q: Were the teachers at **Julia Richmond** a help to you, being a refugee child?

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A: I think they were wonderful. First of all they had classes for s -- for people that didn't know English, special classes, that's where I met another one of my very close friends. And in fact, as an educator later on, I remember going to the guidance department and saying that they should make such classes, but they just refused. They weren't interested, which I thought was terrible. But it was a great help to me, and I had special speech classes and they made it possible for me to finish high school in two years. I doubled up in English and history and I got all my credits in languages. I had three years of German, three years of Italian, three years of French, three years of Latin.

Q: Did you become friendly with many of the American students?

A: One or two, not many, one or two. Not many. My --

Q: What did you -- what did you do in your spare time?

A: Well, I didn't have that much. Oh, didn't have that man -- much spare time, and then one year later, I was already 16, I guess, or seven -- and my father insisted that I had to get a job. So I worked at **Woolworth's**, which I didn't like, but I had to. I mean, he made me work. Not that he took the money, I spent all the money on foolishness, but I -- I had to work, that was part of his requi -- requirement. E -- and my sister was married already, she was living in **Boston** with **Alex** and I used to very often go up weekends and visit with him. But my close friend was a French wa -- girl that had lost both her par -- parents in the Holocaust and her uncle, who was Russian,

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and a multi-millionaire searched all over **Europe** for her and her sister and brought them over. And she was a very close friend of mine and I saw a lot -- and of course I had **Jeanette** and I saw all my friends from **Fort Ontario**, and that -- that was my life.

Q: Did you tell people at **Julia Richmond** about your previous experiences?

A: I never mentioned my past to anyone. I never talked to it -- to my son about it, never to my first husband, never to my second husband. The only time that I admitted my past was the first reunion that I attended in -- in **New York**, and through my friend **Elfie**, who believed that the Holocaust should be heard, and I reconnected with her there and she's -- she's very -- she was interviewed by **Spielberg** and she's -- she is very much a believer of -- of admitting the past, talking about the past and so on and so forth.

End of Tape Two, Side B

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Beginning Tape Three, Side A

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Dorrit Ostberg**. This is tape number three, side

A. And you were saying how you hadn't talked about your --

A: Not at all.

Q: -- experiences before. And so when you were in high school you -- obviously you -- wha-what did people -- what did you say to -- to the other students?

A: Simply that I came from **Europe** and I was born in **Vienna** and that I was Jewish, but that's it.

Q: And did you experience any anti-Semitism at **Julia Richmond**?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Such as?

A: The only time that I even came close to it was that I made friends with this one little Italian girl, and my father had informed me that I was much too stupid to go to college. So I applied for the job at a bank, and I went with her for the interview, and I -- I was very enthusiastic at that time and I told them all about my language experiences and so on, and I thought I was a fantastic candidate for them, and I didn't get the job, and she did. And I thought I was -- there was no question she -- she -- sh -- that, you know, I was brighter and had more -- much more experience and so on for the job. And the guidance counselor at the time told me, well you simply didn't

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get the job because they probably realized you were Jewish, and there's -- the banks are very anti-Semitic.

Q: And what was your reaction, especially after what you had gone through?

A: Frankly, I was happy about it, because I really didn't want the job. I wasn't happy about the anti-Semitism, but I kind of ru -- **shugged** it off, because **New York** is not the place where you feel too much of the anti-Semitism. And I just didn't really want to face it at all, so I was very happy to go to college.

Q: And where did you go to college?

A: **Queens College.**

Q: And what did you study?

A: Well, my father insisted that **[tape break]** my father insisted that I know what I was going to study, well I had no clue what I was going to study. So I ran in, and my -- my brother-in-law was there visiting and he was always my best friend and I said, **Alex**, you got to help me, you got to convince Father what I'm -- I -- you have to tell me what to study. He said, a wonderful thing for you study is biochemistry. I marched into my father's room and I said, I'm going to study biochemistry. He said, okay, you are allowed to go. I flunked my chemistry, because I never learned how to -- how to light the lighter. I didn't do so well in my biology either, but I was put in an advanced literature course in German and I then majored in comparative literature,

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changed my major, my father didn't know about it and that's what I studied and majored in.

Q: And for how long did you go?

A: Four years.

Q: And what happened after -- soon after y -- you got married though, didn't you, in between?

A: Very quickly. I got married th -- when I was 19 because my sister was 19 when she got married and I had to get married at 19, so I did that.

Q: How did you meet your husband?

A: I met him because I was tutoring him in the German, he was flunking German and he was very bad at it. So I -- and he was much older than I was and I was very impressed. I had never been on dates, I had never gone out. And we had a couple of dates, and then he had to leave and so we got engaged in a month or so.

Q: And ha -- what did your parents think of that?

A: They were v -- th-they weren't there f -- at -- at that time I was alone in -- in **New York** at the time. My father provided me with a -- with a -- an old -- not old, I guess it was a young woman of 30 years old, who was desperate to get married, who was supposed to cook for me, she never cooked for me. But she told me that the first man that asked me to marry, I had to get married because, I don't know, I shouldn't miss out the opportunity.

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Q: Where were your parents living?

A: They were living with me, but they had gone to **Europe**. My father went back to **Europe** to reinstate his pension and to do some business in **Europe** with his firm. They went for a month or so in the summer.

Q: Oh, I see, and then you --

A: And that's when I got engaged to my husband.

Q: And was your husband Jewish?

A: Yes.

Q: And w-what was his name?

A: **Harold** -- at this time, **Wochstoch**, that we changed to **Wesley**.

Q: And why did you change it?

A: I hated the name.

Q: And he was amenable to this?

A: He was amenable.

Q: And so then did you come back to -- did you live in **New York** the whole time after you got married?

A: After we got married, I lived in **Oklahoma City** for about four months or so because he --

Q: Why?

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A: My husband went to school there because he couldn't fill the requirements at **Queens**, so he transferred to **Oklahoma City College** or something, a small college. The only one in th -- I think in all of **United States** that didn't need a da -- a language requirement. And we got married in **New York** when my father came back in October, and they all rushed me to get married because he wasn't going to be here in the summer. And I got married. I -- I loved having a big wedding ring, I loved telling everybody I was married, that they had to address me as -- as Mrs. and not as Miss. And then I came back to wi -- to **New York** and I went back to **Queens College**.

Q: And you got your degree?

A: And I got my degree.

Q: And then what happened?

A: I started -- well, I was accepted at **Columbia**, because they were one of the -- **Columbia** graduate school, that they were one of the few schools that had a course in comparative literature at the time. But we had no money whatsoever and I ug -- so I didn't go, and I went to work as a weights engineer, where my -- my husband worked as a technical writer at **Republic Aviation** in **Farmingdale**.

Q: And then?

A: And then I had my son and I stopped working for awhile. And then afterwards I started working for an optical company because I met one of the wives that the **[indecipherable]** husband worked there as a partner, at an **ORT** meeting that I was

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very into, I was on the board of the **ORT**. And I took a part time job and I got my divorce, and I went back to school to become a -- a schoolteacher and I was -- I taught mathematics for about 20 years. And I chose mathematics because at the time languages they weren't interested in, but they were very interested in math. They had a -- they didn't have enough math teachers. And I used to be good at math in college when I first started, but I had a lot of study to do for that, and that's -- that -- that was it.

Q: And where did you teach?

A: I taught at **North Shore High School**, which was right near my home for the first year -- two years, and then I transferred to **Kennedy High School in Bellmore**.

Q: And did you ever remarry?

A: I remarried twice since then.

Q: An-And to whom did you marry -- remarry?

A: I married an 11 year -- 11 year younger man for the second time, who was not Jewish and I divorced him 11 years later. And then I was alone for about nine years or so, and then I married my present husband, who is Jewish.

Q: And your parents? What -- what happened with them? They -- they came -- they stayed in the **New York** area?

A: My parents stayed in the **New York** ar-area. My father died when my son was about eight or nine years old, and my mother lived to be 92.

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Q: What about the other extended family that you haven't mentioned, in **Vienna**, much more extended than just the cousins. Did you ever hear what happened to them, or -- you -- you talked about some of them [**indecipherable**] some going to **Israel** and so forth.

A: Oh, you --

Q: Did you get any -- after the war, did you hear any more about what happened?

A: Well, my mother's brother. My mother's brother was put in a concentration camp in **France**. He was able to escape. He -- he had an -- a non-Jewish w-wife who was partially aristocratic I think, who went into exile -- she went to **Belgium** and she hid him during the war, the whole during the war.

Q: What -- what was his name?

A: His name was --

Q: That's all right.

A: This is terrible that I can't remem -- can't thi -- his wife's name was **Marianne Hugo -- Hugo -- Hugostern**. His name was **Hugostern**. And he went back to **Vienna** with his wife after the war. They never had any children, and they -- he died there and she lived long afterwards and she also died in **Vienna**.

Q: Can we talk now a little bit about some of your thoughts about the experience that you went through? Do you feel, because of what -- what you went through as a

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young child that you would have been a different person if you hadn't gone through these -- did this affect you in the way you are today?

A: Absolutely. There's no question about it.

Q: In what way?

A: In many, many ways. I mean, I -- I don't think that psychologically I'm totally there where I should be. I definitely think all my divorces stemmed from that. I'm sure I have a lot of insecurities. I -- I --

Q: Wh-Wh-Why do you think your divorces stemmed from what you went through?

A: Simply from the experience of my other friends from col -- from **Fort Ontario**.

My friend **David** is on his fourth wife, my friend **Elfie** is divorced, my friend **Jeanette** is divorced, my fr -- her ex-husband had two or three wives. Very few of us were able to really -- one of the exception is my friend **Paul**. He -- he married and stayed married for -- for 50 years or 40 years or whatever. He is an exce -- there's some exceptions, but many, many of us have had --

Q: But why is that?

A: I would -- I would think because of the -- of the insecurities, expectations, really interrupted lives, really -- I mean, a million -- millions of reasons.

Q: Is there anything today that, anything that you see sometimes, or you hear or you smell that remind you of the difficult times during the war, that bring it back?

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A: Yes, many times. Movies bring it back. I -- I remember vividly one movie with **Jane Fonda** and the ride on the train, where she was smuggling some anti-Nazi material or something, and all of a sudden I felt what I felt on the train when I was seven years old. And there are other movies. I -- I -- I saw a movie with my friend **Jeanette** there th -- see, we -- there are certain va -- basic things. You asked me previously, did we ever talk about our past experience. And we rarely did. It was much more of that we knew and we felt the same thing. It's very hard to explain. I saw the movie east w -- **East West** with her. And frankly it's not really related to the Holocaust, but all because it's -- it's -- it's **Russia** and it's **France**, but the oppression and the fear and all that, and -- and we both said we were so happy that we didn't see it with anybody else but each other, because we both knew exactly how we felt and what disturbed us and what -- you can never get rid of that fear. Even today I am petrified when I see a policeman in a car when I am driving. I totally always do a big sigh of relief when he passes me and doesn't stop me. Even though I know I'm not speeding, I'm not doing anything, I'm just plain riding a car. It's unbelievable. Never ceases. And that's probably partially the reason that I hate, detest guns, detest any sort of violence, cannot stand violence in any form and really do not read a newspaper. And even when I listen to the news, I automatically shut them off. I listen to the weather, I know what the weather is, I know -- and half the news, unless I make a conscious effort to listen, I do not hear. And I'm -- I'm sure this is all related.

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There's no question it's all related. I have been in therapy, many of my friends have been in therapy, I mean it's --

Q: Has it been of help?

A: I guess so, because I mean, I -- I -- I -- I don't think I'm a very disturbed or very horrible person, but I -- you know, espec -- this is also, you know, one of those questions, how do you know therapy helps? You don't know because you don't know how you would have done without it. So it's -- it's not really an easy question to answer and -- and when we have absolutely no proof unless you've had -- you were committed and had a mental breakdown, then you know if you got better. But -- I mean, my friend **Mimi** has been in therapy for many years, and is no longer, but that's the one who lost her two friends in the Holocaust. We all -- we -- I feel we are all marked. There is no question on that. I even sometimes feel my son is marked, because I raised him, and some of my reactions to raising him. Either that or it's inherited, I don't know. He is -- he -- he has a lot of sense of insecurity, which I don't like to see, and which I -- I don't remember him having as a child. So, us old Jewish mothers, I'm sure it's my fault.

Q: What -- wh-when your son was the -- the eight -- and speaking of your son, when he was, let's say, eight and a half, when things started to get difficult for you.

A: I was six when I divorced my son -- my husband.

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Q: No, no, no, no, that's not what I meant, I meant when your son was the age that you were -- you were when **Hitler** came in and things started to get bad.

A: Yes.

Q: When he turned that age, did that mean anything special to you?

A: No. Absolutely --

Q: Do you know what I'm saying? When he became the age you were.

A: Yes, no, absolutely not. No, no, never even thought of it in those terms, no.

Q: When he was the age of you at different times of your childhood?

A: No. I mean, he was -- it was still a difficult age for him because I was divorced when he was six years old. So, it took him -- and then my husband remarried when he was about eight and a half, I think. So he did go through difficult times --

Q: Yeah.

A: -- but I don't think that was related to my experience when I was in **Europe**.

Q: Are you angry that you had to go through such a terrible time in your life and others didn't?

A: Not at all. No. No. A -- s-sa -- I-I was very lucky. For -- people that really went through bad times, the people that were killed, that saw their family killed, that were in horrible concentration camps, that were tortured. I had none of that. No.

Q: But there were also people your age who were living here and didn't go through any of what you went through.

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A: Well, they were living in a different country. No, I never felt that way. I felt, in the way I always felt, that I wished that my father had accepted the position when he was offered it, e -- and -- and left **Europe** when he wa -- when -- when his first opportunity came to go to **America**, because I think we would have -- I would have had a different lifestyle. Now, whether that would have made me happier, I don't know. I think yes, in a sense, because I -- a-another thing that I feel is a total sense of displacement. I never really feel as an American, and I never feel as a European. When I'm in **Europe** I feel American, when I'm in **America**, I feel European. And I -- there is no way that I really belong. And -- and there are many, many signs. For instance, my house, I -- I never, ever rearrange anything in my house. It's -- it's very weird. I furnish it, and if I just put an ashtray in another place, it bothers me. I mean sometimes things have to be thrown out or replaced, not talking about that. But I know that many of my friends, the husbands used to say, I -- I always come home to a different home, every day there is a different way of -- of arranging and rearranging. I have never rearranged a room.

Q: Why?

A: I don't know. Must be that I want things as it is, and there's a certain security. And I hang onto things that I don't -- I haven't sold my house that I used to live in. I - - there's no question I don't wi -- you know, I -- I have a lot of my mother's stuff that

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is sitting in the basement. I haven't gone through it, I haven't touched it and I will not.

Q: Are your friends mostly people from **Europe**?

A: No. My friends are American. **Judy** is American, **Laurel** is American, I have many American friends, and I have many -- ma -- I have a few European friends.

Q: When you get together with these European friends now, do you talk about the past?

A: We never talked about the past. I don't --

Q: I mean -- I mean now.

A: A little bit with **Jeanette**. Only in relationship to that I -- she did come with me to the n -- to the second reunion. She was like me, we never talked -- she and I never talked about anything. And she just now also is ready to talk a little bit about it. And in fact, we've -- we've -- just talking about this movie that they're doing and I have -- I -- half of me says yes I'm going, the other half says no I'm not going. I know -- I refused to -- **Spielberg**, I refused an interview with **Spielberg**.

Q: Why?

A: I just didn't want to. I -- I felt my story wasn't important enough, interesting enough. I -- I -- I hate to dramatize what has happened to me, because I think it's nothing in relationship to what has happened to other people.

Q: But your life was definitely in danger.

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A: Was very much in danger. But I survived. I was lucky enough to survive. I wasn't tortured. I was hungry, so what. They have millions of American children that don't have enough to eat, and they're hungry.

Q: Did it affect how you -- your thoughts about your students, your teaching, your attitude towards your students?

A: I don't know. Which way do you --

Q: Well, a simp -- a connection with them, a sympathy with them, because you're a child -- your -- that time in your life was so difficult.

A: Maybe yes, maybe ye -- yes and no. I -- part of me is still very Austrian and I guess Germanic, and I -- now I'm laughing about it because I am retired and everything. I was absolutely much too strict about a certain concept. I still remember being with my brother-in-law and one of the anecdotes were that they had a radiologist who was teaching the internist and he would say -- he would show them slides, and he would say, what is this on the slide? And the man would say, it's a kidney. And he would say it's excellent, excellent answer. Wonderful answer. It would be better if you had said it was the liver. So, I never forgot that because I used to get sick when they didn't remember a formula. And I used to be angry and they had to memorize the formula. It was stupid. I mean, what does a formula do? Absolutely nothing. A kidney and a liver, if he takes it out, that means a lot. So I -- that was the bad part. The good part was that I had -- since I went back to

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mathematics at such a late age and I had such a gap to do, I -- I-I prepared wonderfully. I never assigned a problem I didn't work through first, and I knew exactly where they were going to be hung up. And I understood of them blacking out and being afraid and -- and not being able to achieve. That I was good at. I was also very gullible. I had a kid that told me his father -- he couldn't do his homework because his father was dying of cancer, I was in tears, I -- I told him how my sister died and everything. I ran down to -- oh, he got in trouble with me, he almost hit me. So he was -- he was -- w-w-we -- I was in front of the assistant principal and he said, you know, this kid, he lies a lot. You see what position you put me? I have to call the father now and see whether the mother or whatever -- th-the mother now and see whether the father is really dying. You know something? He made it all up, this kid. Made the whole story up. So there are things that were good and things that were bad.

Q: How often do you think about your past now?

A: Now?

Q: Mm-hm.

A: I guess it comes in spurts. Right now I think a lot because of the interview, because of -- of having to relive it, which is not so easy for me. Most of the time I don't like to think about it. I'm still the same way. But I'm convinced now that it has to be addressed, that it has to be done and I'm so grateful to you for doing this

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because now it's for my re -- granddaughter, because she's only three and by the time she's grown up, I'm going to be real old. And she has a place that if she wants to know what her grandmother's life was like, she can listen to it. And that I'm internally grateful to you, because of course, I'm nuts about my granddaughter.

Q: What are your thoughts about being Jewish now?

A: I've always liked being Jewish, but I was never a religious Jew. I did go and I always go -- I used to go every year -- it's very funny, I -- I do observe Yom Kippur. I used to fast, I no longer fast because of age, difficulty with medication and so on. I -- I used to go and -- and -- and pr -- to the Prayer for the Dead for my father. I never joined a temple, my son never had a **Bar Mitzvah**, simply because my first husband didn't want to pay for it, I couldn't pay for it, and I was very angry because I wanted to just send him to religious school just for the training and they wouldn't do that. I would have had to join the congregation, and I couldn't afford it. I f -- simply could not afford it. And I would have given him the **Bar Mitzvah** on those terms. And then, I'm very rebellious, I -- I -- I don't -- I didn't want to be forced in doing something I don't want to do, and I really didn't want to join a congregation. I don't -- as I said, I love -- I love being in a temple for the singing, and I like the ceremony, I like the feeling, I like feeling I'm Jewish, but I'm not religious.

Q: Even though negative things happened to you because you were Jewish?

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A: Yes, definitely. I -- I -- I don't think that's the fault of being Jewish. I think that happens all over the world to a lot of people. A lot of people are persecuted because of their race, religion and -- and beliefs, and --

Q: Why did you go back to the first reunion, the **Oswego** reunion?

A: I didn't go to the first first **Oswego** reunion. I went to the first meeting in **New York**, because -- why did I go? I don't know. I just decided that I would like to go. Maybe to see some old friends, to make connection. Almost walked out of there, but I --

Q: Why?

A: Because at first I didn't recognize anyone. And I did go alone. I don't remember whether my son went with me or not. I don't remember. Anyway, but then I met **Elfie** and we became fast friends. I was divorced at the time, she was divorced and we liked each other. And -- and then of course I was very much into it. I -- I liked going back to the reunions and I met my friend **Irene** from -- from **California** and many friends. And my friend from **Chicago**.

Q: What was it like to go up to **Oswego**?

A: Strange. Very strange.

Q: Why?

A: Well, because things have just changed so much, you know, the whole fort has changed. People have changed. I didn't recognize many of the people. You know, we

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are all old, and -- and what -- what bothers me now is that there's so few of us that are still alive. So many of us have died.

Q: Even the people that were your age?

A: Even my contemporaries, yeah. My friend **Evol** just died. I -- many, many from my immediate group. Forget my sister's group and forget the real old ones. In fact, at the last reunion, which was just the 55th reunion, I was amazed, there was somebody there that was a baby in the camp, that was two or three months old when -- when -- when he was in camp. So there are very few of us left. Especially the last one, there was maybe 20 survivors that came to the camp or something, or 30. It's amazing.

Q: Did you walk around your old barrack and walk around?

A: Yeah, we went to [**indecipherable**] th-those are the pictures I showed you of -- of the old -- old fort and stuff like that, yeah.

Q: When you do that are you transported back in time?

A: Yes, we are, because to me it was a good experience, yeah, definitely.

End of Tape Three, Side A

Beginning Tape Three, Side B

Q: This is a continuation of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Dorrit Ostberg**. This is tape three, side **B**. What are your thoughts on the state of **Israel** now?

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A: I f -- well, I have my cousin there, I'm very, very fond of. In fact, her -- her granddaughter is here now that I am just nuts about it, **Racheli**, she's 21 years old. She's here on a visitor's visa. But I -- I'm a little confused. I'm -- I'm disappointed that the peace treaty has not been ratified. On the other hand, I was walking with **Racheli** on the street, and -- and a strange man, he must have -- she's gorgeous -- stopped us and said, don't let your government give away any more land. Don't let that happen. So I'm torn between that they worked so hard to attain what they have, and now they have to give up some. On the other hand, I really abhor fighting and I abhor the terror that they live through, so I would like to see peace come. So I -- I don't know, you know, I'm not very political. But I am -- I am extremely happy that **Israel** exists. I'm extremely supportive of **Israel**, and I -- I -- I -- in the politics, I don't know where the compromise should lie. Neither do many others, I think.

Q: What are your thoughts about **Germany**?

A: Well, I -- I don't hate **Germany**. I -- I don't like **Germany**, but I -- when I went back to **Vienna** it was very anti-Semitic. Now -- now my fren -- my cousin **Susie** will not step into **Austria**, will not step into **Germany**, you know, doesn't want to have anything to do with it, and doesn't -- never wants to go back. I was glad to go back. I still have a sentimentality towards **Vienna** that has nothing to do with really -- it has more to do with the opera, with the music, with the life, with the -- with the arts and all that. Has nothing to do with the anti-Semitism that is really rampant there, there's

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no question about it. It's a mixed feeling. On one hand I want all the re -- I applied for that -- for this new thing about the settlement of bi -- as far as I'm concerned, I can't get enough money out of **Austria** for me, personally, if I could. I do get a pension and I just now applied for this thing with the bank settlements, but it seems that my father only had a box there and not a bankbook and I guess nothing will come of that claim. But that way I feel -- I don't -- you know, I feel v-venge -- **vengeful** of -- a vengeance kind of thing, but not really. But I -- I will listen to **Wagner**, I will listen to -- to German music, that doesn't bother me. I -- I like the music per se, I think it transgresses what people are and what their political beliefs are. I don't think it translates -- I will -- I would drive -- well, maybe I wouldn't drive a German car, because of the economy, but -- I -- I don't really know. I -- I have very mixed emotions about that. I would go back to **Vienna** again, even though there is such anti-Semitism, simply for seeing some more, because I only was one or two days in **Vienna**. I really didn't see enough of what was. Maybe it's not even there any more, but --

Q: Did you have any particular thoughts during the **Eichmann** trial?

A: I -- no. I -- my thought was killing him doesn't do any good at all, doesn't bring back the thousands and thousands of Jews. I think killing anybody -- I -- I am against capital punishment, I am. Very strongly. I -- I -- I don't -- I don't see -- killing makes killing, I believe. Not that I wanted even **[indecipherable]** I'm not going that far. But

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in prison and for life would be good enough for me. I don't know, I -- I guess I -- I'm not too v -- vengeance means nothing to me. Doesn't bring back anyone, doesn't do any good.

Q: When things were going on in the former **Yugoslavia**, did you feel any kind of connection?

A: A great connection, because I understood what was going on, and I -- I fai -- I mean, these atrocities ar-are -- are just horrendous. I can't fathom -- I always say we made such advances in technology, in -- in science and everything. We -- we -- we have made no advances in humanity. That today, in this age, this killing, this raping, these atrocities can happen, simply means that we -- we've concentrated in the wrong interests. We've -- we vai -- we should -- we should make advances in humanity, not in -- not in science any more, and technology.

Q: The fact that you had lived there, did you feel any kind of connection?

A: Big connection, because I know of the hatred, I know of the differences. And in one way it was only a strong man like **Tito** that could bri -- that could hold it together.

Q: Since your family and you and many others were deprived of their civil rights when **Hitler** came into power, did the Civil Rights movement here in the **United States** reverberate with you in any way?

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A: Why sure, I was, you know, I'm quite liberal in -- in -- in my beliefs and certainly believe that everybody has a right t -- to be ai -- but they -- you know, there -- there's so many different issues and so many different things and as much as I believe that the gays have every right, that this one has every right to be human, I -- I have mixed emotions. For instance, I-I'm not so sure that I totally approve of this thing that went on in **Italy** right now, during they -- their centennial, their big -- their big thing with the gay parade, or whatever that they [**indecipherable**] I -- I -- I think it was inappropriate in -- in the timing, I don't know. All this -- I don't like any extreme groups anyway, and I don't like any extremists in their movements and what they do.

Q: Do you feel that you, as some people have said, that you are two people, one person on the outside and one person on the inside, because of what you went through?

A: No. I think I'm two people inside and two people outside.

Q: What do you mean by that?

A: I have very mixed emotion internally. I -- I don't think that I'm -- I'm -- I'm -- I -- I'm not as -- as -- even though I refused to talk about my past, it -- it wasn't because I wasn't open, or communicative, or that I couldn't relate to other people, or that I had a secret life inside of me. I -- I -- I don't believe that. I don't believe that I put on a different front outside. I am what I am. I may look different on the outside because I'm very conditioned by fashion, by tradition, by -- by so -- by money that can buy

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things and so on and so forth. But I -- I don't think that I'm so much di -- I think I'm very conflicted inside too, of -- of -- of how -- how things should be, or I -- e-e -- about strong beliefs, about -- about a lot of things. About where I belong and what I am and what -- what contributions we have made and so on and so forth.

Q: Do you feel you tru -- you belong here? You did say when you were here you feel European and when you're in **Europe** you feel American, but do you feel that you belong here?

A: I don't f -- no, I don't feel I belong anyplace. I don't. I mean, you try to feel that this is your home, I'm always happy to go back to the home, or the house that I live in when I go away on vacation. But I, truthfully, no. I -- I -- I don't feel the stability, I don't feel these are my roots, okay? I don't feel roots with anything.

Q: When you became an American citizen, what thoughts did you have?

A: Oh, I was thrilled. I -- I -- I'm extremely grateful to **America**. I was thrilled to become an American citizen. The nicest experience I had, when my granddaughter became an American citizen. She had to after she was adopted. She was two years old when she -- when they went through the ceremony, I mean, what ceremony, she - - she -- she -- she had a flag in her hand. I mean, what can she do at two, she couldn't talk. But I -- you know, I was extremely happy about that.

Q: Did you feel a connection with her then?

A: I guess so. I guess so. I guess so.

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Q: You said that you think about your childhood more as you've gotten older, and -- and obviously with your granddaughter. Any other reason?

A: Well, I guess must -- must be grow old -- you know, I deplore the fact that I'm very much alone, that I don't have any family left, that my sister died, that --

Q: Did she have children?

A: No. She had no children. I -- I mean, you know, the closest to my age in family is my cousin in **Israel**, and -- and I have an older cousin in **Detroit**, but I don't feel that close to her. And I really, you know, it's -- it's -- I love -- you know, I love what she's done with her life. She has -- she has three children and 10 grandchildren sitting on the kibbutz. Almost everywhere -- eight of them live on the kibbutz, I mean, it's wonderful. And I miss that and I'm very concerned about even having this one, only one grandchild that is all alone and my son being all alone, having no brothers or si-si -- has a half sister, but -- my first husband remarried.

Q: Have you been to **Israel** frequently?

A: Oh yeah, about five, six times, yeah. In fact, I stayed for about two weeks or 10 days I think, on the kibbutz with my cousin.

Q: What does it feel like for you to be there?

A: I like it a lot. I like being with her. A wa -- it's hard though, because I don't speak any Hebrew, but I liked it. I like being with her, I love her, I'm very fond of her, I

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think she's terrific. She came here a couple of times and stayed when we -- it's very nice. It's a good connection.

Q: Well, is there anything you -- anything you wanted to add, or anything, any message you wanted to give your little granddaughter? Anything you wanted to say?

A: Well, I guess the only thing is I hope she once listens to it. That's about it.

Q: Well, you gave her a wonderful gift, you truly did.

A: I think, **Gail**, you gave her a wonderful gift, not me. I think the credit goes entirely to you.

Q: Well, thank you very, very much for doing this --

A: Thank you for doing this, really.

Q: -- interview. This concludes the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Dorrit Ostberg**.

End of Tape Three, Side B

Conclusion of Interview