

**Interview with Lore Schneider
August 14, 2003**

Beginning Tape One, Side A

Question: -- museum volunteer collection interview with **Lore Schneider**, conducted by **Esther Finder** on August 14th, 2003 in **Arlington, Virginia**. This interview is part of the museum's project to interview Holocaust survivors and witnesses who are also volunteers with the museum. This is tape number one, side **A**. And I'd like to start by asking you what is your name, and would you please spell it?

Answer: Okay, my name is **Lore, L-o-r-e Schneider, S-c-h-n-e-i-d-e-r**.

Q: What was your name at birth?

A: Well, actually **Lore** was my given middle name. My first name was **H-e-t-i, Heti**. And my last name was **K-o-p-p-e-l, Koppel**, in German.

Q: Where were you born?

A: In **Bochum, Germany**.

Q: When?

A: October 10th, 1924.

Q: What was your father's name and what did he do for a living?

A: His first name was **Oskar -- Oscar** in English, and he was a lawyer, and at times a judge.

Q: What was your mother's name?

A: Her name was **Elsa**, in German **Ilse** and she was a singer.

Q: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

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A: Sorry, I didn't.

Q: Okay. We had a slight glitch, I think we're okay now. Where did you grow up?

A: Well, I grew up in **Bochum** and we lived there until we left for the **United States**.

Q: What was the town like? Was it a big city, or a small town?

A: It was a medium sized city, which has since grown to a population of over 400,000.

It was a grimy industrial coal mining and manufacturing city.

Q: Did your family have a long history in **Germany**?

A: Yes, quite. There are several generations and -- in western **Germany**.

Q: Were there many Jews in your town?

A: There were ha -- accounted for in the general congregation, something over 1100, of whom about four came back after the war.

Q: Before the war, before **Hitler** came to power, what were the relationships like between the Jews and the non-Jews in your town?

A: Apparently peaceful enough. My father represented the miner's union.

Q: Was your family religiously observant?

A: Not extremely so. The major holidays, yes, but among the Jews in **West Germany**, things were sort of loose, but we were members of the congregation and I attended the Jewish school.

Q: Did you have a favorite holiday, and if you did, why?

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A: I guess the two favorite ones were Passover and **Hanukkah**. For Passover we often went to grandparents who kept their matzos in a big barrel, and **Hanukkah** for obvious reasons.

Q: Well, not so obvious. What were your favorite reasons?

A: Mostly -- oh, gifts.

Q: When you were a child, did you personally ever see **Hitler**?

A: Never saw him, but when we were at school, the Nazis would come by and make sure that we were sitting at our desks in our best clothes, listening to the speeches.

Q: When you think back to your childhood, can you remember any personal experiences that you had with anti-Semitism in **Germany**?

A: Well, things began to boil up very quickly after **Hitler** took power. The people who owned the house in which we rented an apartment, their o -- late teens to early 20's sons were among the first je -- to join the party. They paraded around in their brown shirts. Some of the children in the neighborhood joined the **Hitlerjugend**, the **Hitler Youth**. And of course there was always the spectacle of the marches up and down. We lived on the corner of a main street, and the spectacle of the parades up and down with the flags, the music, the torches, and get away from that window. The atmosphere of fear.

Q: Do you have any memories of your childhood before the Nazis began to gain power? Do you have any fond memories of your early childhood in **Germany**?

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A: I guess just a normal childhood. Playing in the park and learning to ice skate, playing with other children. It didn't take long though, before this atmosphere of fear set it. Very early, probably in 1933, we'd began to have what in retrospect I find very surprising, blackout drills. Had to put curtain -- not curtains, but blankets on the windows, don't turn on any lights. Cars down below had to paint their head -- headlights blue. And in retrospect, in the early 30's, I find this very surprising.

Q: Was there any explanation for this?

A: That was the way it was done. I was young enough not to know any real reason. The other thing was the so-called **Winterhilfe**. Once a week people were required to have a meal that was prepared in one pot, and the amount of money that was saved, presumably, by having a thick soup or something of that sort, was to be given to the poor. During the winter the Nazis would come knocking on the door, peek in the pots, and collect what you presumably saved. To this day I do not like to eat pea soup or lentil soup, for that reason.

Q: Did your parents try to explain any of the Nazi related events to you when they began? I-I realize you were young, but did they try in any way to explain the situation to you?

A: They tried to shield me as much as possible, but my father, who is a -- really a -- a person who saw things that were coming, and he tried to persuade others that it wasn't

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just a passing fad, and when he was fired and no longer allowed to practice, he said it's time to go.

Q: Why was he fired?

A: For being Jewish.

Q: When you think back to the events when **Hitler** came to power, do you remember some of the first signs that things were changing? Do you remember it building in any way, or all of a sudden is it just in your mind as all around you?

A: It didn't take long, but the young people who lived in this building, showing up in their Nazi uniforms, other people and pushing people around. My father was arrested for no good reason. His law partner was beaten up in an alley and left for dead.

Fortunately he wasn't and managed to emigrate to **Israel** in later years. But when things began to happen that way, he said it was time to get out.

Q: Once he decided it was time to go, what efforts did he make to leave **Germany**?

A: Well, we were more fortunate than most. My mother had a sister who came to live in the **United States** with her family following World War I. And they invited my father to come to the **United States**, look around for a few weeks and see if it was possible to come and possibly make a living and then decide to apply for a visa. And they then signed an affidavit for us that permitted us to come into this country.

Q: How long did the process take from when he first decided to come until you got the paperwork all in order?

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A: Probably something over a year.

Q: During this time did anyone try to stop you or make it difficult for you to leave **Germany**?

A: I don't really know about that, there are family members who said, oh don't just run off, it's going to stop, it will all be over. And my father said, I don't think it will stop. And he made up his mind and he is fortunate, some members of his family were fortunate to get out. Others were not so fortunate, were lost. Both my father's family and mother's family.

Q: During that time between when he made up his mind that he was going to leave **Germany** and you were waiting for the paperwork, you said it was about a year, how were things changing in **Germany** during that year?

A: I would say it was just more of the same. More of the marches up and down the street, more of your child laughed at that -- a-a-at our man in uniform, you're gonna get in trouble. Or just watch very carefully where you walk, how you walk. Stay out of trouble. Just don't call attention to yourself in any way.

Q: What was happening in your life during this time, before you left **Germany** in that year, or a little more than a year from when **Hitler** came to power, until you left. What were you doing in your life?

A: I was a school kid, and some of the families there were also hoping to get out. But o-others were still ready to tough it out and see what would happen.

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Q: You mentioned before that you went to the Jewish school, did I hear you correctly?

A: Yes. The kindergarten and the school were both burned down later on

Kristallnacht.

Q: But while you were still in **Germany**, was there any problem with attending a Jewish school?

A: No, it was not shut down until after I had left. And at that time my teacher made it her business to teach those children that were still there even after the school disappeared. She taught them in a house, a **Juden** house and then she began smuggling them, at great risk to herself, across the border into the **Netherlands**. **Bochum** is not far from the Dutch border. And she managed to get out quite a number of -- of children, although she herself was later deported and died.

Q: It -- do you have any other memory that sticks out in your mind from that time, before you left, in that year or so before you left **Germany**?

A: It was mostly sort of apprehension. As a matter of fact, where would we go? My parents were beginning to study conversational Hebrew in case we couldn't get into the **United States**. I had a little bit of Hebrew in school of course, but that was prayer book Hebrew, and no English whatever.

Q: Did your parents speak any English?

A: Yes. In their professions, they were multilingual. No-Not very good conversationally, but most educated people in those days knew some French, some

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English. My mother being a singer, had to a-at least know how to pronounce Italian.

My father, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, in addition to English, French, German.

Q: Did you have any doubts or reservations about leaving **Germany**? Di-Did you want to stay?

A: I was young enough to just do what my parents wanted me to do, and there was enough fear there that it couldn't be any worse in the **United States**.

Q: Do you remember when your parents told you that now is the time to leave?

A: Well, the preparations were ongoing. So then I began to read a little bit about **America**. I thought I would find Indians, and my father had visited the relatives who lived, at the time in **Chevy Chase, D.C.**, and he said it's next to **Maryland**. I pictured a little gate going from the **District of Columbia** into **Maryland**. So I didn't really know what to expect.

Q: What did you take with you and what did your parents take with them?

A: Well they were allowed to take a few things which a lot of people later -- in later years were not. So, a few items of furniture, they were allowed to take books, my mother's music and some of my favorite books, a doll. And tha -- that's it. I wanted to get rid of the German looking clothes as fast as I could.

Q: Do you remember saying good-bye to people? Were you allowed to do that?

A: Yes, I -- as a matter of fact I have a page in my autograph book, written by the schoolteacher that I mentioned before. And yes, of course, we took our leave of

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friends, that was still permitted in those days, and the grandparents in a nearby city, the grandmother. The grandfather had died many years before. And a-an uncle -- those people -- Grandmother died of natural causes, the uncle died in **Gross-Rosen**, in the camp.

Q: When?

A: I'm not sure of the year. I tried to find that out in the -- in the museum library, but they didn't have the year. One of my father's brothers was listed as **fashion**, which means assumed dead. He was deported, but they don't know the actual date. One of my mother's brothers, a younger brother, we managed to bring to the **United States** with his family. An older brother lived through most of the war, but managed to come to the **United States**. My father's oldest brother was deported and killed. Another brother escaped to **South Africa**. And another brother was incarcerated in **Dachau** for a number of months, but was released and managed to come to the **United States** with his family. My father also worked on bringing over as many people as he could of the family. With some he was successful, in others he was not.

Q: For those that he was not successful in bringing over, do you know why he was unsuccessful on those attempts?

A: Probably just bureaucracy, paperwork. By that time these people had been deported and you couldn't even find most of them.

Q: Would you, for the record, give me the name of the teacher that you told us about?

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A: Oh yeah, her name was **Ilse Hirsch, H-i-r-s-c-h**. When we read names on **Yom HaShoah** in the museum, she is always on my list to read.

Q: At the time that you were getting ready to leave an-and now leaving **Germany**, what was the reaction of the Jewish community? At -- at this point when you left, were they still -- were they becoming afraid?

A: Some people, like us, were getting ready to leave. Others were still trying to make it somehow or another. So th-the reaction was mixed. Ther-There's no monolithic reaction.

Q: When exactly did you leave **Germany**?

A: In 1934, in June. We went by train to the **Netherlands**. My mother had a friend in **Amsterdam**, and when we crossed the border into the **Netherlands** and everybody took a deep breath, we're out of there. We stayed in **Amsterdam** for a day or two, then went to **Rotterdam**, took a boat across the English channel. We were down in -- way down in the bottom, next to the machinery in that boat, getting very seasick. We went from **London** to a port that the British pronounce, I think **Harrich**, it's spelled **Harwich**. And from there we took a smallish steamboat called **The Corinthia**, that took a little over a week to get to **New York**. **The Corinthia** was subsequently sunk during World War II.

Q: You've mentioned that on the train when you cross the border out of **Germany**, y-you heaved a sigh of relief. Who were the other passengers with you?

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A: Well, my parents. The other people we -- we didn't know. Just people on the train.

Q: You don't know if they were Jewish?

A: No, I do not.

Q: What were your expectations, besides that you thought you'd see Indians and you'd see gates, but what were your expectations of the Americans and what **America** would be like in terms of other issues? Did you have any idea in your mind?

A: Not too many, although the relatives who gave us the visa -- or the affidavit, they had a daughter five years older than I from whom I had occasionally gotten a box of American clothes and I couldn't wait to be American.

Q: Do you remember your first impressions of the **United States** when you first started seeing **America**?

A: Well, the first thing that's always pointed out to everyone, when you go into the harbor, **Statue of Liberty**. Take a good look at that. Also, at that time, people were not going through **Ellis Island**. The immigration people were coming on the ship. The ship landed late in the day. The relatives were on the dock waiting to meet us and we took the midnight train -- that was cheaper -- from **New York** to **Washington**. And from there we went to the ho -- my mother's sister and her family.

Q: When you first started meeting Americans who were not your relatives, how did they treat you?

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A: Well, the first few weeks we lived with -- with our relatives. There were -- there was a set of twins there, cousins, who were four years old, who gave me a terrible time because I couldn't speak English. Then we moved into our own apartment, also in **Washington**. And I was very shy and retiring because nobody would speak to me, I couldn't speak to them. So it took awhile, but we came in the summertime and it wasn't long before I was enrolled in the local elementary school. That was a traumatic experience also, especially since I was tall for my age and they wanted to put me back a grade because I couldn't speak English. I fought like crazy to not be put back another year. I finally succeeded in that, and worked very hard to try and pick up enough English to go on. My bridge to English were numbers. A four is a four is a four in no matter what language, and if I could manipulate those, then pick up a little bit more each time. A very kind teacher put a book in front of me with a map, and then she said, geography. North, south, east, west, pointing at the directions. And little by little I picked up some English. The running joke in my family is a spelling word on my first spelling test. These days the children can spell much more complicated words, but that was Queen. I spelled it **k-w-i-n**.

Q: How long did it take you before you were fairly fluent in English?

A: Oh, I'd say it takes n -- more than a year. The year -- the summer following that first year. In those days the school years were divided into two halves, **A** and **B** and you could move -- you could enter school in the spring semester, for instance. So I

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went to summer school after that first year, made up one semester, and then had a combined second half of fifth grade, first half of sixth grade. Went to summer school again the following year, and that way I got even with others in my age group.

Following that I went to summer school in high school, made up another year and graduated at 16.

Q: When you first started going to school and first started meeting people, did you experience any anti-foreign or anti-Semitic sentiments?

A: Not so much anti-Semitic, but anti-foreign. They -- they made fun of me and I said the wrong things and they pushed me around. It was not as common to have non-English speaking children in the schools then as it is now. There was no English as a second language, and I-I just had to make do.

Q: While you were making these transitions to American public school, how were your parents transitioning to life in the **United States**?

A: It -- it's a matter of trying to make a living. We lived not too far from where the Bureau of Standards used to be located, and so -- in those days, if you were doing anything at all in science, you had to know German. So my father gave some private lessons in German. He also managed to get a job in the liquor store as a bookkeeper. My mother also gave some lessons and then she began to teach music. And that brought forth enough to pay the groceries. But it was still pretty hard to make ends

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meet. I used to be so envious of children that I saw with an ice cream cone, because we couldn't afford it.

Q: I'm going to pause and change the tape, just one minute.

End of Tape One, Side A

Beginning Tape One, Side B

Q: -- view with **Lore Schneider**. This is tape number one, side **B**. And before I continue with my line of questioning from before, I wanted to go back and ask you one more question about **Germany**. I had asked you if your family had a long history there, but what I didn't ask you was if your father ever served in the German military.

A: Yes, he did, as did his brother. They were on active duty, and I have a -- a certificate that indicated that my father got a service cross for his trouble.

Q: While you first were here, in the first couple of months and years in the **United States**, were you able to stay in touch with family and friends inside of **Germany**?

A: Yes, there was one school friend and we exchanged a couple of postcards before things got bad and we could no longer correspond. My parents corresponded with their family as long as they were able.

Q: What kinds of information did you get about life in **Germany** from this correspondence that you were getting?

A: Well, we got the account of people, the Nazis, breaking into the -- my father's family business. They broke the windows, they threw the merchandise out in the street.

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They beat up his brother and then they said, you have to pay for the damage. The younger brother was a physician they beat up, and he was on his way to see patients. Actually he, at one time had been the doctor to the workers on the **Cologne** cathedral. But he was in his car, going to see a patient when they began, on **Kristallnacht** wrecking everything in sight. They tried to set his car on fire with him in it. He managed to get out of the car. They dragged him off, first to jail and then to the concentration camp in **Dachau**. He was there for a number of months, but -- and I have an account of his experiences in **Dachau**. My father, after he came to this country insisted that he retell everything as well as he remembered it. My father said, if you don't tell it as you remember it, nobody will ever believe that this really happened. Later on he was able to bring the family to the **United States**. Another brother escaped to **South Africa**. On my mother's side, the one brother escaped first to **France**, then he was underground for a number of years, came to the **United States** after the war. The brother who continued the family business for a time was dragged off and killed in the concentration camp at **Gross-Rosen**. The youngest brother and his family, who had been living in **Berlin**, they managed, again with the help of my parents, to come out and they came to the **United States**.

Q: You gave me an accounting of many of the members of your family, but you didn't say anything about a grandparent. What was going on with that generation?

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A: The only grandparent that was still alive was my mother's mother and she died soon after we came to the **United States**, of natural causes.

Q: And she never had any interest in coming to the **United States**?

A: She had spent a number of years in the **United States** in the late 19th century in the backwoods of **Tennessee**. They lived there for several years, but it was strictly backwoods. She was frightened of the bears that would come under the house and she insisted that they go back to city life in **Germany**. The first three of her children were born in the **United States**. My mother was the fourth, and she was born in **Germany**.

Q: Do you know what they were doing in **Tennessee**, why they had moved there?

A: I'm not sure why they had moved there, but they had a small business, and my grandfather was actually the postmaster. In those days, post offices were housed in stores, not their own building, especially in small, backwoods communities. My husband and I, by the way, when we were first married, lived in **Tennessee** and we took an excursion to **Elbridge** just to see what it looked like and it was still a wide place in the road back then.

Q: Let's go back to your schooling. Where did you go to school, and what do you remember about the subjects that you studied? Was there anything that you liked?

A: Well, in **Germany** I went to the Jewish school. Of course we learned our **ABC's** and there was a different kind of writing before the cursive writing, it was very much pointy, after the printing. Also, in the beginning, instead of writing on paper, we wrote

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with a slate. We had to carry a slate and a damp sponge with us, and something to mark -- it wasn't chalk -- to mark on this slate. After the first year, then we graduated to paper. Also, after hours, the girls were taught one year to crochet, another year to do embroidery and by the time they got around to knitting, I had left. The boys were given a little bit of training with woodworking.

Q: What about in the **United States**? Where did you go to school in this country?

A: I went to an elementary school in **Washington**, followed that up with a junior high school, also in **Washington**, and ended up at **Woodrow Wilson** High School in **Washington**. And then **George Washington** University.

Q: After you learned English, did you make many friends?

A: I was still pretty shy, I -- I somehow didn't begin to fit in until I was in high school, even though I tried very hard. I spoke recently to a woman that I have known since the first day that we started to school, and what I didn't know until recently is that in a way she sort of resented my working so hard all the time, trying to catch up with everyone else. And she said, in the end you passed me, didn't you? You graduated from high school a year ahead of me. I didn't realize that she resented it at the time.

Q: Were you in school with other Jewish students?

A: There were very few in the elementary. In the junior high school and high school, yes, there were others, and that's when I began to make friends. At **George**

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Washington, in my freshman year, I went full time. Then I took a job and finished the rest at night.

Q: During your days in elementary school, and into junior high school and -- you know, and beyond, did you pay much attention to events that were going on in **Germany**? Again now, I'm talking about before 1939, before the war. Were you paying attention to what was happening?

A: I know my parents were very conscious of it, they talked about it a lot. But I was very busy trying to catch up with school work, to stay abreast of fellow students my own age, and trying to become American. It was not until high school that -- and then later on in college, of course -- I graduated from high school in 1941.

Q: I'm going to ask you if you know -- if you can remember any specific events, like perhaps the **Berlin** Olympics. Did you have any memory of -- of watching that from -- from the American perspective?

A: No, and of course that was before the days of television, so all we got was what was on the radio or in the newspaper, and everybody heard about **Jesse Owens**. My English -- a lot of spoken English came from listening to people like **Jack Benny**. From people like -- programs like **Jack Benny** and also **Little Orphan Annie**, I learned a lot of spoken English.

Q: Were you even aware of the book burnings, or the **Nuremberg** Laws as they were being enacted?

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A: Only in so far as they were talked about in the family, and the entire time, my father, after -- he took out his first papers by the way, first -- after three years, at that time you could take out first papers that -- with which you declared your intention to become citizens. He was then allowed to be employed by the government, and he had then a regular job. And anyone that would listen, he tried to get help for bringing other members of the family to the **United States**. And this is where a lot of information came from.

Q: What was his job when he finally got the papers?

A: He -- well, basically, economist. People who studied law in **Europe**, it's a different system and they could not practice here and he felt he was too old to go back to law school and learn American law. And besides, it cost too much. So he -- but he had a very broad, general education, so that permitted him to work as an economist, and since the war was approaching, he was able to fill in a lot of information about industrial production, coal mining and the like from -- in **Germany** because that had been his background, even when he was a lawyer for the coalminer's union.

Q: What about **Kristallnacht**? How was that reported in this country?

A: Not too many papers, not -- they -- there are many reports on it now, in the -- in the museum. There was also a report in the local newspaper and local -- but what we were getting was mostly from letters and accounts that other people had -- they were comparing notes.

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Q: What about the **anschluss**? When you heard about the **anschluss**, what was your reaction? I mean, what did your parents say?

A: **Austria, Czechoslovakia**, and it wasn't that much longer til the Nazis invaded **Poland**, and -- but the -- I think the invasion of **Poland**, that to me was, for all intents and purposes the beginning of World War II. The -- there was a summer camp in the **Maryland** mountains that's still in existence called Camp **Louise**. They offered a not complete but very reduced price camper-ship to the refugee kids, and I was in camp at the time of the invasion of **Poland**, but we all heard about it. The -- also -- again, there were not too many refugee children in the **Washington** area at the time we came. **Washington** Hebrew offered me a -- a scholarship to their Sunday school. A real **mensh** of a rabbi named Rabbi **Simon** did that, but the ladies of the sisterhood, at that time were not too sympathetic. One of the people, she actually came out and said, well it's the fault of those German Jews. My mother never would go to another meeting.

Q: What was the fault of the German Jews?

A: The trouble that the German Jews are in in **Germany**.

Q: Oh, so she was blaming the victims, is that what you --

A: Yes, mm-hm. That was the -- at least partially, the nature of that congregation.

They were mostly well-to-do business people or professionals. They had no problems in the **United States**, so the Jews in **Germany** must have done it themselves. But the

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rabbi was a **mensch**, said we want to educate this child, let her in. And I wanted very much to go.

Q: With that mindset, that perhaps it was something that the Jews were doing themselves to create anti-Semitism, did you ever experience that from -- from your family or from your community?

A: No, except that my mother always had the fear that I'm going to do something to turn people against me and against Jews. Whenever I left the house, now don't go out and make anti-Semitism. Don't dress in flamboyant clothes, don't dress in too bright colors. Don't be loud. Just stay in the background and you'll stay out of trouble. This - - even in the **United States**.

Q: After the invasion of **Poland**, during the war -- during the war years, did you experience any anti-German or anti-Semitic feelings? This is during the war years.

A: Well there's a difference between anti-German and anti-Semitic by that time. And of course people were making anti-German remarks. They had names for Germans, Krauts and th -- you name it, but at that point I was old enough to know that that didn't apply to me.

Q: Did people in the **United States** make the distinction between being German and being Jewish from **Germany**?

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A: I'm not really sure, because by that time I was a teenager, I was speaking good, idiomatic English without an accent, and I just didn't make a point of it. I just wanted to blend in.

Q: Before I start to ask you about **Pearl Harbor** and **America's** involvement in the war, is there anything that stands out in your mind from the invasion of **Poland** until **Pearl Harbor**? Do you have any memories of that time that -- that stick out in your mind?

A: Just following the news very closely. Now, we personally had no ties to anyone in **Poland**. My father's law partner had been originally from **Poland**. His wife had been British, but they were in **Germany**, not in **Poland**. We personally had no relatives in **Poland** whatever. So it was more reading the newspapers and trying to find out what we could.

Q: When did correspondence between you and your family and friends in **Germany** cease?

A: It went on for quite awhile. It's really heartbreaking, my father's oldest brother was so wanting to get out and the letters were -- and they all had to adopt the name **Israel**, of course. And there weren't any sisters, but they were all -- they all had to be named **Sarah**. But my father had to keep reassuring his oldest brother that he was trying to get the permission to get him out, and he was unable to do so. The youngest brother got out after the incarceration in **Dachau**, and another brother went to **South Africa**,

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and his wife had ties to **Great Britain**, and **South Africa** at that time, was a British colony.

Q: Were you able to keep up correspondence until the **United States** got into the war?

A: I don't remember when the last of the letters ceased. By that time -- I don't know, most of the correspondence was then between my parents and whoever they could correspond with. I was, by that time, attending the college and -- at night and working a full time day job. And I had no time for anything.

Q: What was your full time day job?

A: Well, right after the war broke out, they lowered the age that you could work for the government. So I was 17, I took the typing test and I barely passed, but they needed warm bodies to pound those typewriters at -- right after **Pearl Harbor**, most of the young men at the university disappeared. They all enlisted or were drafted, and equally in some of the government offices. So they needed anybody who could operate a typewriter.

Q: Do you remember hearing the news about **Pearl Harbor**?

A: I most certainly do. I was visiting with a friend who was also from **Germany**. She had not yet become a citizen. I was in her home when they made the announcement. It was, I think, about three o'clock in the afternoon. And she immediately screamed and said, that makes me an enemy alien. What am I gonna do? Are they going to ship me

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back? They didn't, but she was very fearful. By that time we had already become citizens and I was not that afraid.

Q: When did you become a citizen?

A: Oh, five years after we got here. At the time the **Washington Post** had a reporter at the citizenship ceremony and all these people had previously gone to what was called then Americanization school. And they took some pictures of the ceremony and that included a family picture of my parents and myself when we became citizens.

Q: You did say that you were working during the day and going to school at night. Did that leave any time for you to follow the war news?

A: On weekends.

Q: Did you have any idea what was happening to the Jews in **Europe**?

A: Only in so far as rumors came out. From time to time -- of course, my father's brother, who was locked up in **Dachau**, this was just a foretaste of what was to come, and yes, we heard from this one and that one that -- but no one had any idea how bad it really was.

Q: What stands out in your mind about your life from, you know, 1942 until the end of the war? Did you stay as a -- a government typist the whole time?

A: Yes, I learned shorthand and became a stenographer, got a little more pay. But yes, the entire time I was working at the Interior Department doing secretarial work and th

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-- the Interior Department was walking distance to the campus of **George Washington**. So five nights a week I was going to school.

Q: Do you remember hearing that the war in **Europe** was over?

A: Absolutely. It was absolute bedlam in **Washington**. Everyone wanted to go downtown. The buses were not running and everyone was cel -- was celebrating. Before that, there were a couple of major events. One was, for instance, th-the death of **FDR**. I remember walking from my job to the campus and walking with a woman that was taking some of the same classes. This woman had absolutely no confidence in **Harry Truman**. She said, isn't there some way that the Constitution could be changed? What does he know? **Truman's** daughter **Margaret** was a classmate of mine. She attended one or two classes that I did. Several courses were given only at night because the professors were working other jobs in the daytime. So **Margaret** was in one or two of the classes that I took.

Q: Did you know her?

A: Well, enough to say hello, but not -- and when her father became president, everything changed for her. She then had to walk around campus with bodyguards. She had to take the elevator and -- the elevator alone with her bodyguards, she could no longer really pal around with any of the students. She had to have these people with her.

Q: What about when you heard that **Hitler** was dead?

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A: Well, the joke is, **Hitler** is going to die on the Jewish holiday, cause when he dies, it will be a holiday. Incidentally, I should have mentioned this. My father, when he was giving German instruction, gave some instruction to one of the sons of **FDR**, because he thought he was going to need it when -- he was in the military at the time.

Q: Did you ever meet the son?

A: No.

Q: I think I'm going to pause now and change the tape, just one minute.

A: Okay.

End of Tape One, Side B

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Beginning Tape Two, Side A

Q: -- of the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum volunteer collection interview with **Lore Schneider**. This is tape two, side **A**, and we had been talking about the end of the war in **Europe**. How long after the war was over, how long did it take before you began to realize what had happened to the Jews in **Europe**?

A: When the **G.I.'s** were beginning to come back, my father had helped a cousin of his to come over from **Europe**. This cousin had four children, the oldest remained in **England**, they were part of the **Kindertransport**. A son joined the American army, he was injured in the invasion, in the **D-Day** invasion. And through him -- and we visited him in the veteran's hospital -- through him we were beginning to hear more and more about what they saw in **Europe**. Even though he was wounded right in the beginning, through his buddies in the army, we found out a lot.

Q: Was there any reporting of this that you can remember from the newspapers and from newsreels?

A: There was a certain amount in newsreels, but I must say I didn't get to the movies very often and the newspaper accounts were, for the most part, hidden on the back page.

Q: What efforts did your family make after the war to try and find survivors?

A: Well, they began writing letters, of course, and one of the contacts was a housekeeper in my father's home, to whom they had sent care packages all the way

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along. She tried her best to find out what happened to people there. She was unsuccessful. On my mother's family, all we know about the brother who died at **Gross-Rosen**, no one knew where he died, except that he did die in a concentration camp. I found out the exact location when I dug into the archives at the museum.

Q: You were a student during the day, and you were work -- I-I'm sorry, you were working during the day and you were a student at night. What were you studying at night? What was your ambition, what were your goals?

A: Originally I had wanted to be a teacher, my father talked me out of it, and I studied economics. But I was doing secretarial work before I got married and also after, until our first child was born. When I went back to the working world, I became a teacher after all.

Q: As the postwar period moved on, did you follow the **Nuremberg** Trials?

A: Yes, my father went to **Nuremberg**. The Committee rounded up a number of lawyers who knew the German law and made them temporary colonels in the **U.S.** Army, and they worked on particular cases. They stayed for several months, my father stayed for about six months. So the private in the German army during World War I became a temporary colonel in the **U.S.** Army.

Q: Do you know what case he was working on?

A: Yes, it was a -- a guy that -- I don't know what his -- I don't remember his real name now, **Putzi Hanfstaengel**.

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Q: By the time of the **Nuremberg** Trials, I'm assuming that most people in the **United States** knew about what had happened to the Jews.

A: Abso -- absolutely. And -- course, before the war they had people like the **Bund** and Father **Coughlin** holding forth on the radio and a lot of people didn't believe that there was anything really happening there. I think there are people today who don't believe it.

Q: From your perspective as a refugee from **Germany**, who knew from your own family's experience about concentration camps, was there anything about the American reaction to this news about the -- the genocide that -- that surprised you in any way?

A: I don't know that there was any American reaction, every individual was different. Some people were horrified, they were sympathetic. Other people didn't believe it. This -- this couldn't possibly have happened. And I think a lot of that is detailed now in the exhibits at the museum, because there was no monolithic American reaction to this.

Q: Did you hear your colleagues, either at work or at school or whatever, around you, make comment about the **Nuremberg** Trials? I mean, was it general sense that this was a just thing to do, and was the sense that justice was done?

A: I think so, yes. The more people heard about the atrocities of the Nazis, the more they realized there had to be some kind of a trial.

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Q: Did you feel justice was done in **Nuremberg**?

A: It has to be a case by case thing, but for the most part yes, away with them.

Q: Did you follow the debate in the **U.N.** about the partition of **Palestine**?

A: Yes, everybody hung on every word, and there were public meetings to become more informed on what -- and of course it meant more to someone who was trying to get into what was then **Palestine**.

Q: Did you ever have any aspirations to go to **Palestine** [indecipherable]

A: Our family was studying conversational Hebrew just in case we didn't get into the **United States**. I have been to **Israel** since.

Q: I want to ask you a little bit about your personal life also. How was your social life when you were in college and -- and working, and all of -- you know, those -- those late teens, early 20's, what was going on in your life socially?

A: By the time I got into college, yes, I had American friends. There was not too much time for socializing and my father was very strict, still very German. I had a very strict curfew, and if I didn't appear at the time he decreed, I was pretty scared. And my friends were a little bit afraid of him as well.

Q: Basically, what I want to know is how you met your husband and when that was.

A: Well, when I took the government job at the Interior Department, I went on the bus every day to work and always loaded down with books because after work I went to my classes at **George Washington**. And one day a good looking young man offered

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me his seat. What a way to meet girls. And he worked nearby and that's how I met my husband.

Q: When was that?

A: It was in -- let's see, the winter of 1942.

Q: And what was he doing in those days?

A: He was -- had graduated from college the year before. He did it in reverse manner. He studi -- he studied in the day and worked evenings. And he was skilled -- he's a geologist by profession and he was skilled in making maps. They needed maps to be made for the air force in those days and he was working in a division of the Interior Department that made maps especially for the air force, and he was working nearby.

Q: Want to tell me about your -- your first date, real date?

A: Well, we did go to some gathering at his office, but the first real date just for the two of us was to see the movie, "**Casablanca**". And we have never forgotten it. This is -- the movie is now 60 years old and still a classic.

Q: I want to ask you about your perspective on some things that were happening socially in the **United States**. As a refugee, how did you view relationships in this country between blacks and whites?

A: Well, we thought it was totally wrong. I went to a segregated high school, that was how everything was back then. Integration did not take place until we came to northern **Virginia**. And the year that our children entered the **Arlington** county

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schools is when they truly desegregated the **Virginia** schools. There were African-American students at **George Washington**, and my husband worked with some African-Americans, and it was perfectly normal to be friends with those people. This was not the usual way, **Washington** was a southern city at the time. There were some African-Americans who worked in the Interior Department, for the most part they were messengers. They didn't get too much higher than that, but nevertheless, we tried to be friends with them.

Q: Was your husband born and raised in this country?

A: Yes, he was born in **New York**, lived most of his life -- he says he could walk to every school he ever attended, from elementary school through college, in **Brooklyn**.

Q: During your time in this country, there were some very turbulent eras. And I was wondering if you have any thoughts about the Korean war or the war in **Vietnam**. Did you have any thoughts at the time or in retrospect about some of these conflicts?

A: My husband's brother was in the army during the Korean war, but they sent him to **Europe** instead of to **Korea**. Nevertheless, he dates back to those days. By the time the **Vietnam** war came along, our children and their friends were in college and demonstrating against the **Vietnam** war.

Q: There were many social upheavals in this country, the Civil Rights movement, the Women's movement. Did any of these touch you personally?

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A: Well, certainly when we first were married, we lived in **Tennessee**. Very much southern, very much segregated. And I almost got into trouble work -- I worked for a government agency there, for calling some of the African-American employees -- I worked in the employee relations office -- for calling them mister. That is not done, but I insisted on doing it anyway. It took a long time for that kind of thing to wear away. And of course now at the museum there are a number of African-American employees who are very close to us. I -- I had somebody raise their eyebrows at seeing one of them kiss me. So what?

Q: Has your level of -- of -- of -- of ma -- excuse me, level of observance changed with respect to Judaism, or do you still follow the same traditions you followed as a child?

A: Well, once we had children we decided it was time that we joined a congregation, that we sent them to Hebrew school and we -- when we came to northern **Virginia**, we joined a congregation that we are at -- that we still belong to now. In **Minnesota** where we lived, we were members of a very large congregation. The one in northern **Virginia** is very small. My granddaughter was just **Bat Mitzvahed** in **Massachusetts** and she did everybody proud.

Q: Well, let me ask you when you got married, and tell me a little bit about your children and when they were born.

A: Well, the war ended in 1945. I got my degree in the spring of 1946. My husband was discharged from the army soon after the end of the war. He got a job in

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Tennessee. And in May of '46 we were married and went immediately to **Memphis**, and we lived there until 1950 and then he was transferred to **Minnesota** and we lived there until 1960, and in 1960 he was transferred again to northern **Virginia**. We've been there ever since.

Q: And how many children do you have and how old are they?

A: I have three children. They range in age from 55 to 50.

Q: And how many grandchildren?

A: Only three.

Q: What did you tell your children or your grandchildren about your experiences in your childhood?

A: I saved some documents that I gave to each one of them, so they know why I'm here. The younger grandchildren know why grandma is in the **United States**, but they have not yet visited the museum. Their mother has been wanting to shield them, I think they're old enough now. But the others know what grandma is about. Q: Besides your work at the museum, are you affiliated with any survivor group or organization?

A: Not really. I was there, working for another volunteer group when they first

organized, back -- oh, it must be about 20 years ago. They had a -- the first convention at the convention center in **Washington**, it was brand new at the time. But other than that, just through the people that we have known over the years and the friends that I've made, fellow volunteers at the museum.

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Q: What work do you do at the Holocaust Museum?

A: I work in visitor service doing the various things that the people in red jackets are asked to do. Giving information, sending them up into the exhibit, sometimes walking around answering questions and so on. It's very gratifying, especially when visitors appreciate what you've done. In the past month I've had two letters sent to the museum from visitors, who -- they somehow got my name and wrote letters, thanking me for being kind to them.

Q: What do you think you personally bring to the museum in the work that you do there?

A: Well, of course the main thing I think the survivor volunteers bring is, if anyone has any doubts that this happened, we know better. A German lady came in not too long ago. She said, the more she went through that exhibit, the guiltier she felt because she was alive at that time and she did nothing. She -- she was tha -- I think she was sincere.

Q: Have you ever been back to **Germany**?

A: Yes. Not of my own volition. For many years -- for about 60 years, I refused to set foot in that place. Then, in 1995 a professor at **der Ruhr** University, which didn't exist when I lived there, managed to persuade the city fathers to bring back people from various parts of the world, those who were still alive, and bring them back for a reunion in **Bochum**. The -- the mayor was of a different party, and previous parties

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who were in charge of the city were not particularly interested, but this mayor said, okay, let's do it. So they began writing letters to those people that they could reach. One of the ways that they reached me is sort of interesting. **A**, one of the people that stayed in **Germany** had a sister who lived in ing -- in **Israel**. This woman was in touch with one of our school friends who lives in **Cape Town**. And when they started trying to locate people who had formerly lived in **Bochum**, she was telling one of her best friends about this. Well, this best friend is my cousin, who also lives in **Cape Town**. S-So through this long way around, they located me and wrote a letter. And I was very dubious about going, I hesitated many months. Then the professor and his wife were -- and son were on a trip to the **United States**, and he wrote and said, we're going to be in the **Washington** area. We'd like to meet you, we'd like to go to the museum, we hear tickets are very hard to come by. Well, he asked the right person. And we arranged for tickets for him. And then when he called, said he'd like to meet us, I was still skeptical, I thought, what kind of a Nazi could this be? But we decided to take a chance and we met him in town for dinner. And he turned out to be a most extraordinary person. So much so that we planted a tree in **Israel** in his honor. He is absolutely, unbelievably dedicated. And he kind of took the fear away of going, so we went in 1995. And there we met some people that I hadn't seen since we were children. They took us all around the city and showed us what was left, what was rebuilt, what isn't there any more. And since that time we've been in contact with

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these people. A year ago he and his wife came to the **States** and visited some of the former residents that they had met in past years, they went to various locations in the **States**. And next month a woman who lives in northern **Virginia** who didn't go on that first trip, although she had been to **Germany** several times, she is going to go by herself with a friend, she is now a widow. She is going to go and she will get more or less the same program that the rest of us had back in '95.

Q: How were you treated by the Germans, the average person, when you came back to visit?

A: Well, these people saw to it that we were treated royally. He was a professor and he had some -- and historian -- and he had some of his graduate students volunteering to escort us around. I referred to them as our babysitters. Anything we wanted to do, anywhere we wanted to go, in addition to the formal program that they had laid out for us. They couldn't have been nicer.

Q: How was it for you to be back in **Germany**? What was the feeling you had?

A: It's really indescribable. I didn't want to be there and yet I did, and I said th -- the **Shehecheyanu** to myself. Never thought I'd be there ever again, but they -- they made it so easy for us. And I had been totally afraid all those years and they -- they made it easy for us.

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

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A: Yes. I've been back twice. My husband worked there for three months shortly after we came to northern **Virginia**. At the time we couldn't afford to all go. And then, several years later, he gave a paper at a **U.N.** conference, dealing with the work that he had done before, and at that time we took all our children. And then one other time we went to an elder hostel in **Israel**. And at that time we met up with some of our old friends as well.

Q: Is there anything that we haven't mentioned that you would like to talk about before we conclude the interview today?

A: Only that I'm still finding out and learning things, both by keeping in touch with old friends and by working at the museum. One person leads to another. I was just sent a clipping from the German newspaper that dealt with the experiences of my school friend of **Germany** who now lives in **Cape Town**. In **Cape Town** they have just opened a Holocaust Museum. She escorted me through it the day before **Nelson Mandela** was to appear for the opening. We couldn't stay for that, but their focus is a little different, but wherever there is a museum -- and there are now many of them throughout the world, we have gone to see what they've got to teach the world.

Q: I thank you very much for speaking with us today and this concludes the **United States** Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with **Lore Schneider**.

End of Tape Two, Side A

Conclusion of Interview