

Let's go back a little bit. You were talking about standing in a field with people with guns. Can you repeat that to make sure we get all in?

Thousands of people, one next to the other, on a very cold night. I remember wearing lots of underpants, I can't count how many, and why that was, I don't know. We were not told. And we were surrounded by machine guns and were supposed to be shot, all of us, and then supposedly the word that, this is it. And then they canceled that. And I made it again.

So you actually have memories of that time?

Of that time standing there, yes, I could find my way around there and where that was here. And of course my grandmother, she passed in the concentration camp where the bread was delivered one day. And the dead people where the others, they were thrown in the water there. They were not buried. And my mother felt for the rest of her life, really bad. That was very hurtful to her.

So your grandmother died in the--

In the concentration camp.

In Theresienstadt.

That was my mom's mom, and my dad's mom died shortly before I was born.

But I'm just saying your grandmother died Theresienstadt.

In Theresienstadt, yes. Her name was [? Phillipina ?] Goodman.

OK. What about clothes, did you have enough warm clothes

No, whatever they gave us, whether it was mine or not necessarily, whatever these people gave us. We became this nothing, no suitcases, no anything, no warm clothes, whatever they want. I did have some mumps while there. And I do remember my neck being swollen, and they put some brown smelly cream on me which did not seem to help. And then they put me on a table, not in a hospital, there was not such a thing there.

On the table, and they cut, to make a cut, then you could-- quite a cut, several inches on the side of my neck, and whatever, and that took care of, remedied the situation. And what's the sedation, or what it was, I do not-- I was all by myself. Whatever they done then-- what could we say? Being dumb, uneducated, and whatever was done to us, whether you were young or old, you had to submit to. No choice.

So do you remember talking to the other children at all?

I'm sure I did. I was shy by nature in that situation. Being away from my family, and was a little spoiled, being an only child.

Right.

My mom said when I came to visit her I would put my hands and fingers into her neck to be with her, but she had to leave, she couldn't stay. I'm sure I was affected by that. Growing up, I was pretty reserved and shy for quite some time. It has worn off after the years, thank goodness.

Were you as a strong child, physically, or were you delicate? How would you describe yourself at that age?

No. I was, I remember after the war being not a very strong child, plagued by colds very much, and put under X-ray

machines for my swollen tonsils repeatedly afterwards. And now, of course, I am very much aware, not more than absolutely necessary. I had enough of it. That was a very in them days of finding out, and they did not, of course, know the harmful effects which were much more harmful, the X-rays [INAUDIBLE] than they are today.

So what other memories do you have of Theresienstadt that you can talk about?

Then when they came to visit, the SS people and the head person-- Rahm supposedly was his name-- he would come and there was a nice children's playground which we never got to play with. But he went there. It's a gate. It was the entrance to the town.

And then he came in and said-- Uncle Rahm was his name. We have to eat again sardines. Well, we never got sardines. It was just something they told us to do when the camp was inspected. But other than hanging around from day-to-day and having no knowledge of anything, it just passed by-- and being really happy when I could see my parents.

Right. Do you remember snow, with the bad weather times at all?

I did. I do. Many of my memories, and this I'm sure has to do that, you kind of want to shut down--

Yes, yes.

Things that are not very pleasant. I think that has a lot to do it. But of course after the war I had really vivid memories.

Well, we can talk about that later.

So what happened there, it's not, but when it was over, on our way home, it was on buses--

Let's get to that in a minute. I just want to talk a little more about Theresienstadt, about if you have any other memories, any other incidents that happened while you were there?

Nothing's a [INAUDIBLE] test. Not eventful or anything, but just being--

For three years.

Exactly according to my mom, 32 months. Of course no holiday, a birthday celebration, or anything, the days went by one like the next.

Do you remember the Red Cross coming to visit?

No, no knowledge of that, nor did I hear that from my parents. No.

Do you remember what state your mother was in, or your father, when they would come to visit you? Were they very emotional or were more reserved? Or do you have any memories?

They were very happy to see me, having me only, it means even more. One child, and then my dad was on in years. My mom and dad were married 14 years till they were lucky enough to have me.

Oh my!

So my dad was about 50, 51 and my mom 36.

When you were born?

When I was born. Because they were married for about 14 years before I was born, couldn't have any children, nothing was done. It finally happened. But of course they wanted children, but that's how it was and the age difference is

because my dad was married to my mom's sister for seven years.

You said that.

And then he was in the family and stayed in the family. And my mom was a good-looking woman. And so that's how that happened. So what I wanted to bring up is my dad. He was [INAUDIBLE] perhaps at that age when people are more mature, children even more meaningful than when you are young and especially after they had been through all that, it means much more.

You had said you had said that he did not want to talk about what he had been through.

After the war, not in my presence. Not in my presence. My mom didn't say anything about that. But my dad did not want them, my mom and dad together, or others to talk. But he couldn't force others but together, no mention about that time at all.

Do you know what he did in Theresienstadt? Your mother was in the children's home.

If he do, and he didn't do and--

He wasn't well.

He walked on a cane. He was a little humped over for the pain which increasingly got worse and worse. He finally was, after the war, confined to a wheelchair. And we get to that after, how that situation--

Is there anything else you wanted to say about being in Theresienstadt that you haven't mentioned yet?

If you want to [INAUDIBLE] a time in the camp, it was really not eventful. We were separated, living from day to day. Nothing happened. As I said the dangers of it, my parents knew about more than I did and my father as they said they're selling their wedding bands and giving all the money to save me a little luck plate invisible also then I was not taken to the gas chambers. When they first wanted to.

When you left Frankfurt to go to Theresienstadt, do you know if you took anything special with you? You were very young. You were five. Any toys or anything like that?

Not that I remember. Of course you were limited. We had to leave already in [PLACE NAME] inside everything when we went to Frankfurt. We always had to leave everything. We couldn't sell or do anything.

So you didn't have a special toy or anything with you?

Not that I remember that. Only I do remember the Italian bread. They called it [INAUDIBLE], which is the smoked sausage that doesn't need refrigeration. It was very fatty, and the taste of it, the salt, and the spices. I seemed to like it so I would tell my mother, I don't like the apartment but I do like the food here. So that is something I liked for a few days, they still had that. And of course, they take it from me.

So aside from the mumps that you had, your health was with was pretty good in Theresienstadt?

Well, a few colds, but nothing that stands out. I was malnourished, of course. But I did no activity, no nothing, just an existence [INAUDIBLE].

Do you remember feeling hungry all the time?

No, I was never hungry. I never wanted to eat. That was not my favorite pastime.

And did you see people who were dead? Did you ever--

About my mom, after told me that the dead people, 120 on the attic. They were kept there for a while next us till finally removed them. And my grandmother was put on the wagon where they transported bread on, to be thrown in the river. But this is stories I have heard. I was too young.

Too young.

And especially since I lacked the education and all that. I wasn't aware of any of these.

Let's now move on to the next chapter, which is how did you know that you were going to be leaving Theresienstadt? What was the next big change for you?

Well, I was not-- I did what I was told to do, and along with my parents on a big bus we left [PLACE NAME] to Frankfurt.

So what did that mean to an eight-- you're now eight years old, right?

Right.

What did what did that mean to you? You were back with your parents.

I was back with my parents, which was very important, of course.

Absolutely.

And upon arriving there, I do vaguely remember-- I think Kolb was his name-- K-O-L-B, if I remember right. He was the mayor of Frankfurt, and he treated the bus of survivors somewhere there with tulips, a bunch of tulips. And my mom came back. She didn't have a pair of underpants to wear under her dress [INAUDIBLE] And we were fed and taken care of. We were then taken--

Do you know what month you left Theresienstadt in '45?

No. I don't want to just take a wild guess, but I cannot tell you that.

OK, so now you're in Frankfurt.

Now we were in Frankfurt. For how long? A short time. Whether it was days or weeks, I do not know. We were transported to [? Kurtbaden, ?] which was a hospital with different things like schools, the empty one being for the Holocaust survivors. And they housed us there for 10 months. It was part of the hospital because they didn't know what to do with us. I was frequently with sickness, plagued by colds, especially the tonsils, and as I mentioned before, the X-rays and all that. And I was finally free and could go outside. And the people there, talking, and on holidays, trying to make it a little festive and all that.

So after the 10 months we went back to Frankfurt and they made available a wing that was a hospital before the war, was mostly destroyed but a half of a round building was made available for all the survivors. And I go up there, it was called an old people's home, translated. It was in [? Stagenstrasse ?] even, what's her name, not Susan, the other lady that was a pediatrician, that is friends with Susan-- Ilsa Nussbaum. They came from [PLACE NAME], too. She came to visit us.

And we stayed there till I almost left for the United States. We were fed there. The government supported us. We had no money and all the other people were on in years and it was called an old age home, translated.

I grew up with people 80 years old. I was the youngest there, the only one. I learned to play craps from them, and learned of mood swings and what makes people tick. And I learned a lot. I went into school.

I was going to ask, when did you start school? When did you first start schooling?

Approximately the age 8 and a half years when I learned to write my name and all that. And I did not have anything to put my books, nor did I have a pencil. So it was given to me, it was a pocket book really, and not suited to the school but that's all I had. Then somebody was nice enough to give me a pencil because we had no money, and so we couldn't go to the store and do anything.

And we were living there in one room, my parents and me. And the exterminator had to come frequently, because there was bedbugs in there. And they took care of us. But I went to school. The adjustment was not that easy, but reluctantly I made it.

At home I was happy even without these things because I felt always cared for and loved. But after several years in school, my parents were wise enough to realize that it was possible to send me to a private school. The schools were pretty much destroyed during the war. A private school with less children in the class. And so I could get a better education and I was always older than the others.

They started school at the age of six. I was able to go with a little money we had saved to send me to a private school, which one they had to pay for of course. And I was very happy there. I did really well.

Was it nearby?

No, I had to take what's called a Straßenbahn. It's not a subway, but it's above ground, streetcar. I had to change in the middle of the town. It took me about a half an hour to get there.

This is still in Frankfurt?

In Frankfurt, it was a private all girls school. And I made good progress. I was happy. I was a good student. I jumped twice over classes because I was always the oldest due to circumstances. And I did graduate number one in my class.

Were the other students Jewish students?

No. I was the only Jewish person there. No Jewish students. First of all, the Jewish people were all killed supposedly, according to my mom. I mean you must know that better. I am probably the-- or one of the youngest survivors from the concentration camp. And supposedly one of five families where mother and children that came out of a concentration camp without losing any one of the close family members.

And the people there help me in the beginning with homework and all that. My parents were-- my father's condition got worse, of course, that he had to go be in a wheelchair. But the surroundings I grew up in are not the norm. But remarkably at that time and even today I do not feel deprived because I was loved and cared for and had experiences, and all that adds up to making me as the person I am today, which is the great understanding of people. You name it, hardships or everything. I was very, very poor, and I was well-to-do, so I can identify with both.

And the most important thing in life is what people do to each other, that they don't care enough. My values at different than the norm as shaped by all my experiences, and of course I have a special soft spot for the elderly. I feel that the younger people get all the attention needed and the elderly, they have done their job, and often are left alone, lonesome, and deserve more attention than they are given. And I've stood today, even a few days ago, stand up when I see something is not right and could be a change to make an older person happy.

So as I said, I don't need anyone to feel sorry for me and I have not spoken up for all these years. Even my close friends didn't know about my past. But what may be my husband's parents would say that I was in the concentration camp. I would never even mention that because I did not have the need that anyone feels sorry for me or refers to me as a concentration camp survivor or anything. I just want to be treated like any one else. No special attention required.

Can we get back to your story about going to school with non-Jewish children back in Frankfurt? Did any of them ever ask you about your background? Did you become friends with them?

Yes, except one incident once happened in the private school of girls, they told a girlfriend of mine about that dirty, dirty Jew and she told it back to me. I told my mom. She went to school and my mom was really upset. And it was found out that the parents of that girl were in the Nazi party. And the girl was much too young to form an opinion, but heard this from her family at home, and they took a disciplinary action.

Did you experience any other antisemitic incidents?

No, only when I would travel in the streetcar, and of course people didn't know who I was, and would now and then make comments. And when I was finished, this school, I wanted to become a nurse, and there was the hospital that was a gift from-- it started before the war on Jewish people. And I wanted to be admitted to the Nursing class there. So I went there. I was accepted. In them days, a long time ago, you had to fill out your religion. I don't think that's the case here today.

Now, what year are we talking about?

We are talking about the mid-1950's. I went there with my mom, filled out the paper, what was required, but it said also religion. And of course they wouldn't let me fill out papers if the place was full. As soon as we got home, there was a phone call. And we didn't have a phone of our own. We used the phone number of a neighbor because we couldn't afford the telephone.

And was a phone call saying they could not accept me because the class was filled. It was not full. We could put one and one together. Because of my religion.

So when I was still in my mid-teens, my mom did have the foresight, it would be a good idea to apply to go to the United States, which I-- although I'm independent, can go during the day wherever, but I do need a home when at night with my family. So I really didn't [? pull ?] much, but she said, well, you can just put the application in. That does not mean that you have to go. So I did what she told me. And it took several-- talking now about that legal and illegal immigration, took several years.

And when I was finished school, I realized that there was-- and applying and being denied there for a job, and what I heard, laughing when people didn't know who I was-- there was still a good amount of antisemitism there. And the future, not too many Jewish people there, and the future is really not--

And my parents were open to me marrying somebody that is not Jewish. As long as they-- even so my dad would keep the holidays and on Yom Kippur wouldn't eat, no matter what his health was. He would-- till the day he died, he wouldn't do that. And also in the concentration camp, he or afterwards, he would rather go hungry than eat something you shouldn't eat. But he wanted me to have somebody. He didn't say Jewish or not Jewish, somebody that treats me good, that was the main thing. He could be poor, but somebody that's good to me.

So I figured there is no future for me there, and I figured I will take a chance. I had an aunt and uncle, my dad's sister, and her husband, and other relatives. They were in California, but my dad's sister and her husband, who lost a child in a car accident, were in New York. And I think if I go there and my dad said, if things don't work out, I can always come back.

So I figure, that is not a bad idea. I'm going to do that. So I turned 19. The boat was the SS United States it just had a write-up. It is done now, the ship. I came over with this ship, tourist class, and Margaret Truman was on that ship.

I'm sorry, what was the name of the ship?

The SS United States.

Oh, SS.

[INAUDIBLE] to find investors to-- there was a big write-up in the Harford-- in the local paper about it. And I saw it on the news and all that, it's now in Philadelphia. It was a luxury ship, it was only a few years old. Lightweight, we went into a storm. I was quite sick. And I said, no more [INAUDIBLE].

You're now 19 years old, right?

I turned 19 on the ship.

So this is 1956?

This is 1956. That is correct. And I came here the 4th of July.

What did the United States mean to you as a 19-year-old?

As a 19-year-old, freedom like I have never experienced before, and achieving my dream and being able to do what one wants to do as long as you don't hurt somebody else, and having a life like you couldn't have in Germany. People being much, much different, not resenting people from other cultures, since this was a melting pot of many, the United States, which Germany isn't.

Even some years ago visiting, anybody that's different from them they kind of-- I don't think that's a way to celebrate, to live, only their way. And yeah, I felt total freedom doing what whatever I can achieve without--

Did you know any English?

Yes, I took English in school. I was good at it. In writing and speaking, maybe better than today because we spoke only German with my husband's parents. Even so, they could speak English and so did my husband. So yes I spoke English, French, and German. I was fluent in reading, speaking, and writing, when I came to the United States.

So who met you when you arrived?

My aunt and uncle, which is my dad's sister and her husband, and a boyfriend that was a Jewish guy that was in the military in Germany. I met him in synagogue there, and we were friends and corresponded. And he picked me up, with my aunt and uncle, when I arrived. And another boy and I still know his name, and another boyfriend, also in the military, Jewish man, he bought me to the boat in France in Le Havre, when I left on the boat to the United States. And of course one didn't know from the other. It was the best, that's the platonic friendship nothing else between all of these.

Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

Absolutely, yes. It meant ultimate freedom to me. And I worked across the Statue of Liberty in New York, near Wall Street, for two years I saw it for my window every single day. I know the meaning, the gift from France, and it is something else.

So you stayed in New York City in the beginning?

I stayed in New York. I lived a few weeks with my aunt and uncle. They had a one bedroom apartment. They had a pullout bed that they bought in the living room, a small place in Washington Heights.

And then I rented a room from neighbors in the next building. I ate and lived with my aunt and uncle, but I had my home and my clothes over there because their place was really, really very small. It was a disappointment that I couldn't stay, but now after, when I was more mature, I understood that they didn't have room. And they did everything possible to make me feel comfortable. And we good to each other.

Did you go to school, or go to work?

I went to night school, and I went to work. I worked at Associated Metals and Minerals, 75 West Street down near Wall Street. I took the IRT and the subway every day to make it to work. And they wanted to keep me there after I got married.

So when did you get married?

I got married after I was two years in the country. I could have gotten married before, but it wasn't what I wanted. And I was still very young and there was no need for it.

So this is 1958?

I was married in '58. That is correct. I was married on June 22, 1958, and it so turned out that my husband's family and my family knew each other from Germany.

How did you meet your husband?

He did not know that before. And I had my mother, my dad in '57. September the 13th of '57 my dad died

How did you meet your husband?

On a blind date. When my dad died, a mutual relative of my aunt and uncle, and also of my husband, came to pay their respects to my aunt and uncle, and I was there. And she said she heard of a relative in Connecticut, and if I would go out with him.

And so he came, weather permitting. It was winter time. Due to a snow storm, we had to postpone it. And we met I believe it was in February of '58, and in April we became engaged, and on June 22 we were married.

And I had my mom come over this country on a permanent visa, but she decided this lifestyle was not for her, not speaking the language and being used to disciplined life, and having persons there. And now that I'm married, she decided one day after we came back from the honeymoon that she is going back to Germany, which she did.

Was your husband a survivor also?

My husband was born in Bad Kissingen in Germany. He came here when he was five years old. He came to New York, which is why he had no accent.

What year was that he came over?

He was born in '37. No, he came over in '37. He was born in '32. I was just a little thing then when he came over to this country at the age of five.

So you moved to Connecticut after you got married?

Yes, because my husband lived in Connecticut.

Did you work, or what did you do in Connecticut?

No, I helped, and I was a homemaker. I would have liked that, but my husband did not want me to work. He was used to old-fashioned ways. He said, I can support a wife and a family. And he was five years older than I was.

What kind of work did he do?

He had an-- you're not from around here. They had a farm. His dad bought a farm when they came from New York here. My husband worked on-- he didn't do the work, they had hired help. They had cattle, and they went to auctions, and bought them, and sold them to farmers, and milked them in between. And they had hired help for that.

So you lived out in the country then?

Yes, it was right outside Hartford in Bloomfield, the town I live in now.

Do you have any children?

Yes, I have one. I miscarried a little boy that was totally formed, was only four months old and stillborn. And then we had our only living son, who is now 56 years old. He is old. He went to UConn in Storrs. Then he went to Case Western in Ohio, and he stayed there and became an attorney.

Can I ask you, do you have any grandchildren?

Yes.

Wonderful.

I have two grandchildren. A granddaughter, she's 28. She manages a ski resort in Colorado. And I have a grandson whose wedding I attended over Labor Day. He's 30 years old, and he lives in Cleveland, Ohio.

Can we now talk about some of your thoughts? Are you more comfortable around other people who are survivors than people who didn't go through what you went through, or does it not make a difference?

It doesn't make a difference. In fact, I'd rather be around people that are not survivors, because I don't want to identify as just part. Everybody has different experiences. We all have a suitcase, and I-- this is not what I want to be known for, talk about, this is just a part of-- everybody has something else happen to them, and I'm much more comfortable about people that are not survivors than people who are, because I find they want to talk about this and that.

And I really don't want it. It's like rubbing on a wound, and I feel more comfortable not talking about that, just letting it be, like losing my husband to Lou Gehrig's Disease and all this. This is part of me and who I am, but it is not-- in a social situation, this is not what I like to focus on. I like to talk about other things that are of interest to everybody.

So when you meet people and they ask you about your background, what--

It sometimes comes because of my accent. It depends how close I want to know them. I will put them off or walk away if I can, if I feel it's just a casual situation, and I really don't like to dig into this. It's not what I want to do with anybody. I don't feel comfortable unless I'm in a close friendship or relationship. I do not like to talk about these things.

You said your father didn't want to talk about, let's say, the Kristallnacht.

And as a result, I didn't do that to my son either, because I figured a life presents enough hardship, and you want a happy, happy life. You have to know the bad in order to appreciate the good. I understand that. But to overdo it with miseries-- I didn't. I did the same thing my dad did to me. Very little-- never talked about it when he was growing up.

I don't try to dwell about it. It's something that happened. I cannot change it. He could not change it, and there is more to life. Life goes on.

I feel, whatever life presents me, I do my best to improve it, remedy it. And after I've done it, all I have to let go and move on. I can't change anything.

How would you describe yourself? German, Jewish, American? What would you describe yourself as? Do you feel

German?

No, absolutely not, no way. I would describe myself as an American Jew. That would describe myself best.

What are your thoughts about Germany?

That there are good and bad people in the world, and these things would not happen if the majority would be good people. Even so, there are good people, and we owe them a lot, and I'm personally friendly with them. Still have some that are still alive. But the majority is not good. These people I was visiting with my husband, and I heard them comment about people from other countries that look different than they are. It is difficult for that society to accept people that are different than they are.

Here, our makeup is the melting pot from all countries. Maybe that has something to do with this. Other countries are more where only the majority is of their own background. And they are very narrow-minded and all that, and it is not my cup of tea.

You have been back to Germany.

I have been back to Germany. I don't discuss any of these things with them. I know who they are and want no part of it.

Why did you go back to Germany?

Because, first of all, to my mom's funeral. I've never been for pleasure, to spend my money there, or about [? striking ?] out after reunification. The property was in the Russian-occupied zone. But what I forgot to mention is that, when I finally-- with attorneys, of course, and proving that I was the heir, and the only child, and all that, got the property back. It took a long time. They still owe me money, for now I would say 65, 70 years. They do not deny that when I was there.

From a then 16-room house, they put it into three, four apartments, and the town collects the money. They had to give me my-- after reunification, they had to give me my property back in my name. It could not be changed after my parents passed, but it was Russian zone. But after that, with the help from attorney, I was able to.

But there is no law saying, for all the years they collected the rent, that they have to pay that back to me. And since my husband could speak German, but more dialect and not in writing, and it was up to me, and the family, and be here to take care of my husband's parents who could not drive a car, were dependent on us taking care of them-- since there was no law and no need to fight anymore-- even so, I consider myself a little fighter-- but I did not want to carry on, because it would be pretty useless wasting more time, harping on these things that I cannot change. So they still owe me the rent. They don't deny it, but since there is no law saying that they have to give it back to me.

Do you get reparations?

Yes, I do.

And how do you feel about that?

I feel I am absolutely deserving. You cannot make it up. The reparations cannot give back what they've taken away. It is just a token.

It's not enough, and it is deserving money, and what can I say. It's not a substitute for if that wouldn't have been. I would have had the other way around.

Do you think you would be a different person today if you hadn't gone through, in your childhood, what you did?

Absolutely, yes, because I know I'm very different than most people because of it. Because we are formed, not only by our genes, but a lot of our life experiences that make us who we are today.

So how would you be different? What do you think?

I would be not as compassionate, understanding, and have very different values. Probably not better. I think these are better, whatever, family, education, being considerate those of others, not being judgemental, and all these things and part of my experiences that made me who I am. And I think, and very important, I was never short cut the time together of love for my family. The value of family and love was very important, and still is.

It's important to me, not material things or any of that. Good health and happiness and financial rewards are two completely different things. And one thing I'm not looking for and don't need is means any pity. I find that survivors dwell too much on some of that, that they should. I don't want to be treated different than just a normal person. What I am I don't want any [INAUDIBLE] nothing I also am very caring and compassionate, but I'm also strong enough to know that self-pity has no value.

Are there any sounds or sights or smells that just trigger memories of your childhood?

Well, whenever they come-- my mind is usually either that I do something, all these thoughts I keep my mind occupied. But when it comes to the suffering that mainly my dad and my husband experienced, it is unreal and difficult to understand, especially in my dad's case. Why people do that to each other, the hatefulness for people, that one is jealous and the other one has something more or better, that they worked for, because they stress education, and therefore could allow to live at a higher standard of living than others.

Why these things happen? And I don't believe we ever can change that. It's a really unfortunate.

Did you ever did you ever get more schooling?

I would have gotten more schooling, absolutely. What I have I was told amounts to two years of college. The private girls' school I attended was what would qualify me to go wherever I want to go there.

They have a different school system in Germany. There are three levels-- at the time. I don't know what it is today. If you want to just be a regular worker, a school system to go, which is elementary school all the way through. Then a middle school if you want to be a secretary, and I attended where you can go to the university. And I was able to do that, and I did have the grades to do that.

Have you ever worked in the United States?

Yes, I worked in New York.

Oh, right, in the beginning. And then after you got married?

No, my husband did not want me to go to work. I was offered a job that I will regret not have taken as long as I live as the years ahead. It's at Hartford Hospital in Hartford, Connecticut. A Jewish man by the name of Monroe [? Himmelstein-- ?] he came from a farm. His father died unexpectedly early, too. He became a top-notch surgeon.

He operated on my husband for peritonitis. My husband almost died from it. And he operated, and we talked frequently together, and my husband was three weeks in the hospital. And during that time, my mother-in-law was with Alzheimer's in a convalescent home, and my husband's dad was in another hospital with pneumonia. And I was left with 30 cows and 20 cats.

And we talked frequently about different things. And he said, I would like you to come and work for me. And this would be the job of my dreams.

My son was gone, and I could have done it, but my husband didn't want to. So when I turned him down, he went to my husband and said, you know, I would like your wife to work for me in my office. And I told him at the time that I was in

that trained, and he said he knew that I could do the job. And my husband turned him down and said, I need her more than you do.

My husband came home from peritonitis, and three weeks, and no food, no IV, and having a couple of feet of intestine lost, with an open belly that needed attention by a nurse every day. And they wanted to send free of charge, of course, from the insurance company, the hospital that the nurse comes here daily till that is healed. When Doctor Himmelstein came and heard it he said, there's no nurse coming. Sharon can do that on her own.

It was rather scary to expect me to take care of this open wound, cutting through the belly button to let the pus come out and cleaned out daily. So, I did it. It was scary, but I did it. And it healed up nicely. But my husband didn't want me to take the job. He said, I need you. And he told the doctor, I need her more than you'll need her. But that was something up my alley.

What were your thoughts during the Eichmann trial? Do you remember?

I didn't have that much time to give it the proper attention I would today. Between the business, and the family, and with my husband's parents, and my own mom, I cannot give you any opinion on that, because my priority was my devotion, total devotion to my family before I [INAUDIBLE]. And so only after everybody unfortunately was gone did I spend time--

What year did your husband pass away?

My husband passed away nine and a half years ago after being diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease, unexpectedly. His lab work was perfect, and all of a sudden, he got that disease. I knew there was something like that. I did not know how it was called, and how it was. And [INAUDIBLE] here are the papers after all the information.

I offered to still go to Israel and see if they could help us, but he said he wouldn't. And of course, they couldn't take care of that. This is something where there is no cure for at this point. And even after I contacted so many people and was told not enough people-- too many, but not enough have it, so enough now the [INAUDIBLE] backwards and ordered.

Not enough money is put into the research. Why that happens? Supposedly most people that were in Vietnam exposed to Agent Orange, which he was not. Why he got suddenly and in hindsight after we got married, shortly after, there were signs which were never recognized and excused with this and that. And even if he has gone a few years before, the signs are not recognized. I talked to other people that had that in the family, and we all had the same experience. At [? Baxter ?] that stuff if it does not have first hand experience.

It cannot be diagnosed. There's no tests or anything. Only people that have been unfortunately been through it once can say, hey, this might be the culprit of it.

It is still a ways to go. It is a very miserable disease where your mind stays, and your body shrinks away. And we have to accept it, and I cannot. Whether it is my dad or my husband, the suffering-- that is the worst about losing somebody, is the suffering these people go through. That is immensely scary. And when these thoughts come, I have to keep doing something else.

I still have a chair that we bought where my husband had to sleep on in my living room. It's like, no, I cannot sit on this chair. Even so it's the most comfortable because it brings-- like a movie, the memories come back, what happened there. Or, say, with my dad, any of this if something mentions, I don't want to be reminded. It's part of me, and I try to keep right away occupy myself and get different thoughts if these things cross my mind, which they certainly do.

So I try to stay away from it and don't want to talk to people. Don't try to have my friends, because they make me sad. Even here, people from the concentration camp, they say a sad [INAUDIBLE], and I don't want to be part of this. It's part of me, and I have to make the best of it because it's past. And I did my duty to the best of my ability, and that's all I can do. And to make things worse by dwelling on it doesn't serve any purpose.

Before we end, is there anything you would like to add that you haven't mentioned?

Suffering after the war, I don't think it is understood properly, for all people after that, that have been in the concentration camp, that it did not end. Heaven did not open. Life was very, very difficult.

Being three years in the concentration camp is one thing. Afterward, growing up an old people's home, and I am again now living in a very nice, even luxurious retirement home, but with old people again. This is my second chance. Yes, I am more understanding toward these people, but for me to have to go through that again is, at times, a bitter pill to swallow. But it is something, having lost all my family.

Did you lose any other extended family that you know of besides your immediate?

Well, my cousins, they are all gone. Most of my aunts, and uncles, and cousins-- they perished in the concentration camp. And the others, due to my parents' age and circumstances, they were all about 15, 16 years older than I am. And I am 78 now, and they have all passed. I have nobody any more except this son and the two grandchildren.

And my son turned religious. He is an educated religious man. But he was left without any conscience or heart, shall I say? And the grandchildren, except my grandson, they're not much different. They're good people, but they have different values.

And I hear from my granddaughter rarely, not even for the holidays. And my son, now and then. And that is something. When I was in New York, I would write to my parents twice a week, letters. It's a different generation, maybe.

I hear complaints from others, too. Maybe I'm a little less fortunate in that respect. I tried my best, and that is all I can do. And to do justice to my dear husband, I would like to say he was suffering in the [INAUDIBLE] a home and hospital, on the hospital wing for over a half a year, dying from Lou Gehrig's. My son never once came to visit him, never once, and not a phone call either. And it's a hard pill to swallow, but I do not talk about these things. Only one or two of my close friends know about it, because it is what it is.

Do you think the world has learned anything from the Holocaust?

People seem to forget too fast. I really don't think so, otherwise things that are going on today would not be happening. And I don't think it is relevant. If you can't change it, it's very sad. Netanyahu is coming here now, visiting with our president. And I hope things-- for some reason, they don't see eye to eye. And I was hoping that a person of a minority like President Obama would be more understanding toward our situation, but it did not turn out to be that way.

I am all in favor of Israel, but not to the point that I want to spend my life there. I was and visited Israel for three weeks with a group, with my husband, was very impressed, but I choose to live in this country. But I'm also very much in favor of Israel being treated the way we deserve to be treated. And it is, after all, our strongest ally in the region and hasn't gotten the attention that I think we deserve.

And the Jewish people still seem to think President Obama is doing the right thing by voting for him. And I think it is important that we see that Israel remains strong. And that they can have a life of peace, and not live under the threat of the same thing or even worse happening again.

Well, that's an important note to end on. I want to thank for doing this interview. And I just want to say just a closing sentence-- that this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Charlotte Schiff.

Again, I thank you so much.

You're quite welcome.

And I hope I answered a good part of your questions to the best of my ability. And for your own information I cannot stress enough how important the times. [INAUDIBLE]

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