

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**  
**RG-50.106\*0258**

## PREFACE

The following interview is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The reader should bear in mind that this is a verbatim transcript of spoken, rather than written prose. This transcript has been neither checked for spelling nor verified for accuracy, and therefore, it is possible that there are errors. As a result, nothing should be quoted or used from this transcript without first checking it against the taped interview.

## **GRETE HIRSCH**

### **July 4, 2016**

Gail Schwartz: The following is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Grete Hirsh. It is being conducted by Gail Schwartz on July 4, 2016 and is taking place in Chevy Chase, Maryland. This is track number one. Please tell me your full name.

Grete Hirsch: Grete Hirsch.

Q: And where were you born?

A: In Stuttgart, Germany.

Q: When were you born?

A: On 24<sup>th</sup> of December, 1921.

Q: Let's talk about the members of your family. Your parents' names?

A: My father was called Otto. My mother was called Martha.

Q: Did you have siblings?

A: I had, have a sister. She is called Ursula and I have a brother. He is called Hans.

Q: Where are you in the line of ages? Are you –

A: I'm the middle one.

Q: You're the middle, ok. Let's talk a little bit about your family's background. How long were they in Stuttgart. How long had they lived there?

## Interview with Grete Hirsch July 4, 2016

A: Always til they were thrown out and then lived in Berlin.

Q: Before that. Like grandparents and how many generations back.

A: I don't know. Very long. All my generations were born in south Germany.

Q: Tell me a little bit about your parents. What work did your father do? What did he do?

A: He was a **restenbahn** [ph], a lawyer.

Q: And his relationship with the Jewish community was –

A: Became better and better because he became more Jewish.

Q: When you say became more Jewish, what do you mean by that?

A: He was always Jewish but you know when we were first born, it meant nothing. You were Jewish. You were German. And then you became very Jewish. You were always Jewish but you didn't talk about that. You know who did that, who made that possible. I'm serious now.

Q: This is a conversation not between you and me.

A: Hitler.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: Before Hitler it wasn't important.

Q: Right, right. So he was a lawyer. Was he a lawyer for the government?

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

A: Yes.

Q: Do you know in what department or –

A: Yes, it's called **Neckar**, you know what Neckar is, the very famous river in Germany. It's the Neckar arcade, very famous place.

Q: So he handled legal issues?

A: Right.

Q: Did your mother work?

A: No, no mother worked. They all worked, but not for money. You know that don't you?

Q: She stayed home. How much education did she have, your mother? Do you know?

A: Increasingly more as more became possible. These are impossible questions because we live in times where education has become very important. And people are being educated now who had no chance of being educated before. So these are not very good questions. I don't mean that you don't ask good questions, but they are simply, they don't make much sense.

Q: They don't apply yes. Tell me about your siblings.

A: Well my brother moved to America and became well known here, fairly well known. My sister stayed in England with me. She's no longer alive now but she's –

Q: Let's talk a little bit about your childhood. Your schooling. What kind of elementary school did you go to?

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

A: Very good schools. I don't know how to describe them.

Q: Were there Jewish and non-Jewish children?

A: No.

Q: Just Jewish students.

A: No, general, general education. Not just Jewish.

Q: So it was Jewish and non-Jewish students.

A: Right.

Q: So you went through?

A: Such a thing didn't exist in Germany. Your question that simply didn't exist. You were German, period. Like you are American now. No, really seriously.

Q: Yes, I understand. So you went to school. What other interests did you have? Did you have any other hobbies or –

A: Yeah, I'm a musician.

Q: A musician. What instrument?

A: Violin.

Q: Violin? So you played that as a child.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

A: Always.

Q: Wonderful.

A: Do you play an instrument?

Q: Yeah. This is more a conversation, not a conversation between you and me. It's more my finding out about you. Ok? So you said you played the violin. Were you interested in sports?

A: What?

Q: Were you interested in sports?

A: Not particularly. We all had to do a certain amount of sports. It wasn't a matter of whether you were interested. You had to do sports when I was young.

Q: Which sports did you do?

A: You just had to do sports. There was no subdivision. You had to do sports. You are asking questions that are so modern that nobody would have known then. I'm sorry. I'm not blaming you. I'm just telling you. It didn't make sense. They did sports.

Q: Like tennis and swimming?

A: Yeah, whatever, whatever was offered you did.

Q: Did you have German friends who were not Jewish?

A: Yes, of course.

## **Interview with Grete Hirsch** **July 4, 2016**

Q: And you had good relationships?

A: Of course.

Q: Can you describe the house that you lived in when you were young?

A: Beautiful house.

Q: It was a single house?

A: No it was a double house with my cousin. Built for the two of them, for two brothers, my father and his brother. And we grew up like that.

Q: What was the address? Do you remember the address?

A: Yes. Oh my god. It would be very funny if I didn't. All I remember is the American address right now.

Q: That's ok. Religiously when you were young, did you observe holidays, Jewish holidays? No?

A: Well it depends whom you ask. You ask my brother, he will say yes. If you ask me, no.

Q: Did you observe Passover at all?

A: Once in a while, we, I think we fasted on Passover. Nothing that I knew much of. My Jewish education started when Hitler came. It's not a very good thing to say but it's true.

Q: Yeah.

A: You've heard that before, I'm sure.



**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

Q: Yes. What language did you speak at home?

A: What do you think?

Q: Ok, you spoke German obviously.

A: **Swabish**, not German. **Swabian**, very Swabian. It was called Swabian.

Q: And so things, would you describe yourself as an independent child? Were you very –

A: Very independent.

Q: You would go out and do things on your own. Like what?

A: Anything that was possible to do, we would do.

Q: Before Hitler came into power, did you experience any anti-Semitism?

A: Well you know it came gradually and you must know a little bit about that. It didn't come from Monday to Tuesday. All the things were very gradual developments and in Berlin more than Stuttgart and we eventually moved from Stuttgart to Berlin and I stayed in Stuttgart a little longer. You can't, you can't do it like that. It doesn't work like that.

Q: When did you, did you say you moved or your whole family moved to Berlin?

A: My family moved to Berlin.

Q: In what year? When was that? You don't know, ok.

A: Hans would know, he would know. I moved later. I stayed in Stuttgart with my aunt.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

Q: How old were you then? You were a teenager?

A: Yes.

Q: Why did you stay?

A: Because I wanted to. I went to a wonderful school.

Q: This was a high school level.

A: It's what you call high school. It wasn't called high school.

Q: Gymnasium.

A: Yeah. You didn't have Jewish holidays like we do here now.

Q: You stayed by yourself with your aunt, while the rest of your family went to Berlin.

A: Right.

Q: How long did you stay with your aunt? Or when did you go –

A: These are not definite dates. This is changeable dates from month to month. It changed, sometimes longer. Some months, not longer. Eventually I had to go to Berlin. I didn't like to but I had to. And then I had to go to a Jewish school, which I also didn't want to do it but I had to. But that's when things changed.

Q: Let's talk about when things changed. Let's talk.

A: When they became Jewish. They were always Jewish but we didn't know it.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

Q: How did that make you feel as a teenager? Was it uncomfortable or –

A: No, it. I don't know how much you know. This is a very gradual development. When you would find out you have blond hair. You don't know that other people have blond hair and suddenly you realized that you are not alone. Or you are tall and you didn't know you were tall. These are things you gradually find out. They don't have definite answers and if they have definite answers and they try to do that, they're all wrong. Because they are more correct. It was a very gradual development. So I don't give you a hard time but that's how it was.

Q: It's very interesting what you're saying.

A: This didn't happen from Monday to Tuesday, that's not how it was. They happened much faster in Berlin than they happened in Stuttgart for instance. In Stuttgart we didn't know much about it. In Berlin they all knew about it.

Q: Do you know why your family moved to Berlin?

A: Because they were Jewish. Because Jewish things become more important. And other things more impossible. That's more important to say.

Q: Such as?

A: Anything. You had to, what you learned was more Jewish than ever before. I didn't know anything about Jewish history ever. You don't want to tell them that. No, really. I have a brother who is five years older than I am and very early on, he was always interested in things Jewish. I never, I loved him. I never understood what made him interested. I was interested in music. Nothing else mattered. So you know these questions, they may have answers but they're not good. They're not good answers.

Q: Whatever you can remember is important.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

A: I remember it but they are not definite answers.

Q: And your father in Berlin, then got more involved with the Jewish community.

A: Very, very involved.

Q: Can you just say a little bit about what he did, what his role was?

A: Well yeah, there was an institute for, just for Jews in Berlin and then he became one of the highlights of that institute.

Q: His relationship with Leo Baeck.

A: Excellent. They were like brothers, they were –

Q: They were very close, right. So he worked with him. So now you moved to Berlin. You're going to a Jewish school. And did you have any instances in the beginning when you moved to Berlin of anti-Semitism? Did you feel it? Did you have any experiences?

A: I'm sorry. I don't want to make ridiculous, I don't want your questions to sound ridiculous but somehow they cannot be answered. Because all this was a very gradual process. And whatever I say it's going to be not quite right because it all happened very, very gradually.

Q: What were some of the gradual changes?

A: That I had to go to a Jewish school.

Q: Ok. Anything else?

A: That, that's plenty. That's maybe the most important thing to say.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

Q: For a young person yes.

A: That you couldn't easily go to, you could but it was very much more difficult. You didn't get as good an education and Jews are interested in good education. So you had more and more, I mean it's all very interesting actually. You have more and more Jewish schools because they are better at education. I don't feel wonderful about the Jews, but it's true. It's true that better education for Jewish children than for other children because they were interested in education.

Q: I assume, your only friends were the other Jewish children, not non-Jewish children.

A: In school, by the time I went to school in Berlin, I didn't really have to go to school anymore. My sister did. And she –

Q: How much younger –

A: Three, three years. And she had to go to, what kind of school, yeah there were Jewish schools. There were more Jewish organized than before.

Q: So what did you do since you had completed school, what did you do?

A: Music. I never did anything but music. I played violin.

Q: Wonderful. So did you teach? You did?

A: Played and taught and traveled the country.

Q: You were able to do that in the 1930s.

A: No, it was all along at different times, different ways. Different groups. You know they formed little groups and they traveled around for a little while. I was in most of them somehow.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

Q: Were these Jewish musical groups or mixed groups?

A: See, this, the process was so gradual that when you ask me that I feel whatever I say now it's not going to be quite true. Because the process was too gradual. It became very Jewish but it wasn't totally Jewish to begin with.

Q: To start out with. Right, right.

A: So it's all eventual.

Q: I understand that.

A: You must, whatever you experienced here, you must have experienced it in a different way a little bit true, that things happened gradually and not, were you always Jewish. Yes, but I didn't - I was always Jewish. It didn't, had no meaning for me. And then it became extremely meaningful.

Q: Well I know as the years went by that the Jewish musicians were not able to play in this order and they formed the **Kulturbund**.

A: Absolutely right. Right, right.

Q: Were you part of that, if I'm pronouncing it correctly, Kulturbund.

A: Yes, we couldn't play anymore so -

Q: Were you in one of those groups?

A: Yeah, off and on.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

15

Q: What kind, can you tell me a little bit about that experience?

A: I played in so many different groups that I wouldn't know what to tell you. Whatever meant I went with, whatever I could get into I would go with. And they became more and more Jewish. Having not been Jewish exclusively and they became more and more exclusively Jewish for obvious reasons. Obvious. They must be obvious to you or for anybody who knew what happened to the Jews in Germany. It was a gradual process.

Q: You were living –

A: What are you Jewish? If you would ask me five years earlier, it would never have occurred to me to say I am Jewish. It wouldn't have occurred to me. Said I am Jewish. I was always Jewish.

Q: You lived at home with your parents and your brother and sister?

A: Right, I lived with my aunt for a long time in Stuttgart while they lived in Berlin.

Q: But I'm saying when you eventually moved to Berlin, you lived with your parents?

A: Well then gradually moved to England because we were thrown out of Germany. You know that.

Q: Before we get to that I just want to find out if there's any other information you can give me about your life in Berlin before you went to England. Any other –

A: What kind of information?

Q: Well do you remember any other limitations besides being able to perform musically?

A: I made my own limitations. I was exclusively interested in music so that was it.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

Q: That was your whole life? Did you listen to Hitler's speeches on the radio?

A: Sure. Whatever you could. Sure.

Q: What was your reaction as a young adult?

A: Different, different times different reactions. I didn't know so much and gradually I knew more about how things go and then you assess it differently. That's obvious.

Q: Was it a particularly frightening time for you as a young person?

A: That's a very difficult question. I don't think we experienced as frightening. We experienced it as exclusively, became more and more exclusive. It had to become more and more Jewish. Things weren't Jewish. Things were German for me all my life but I was a good Jew, but as life went on over the many decades, I became more and more Jewish, not because I wanted to but life became more and more Jewish.

Q: I understand that later on. I understand that. Is this when Hitler came to power and the years started to move along. Did you talk this over with your brother?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you have discussions with him?

A: Yeah but I didn't, he lived in a different town from me. But he's older than I and I was his younger sister so there was a certain difference from that point of view.

Q: I just meant was this a topic of conversation between you both?



**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

17

A: Mm. Do you know when you are young you would talk about a lot of things and many you forget and some you can't forget and they're political and the political ones you know, they have to do with becoming more and more Jewish. Not because you wanted to but because you were forced into it.

Q: Do you remember it as a particularly frightening time, your last years in –

A: I wouldn't call it frightening.

Q: You would not have called it frightening?

A: No I think I was brought up to take what comes in the best way I can take it and I don't think I ever thought of it as frightening or not frightening. You just had to do it. Shut up already, do it. You know that kind of thing.

Q: When you'd go out on the street and you would see let's say a swastika?

A: Went to a Jewish school in the end. You couldn't go to any other school anymore. That was enough.

Q: But when you would go out on the street and see a swastika on a flag or a banner, did you have any physical reaction to that? Was that frightening?

A: No, it wasn't on that level. It was, it simply was whatever you read about books and I read it now, it's wrong. It's wrong because it was so gradual. It's like you know this is called green and what, I'm not trying to be funny. And then you find out this is green but this is not green because this is called barrack green. And suddenly there is a difference between this green and that green. You never knew it was just green. So there were also difference, but Jewishness became a very, very important. My father was a very high up in person in the Jewish community. Very well known. So everything became on Jewish.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

18

Q: But I was trying to get your reaction as a young woman to seeing let's say German soldiers on the street or swastikas. You don't remember. Do you remember being disturbed by that? Or you took it for granted?

A: You're asking me a question. I was very alarmed to answer because the schools you could go to were more, were Jewish.

Q: Yes, but I just meant on the public streets, when you would go outside of your house.

A: I had many friends that were not Jewish at all.

Q: Were there any anti-Semitic incidents that you were a witness to?

A: Well to me, but it wouldn't have been. We weren't brought up that way. I mean I think they existed but –

Q: You yourself did not experience it?

A: No. No and whoever does must have been in a particularly Jewish environment where this was highlighted. Otherwise, if they asked me they wouldn't have felt it.

Q: Was your neighborhood in Berlin a mixed neighborhood of Jews and non-Jews?

A: Right.

Q: Families. And did you keep up your relationships with the non-Jewish families who had children your age, young people your age?

A: Hm.

Q: So they were welcoming to you?

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

A: Of course.

Q: That was not a problem.

A: Well. These are complicated questions with complicated answers. The answer is no. But of course everything became more and more Jewish because it had to be, not because we wanted it to be. That's just how it was.

Q: OK well let's move on. So now you're in Berlin and you lived there how many years, once you moved there?

A: Til we had to move to England.

Q: How many years was that? What year did you move to England?

A: 39, I think we moved to England.

Q: You moved to England in 39. Ok.

A: I think so. I'm not sure. I am very bad with dates, I'm very bad.

Q: Tell me a little bit about how you got to go to England and how the arrangements were made.

A: Well we had to go to a Jewish school and the Jews became more Jewish and they fell apart. More and more people had to leave. It was philosophically and religiously a time that in retrospect was abnormal.

Q: Your family decided to move to England?

A: Yeah.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

20

Q: And all of them or, or –

A: No, it was a gradual process. My father, my parents never went.

Q: Your parents stayed in Germany?

A: They were, they felt very German and they wanted to stay in Germany and they wanted to bring up their children as German. But the children went out.

Q: It was your desire to leave, to go to England.

A: Well it was more than decide. You couldn't go to other places anymore. The Nazis made it impossible.

Q: Did the three of you go together?

A: No.

Q: Can you tell me –

A: Separately.

Q: Who went first?

A: My brother was much older and went to America.

Q: He went to America.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

21

A: And my sister and I went to England for many years and then the war broke out. And my sister and I were in England and my brother was in America. And we didn't really know him. I mean, not really.

Q: Do you know if it was difficult to get passage from Germany to England? Was that a problem? When you and your sister left?

A: Germany to England.

Q: You said you decided, you and your sister went to –

A: From Germany to England. What do I know about going from Germany to England. We went on something which was made -- I don't know if that helps you but it was made something for Jews who, they were sure they could get out. Actually my father had a great to do, great deal to do with that.

Q: Getting Jews out of Germany?

A: Right.

Q: To England?

A: He had a great deal to do with that. He was very well known for that. You try to get them out as fast as you could and then Jewish schools started happening in England.

Q: So you and your sister went together to England?

A: We left together. I think it's very long ago.

Q: I know it's a long time ago.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

A: We left together and I took my sister had to go to school and I sort of stayed on without having to.

Q: You stayed on?

A: I had to somehow do some schooling.

Q: Are you talking about in England?

A: Yeah, yeah. In England now.

Q: So the two of you went together. Did both of you speak English at that point? Did you know any English?

A: No. French.

Q: That must have been an adjustment. And that was 1939.

A: Very, very long ago.

Q: Where did you live in the beginning when you first went to England?

A: Around, different places. We were together in --. Friends who took us in that lived here and there or somewhere else.

Q: These were German friends who had moved to England.

A: Sometimes German, sometimes English, sometimes American. There were different friends who –

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

Q: That your family knew? But you and your sister were together?

A: Yeah but my parents stayed in Germany.

Q: Your parents stayed in Germany right.

A: It's just my sister and I. My brother went to America.

Q: Did you start to work soon after you got to England?

A: My sister went to school and I didn't know, but knew much later on that I was jealous. I didn't know what jealousy was. But I was jealous that one had a schedule where one had to do things. I wanted to learn English because I thought I should. It was a bad time for me, very, very bad time. I sat in my room. I remember sitting in my room, really for days on end just crying because I didn't know what to do. And I thought I was brought up better than that. There must be something else to do. What should I do? I didn't know the language. I didn't really want to know it. I didn't really want to know anything Jewish. I felt, all I could just stay in my room and cry. And then I had a teacher who was very interested in music and found out my ability in music. And then things changed through her because she pushed me into all sorts of music things and I was good at that. That took a little while. And without her I don't know what would have happened. She is sort of, she was aware that I sat in my room and cried. And I didn't know what else to do.

Q: So you were what, 17 or –

A: 16. It was something like that. It was a bad time.

Q: You were aware at that time of the Kindertransport? Did you know any children who came over?

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

24

A: Very good question. These things came back gradually. My understanding of it became very gradual. We didn't really understand. I didn't really understand I was Jewish. I didn't really understand that I was German and nothing but German. I didn't really understand why I should live in England. It all happened so you just it's what you have to adjust to. And later on you try very hard for the rest of your life to make, make you understand how it all happened. And that takes a long historic understanding. I don't know. Were you born here in this country?

Q: Yes.

A: Well then you don't know how difficult that is. And you may know but it's very different. When you come from elsewhere, you speak a different language and nobody quite understand why you should be so different and I was very shy, enormously shy so I always stood in the corner and cried. And people always asked me why I cried. But I didn't know why I cried. I just cried. I didn't know what else to do. Music, music saved me in the end. If it hadn't been for that, god knows what would happen. My sister, she was very musical. She learned cello and she went to school and she learned, she learned all the things one learns when one goes to school. And it was the first time but I didn't know it for a long, long in my life that I was jealous. I didn't know the word jealousy. But she knew you know at 3:00 I have to go this or whatever it was. But I didn't know that. I just knew that I had no schedule and it was like this and she didn't like it. But she had to do it.

Q: Had you ever considered more schooling or, regular schooling.

A: Oh I continue, continue.

Q: But you didn't do any schooling anymore?

A: I'm very well-schooled anyway

Q: But I meant at that point when you got to England.



**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

25

A: Well whenever. At that time we had no money, so no. There is nothing you could do at the time. You went where you could go. I have always we have always, I was brought up that you do the best you can with what you can do.

Q: Your contacts were other musicians. That was your world.

A: In England, not very many. In England a little bit because I went to a music school in the end because I could do that. I mean it's something I could do. I couldn't do so much but music I could do.

Q: What kind of communication did you have with your parents back in Germany? Were you able to write letters and receive mail?

A: Yeah, I don't know. My brother would know. I don't know how mail went between Germany and England.

Q: You did get letters from them?

A: Yeah but they were, I don't think they were very regular. I don't remember exactly how. Maybe when I'm finished talking to you I will remember it. It was more complicated because we were in enemy country. Germany was an enemy country so I lived without being German, without being English. I lived in enemy and as an enemy alien. I was called an enemy alien. I make -- my family are very nervous when I call myself an enemy alien because they think it's -- I should never say that word. But I was an enemy alien. And I, you do what you have to do. You don't think so much what else. You try to do what else you do. And the thing I could do was music and that's what in the end got me out. So thank goodness for that.

Q: The war started in September 39. Do you remember that at all?

A: Not really. It's hard not to remember.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

Q: What were some of your memories of that time?

A: We couldn't. I don't know how difficult it was to stay in touch with Germany and eventually I will know it. Right now I don't know it. To stay in touch with Germany which was a country that was not like England. It was very difficult. Especially since you were not English to begin with. So I don't remember. It was just, we were forever refugees. My name was I was a refugee. I was not English or German or anything else. I was a refugee. What was a refugee from? I hardly knew that I was a refugee. And my brother in America became American and I thought it was wonderful to be American.

Q: Did you have communication with him?

A: Yes, but it was –

Q: By letters back and forth.

A: I don't know how it went. I would have to ask him. He has a wonderful memory and --. When you wrote it usually took two or three weeks to get a letter and you were careful what you wrote. It arrived so different from his that you figured out he wouldn't understand it anyhow. He was a very good brother but we didn't really know, we didn't really know one another. Not til later. Not til we left, not til we left for England. We left for England because we couldn't stay in United -- in England.

Q: You stayed in England for how long?

A: 46, we came to 46 I think we came here.

Q: You stayed in England all through the war?

A: That doesn't sound right. It doesn't sound right.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

27

Q: You spent the war years in England.

A: Wait a minute. I left Germany in 39. In 46, for seven years I was in England. That's what I think about.

Q: Did you stay in London the whole time? Were you in London?

A: Mainly in London. No it was all over the place. Wherever I could.

Q: Were you there during the bombing, the Blitz. Can you tell me a little bit about what you remember?

A: You don't want to hear. It wasn't nice.

Q: What your particular experience was.

A: The particular experience that you couldn't stay. For instance, you lived here, you couldn't live here. You had to go to a basement because of the Blitz and --

Q: Shelter

A: That was the particular experience, that you didn't see daylight very much. What am I hooked up with?

Q: (mentions microphone must be used to record) So we were talking about when bombing started during the Blitz, what your experience was and you had to go down into the shelter. Shelter in your building.

A: No, it was built for us. Shelters were built for people. To get out of harm's way. It was very dangerous to be higher up. Street never was very dangerous.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

Q: Was your house damaged, the house that you lived in?

A: Yes, our apart – it was a double house. It still stands and our house was a little bit more damaged than the other, but yes it's there.

Q: You were able to stay in the house.

A: No, we weren't there anymore. We were in Berlin. It was –

Q: I'm talking about when you were living in London. You said –

A: No, in London. In London we didn't live anywhere else. I mean we lived wherever we could.

Q: During the bombing in London, your house was not damaged.

A: There was no more, you were housed.

Q: The place you were staying, the place you –

A: No we, my sister and I went to a boarding school because my mother had known somebody there and she went to school and I was just extremely unhappy because I wanted to learn music and do something and I couldn't. I couldn't –

Q: You went to the school with your sister, to the boarding school with your sister?

A: To begin with, yeah. And then and she went to school, she actually had regular classes but I didn't.

Q: But you did not because you were older. Is that it?

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

A: That's right, that's right, that's right.

Q: But you were at the boarding school with your sister?

A: Well I lived in a boarding school. I don't know what I had there. I had whatever they offered.

Q: Was that in the countryside?

A: Do you know England?

Q: A little bit.

A: It was in Worcestershire. Does that mean anything to you?

Q: Not really but that's ok.

A: It's not terribly far away from London.

Q: But you were not in the middle of the city during the bombing.

A: It became very well known as a very famous male public school, later on. So maybe even then already.

Q: So your life out in the country revolved around your music also.

A: Yeah, always.

Q: Were there groups that you could play with out in the countryside?

A: Yes, whatever you could do you'd do.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

Q: Out there did you come in contact with other German young people who came in –

A: Germany. Couldn't get.

Q: I meant the children who came on the Kindertransport who were able to get out.

A: Yeah, probably we probably knew some of them, yeah we probably knew. We knew people because we are part of this transportation system. We were transported ourselves.

Q: Were you a part of the Kindertransport?

A: Well, we, we were, not really officially but yes we were part of it.

Q: In what way? Can you tell me the connection, in what way?

A: No. it was a big place where lots of things could happen and yes, they happened. If you can get into it somehow or other. It changed all the time. It was a very – war broke out and very changeable times so nothing lasted for very long.

Q: But that's how you initially got out of Berlin to England was through the Kindertransport. Is that what you're saying?

A: Did I say that?

Q: No I'm just asking.

A: Well you said this is how traditionally got out of Berlin to England. Not because of that, because of Hitler. Because of being Jewish. I'm sorry. It depends how you put it. If I hadn't been Jewish I probably would have stayed in Germany. But it so happened that I was Jewish so I went. And my brother was in America and he was very anxious for us to get out. And so were our parents in Germany. Out, get out. And we were, we were called refugees. We were not

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

31

English. We were never, never English. I was American the minute I came to America and you are American. In England you were not English. You were refugees. I don't know how it is now but it's probably still like that. You were forever known as the refugees. That's how it was.

Q: Did you have any contact when you were in England?

A: With whom?

Q: With any of your friends back in Germany before –

A: Yeah my parents.

Q: Besides your parents, did you have contact with –

A: Yeah we had some friends.

Q: Friends? You did?

A: Yeah but I, yes, had some friends. They divided more over the time. They divided more into Jewish or not Jewish and when I was young that didn't – it's like here. You go to school. You don't necessarily know whether someone is Christian or Jewish or not. Maybe you know, maybe you don't know but it was like that in Germany. You didn't know it.

Q: Let's talk about the years now, from 40 to 45. 1940 to 1945

A: Yeah that was in England.

Q: You were in England and you were playing the violin and you were out, you were not in London, you were in the countryside during the war years.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

A: You couldn't be in London. Nobody could be in London.

Q: Were you able to follow along, did you know what was happening in some of the other countries in Europe, to the Jews in Europe?

A: You know up to a point. It was not like now.

Q: Of course not. Did you have any awareness of what was happening on the continent?

A: My parents were in Germany. Of course I did.

Q: And you were able to stay in contact with them for how long?

A: Yeah, somehow we could write letters. It took three weeks. It was complicated.

Q: What happened to your parents?

A: Hm. Hitler looked after them.

Q: Do you know what year that was?

A: Oh, you don't want to know that in details. It all became very complicated.

Q: I understand but it's important for history's sake.

A: Well some came out, some didn't come out. It was all very complicated. I believe. Let me not talk about that. It was just a mess. It was a real, real big mess because you did, you got divided into groups that you never knew belonged to. Are you tall or are you small? You don't know until you find people are smaller or taller. You're white or you're black. Sometimes you know but unless you have people around you, you don't know. And you didn't know whether



## **Interview with Grete Hirsch** **July 4, 2016**

you are Jewish til after all this happened. Then you knew. And then it became a big, big thing that you were Jewish.

Q: So you remained, during the war years, you remained outside of London and you were playing the violin and you were in certain groups. Did you have a circle of friends then?

A: Yeah.

Q: Young adults like you?

A: That's when you make friends.

Q: And you listened I assume and read, to the radio and read the newspapers.

A: We did this as much as you listen nowadays but you listened yes.

Q: So you were aware then of what was happening? To some of the famous –

A: Yes, yes and we could write to Germany but I don't know any more how often and how frequently. My brother would know. Hans would know that.

Q: What about your language ability? How long did it take you to learn English? Was it quick or was it –

A: English.

Q: I'm saying how long did it take you to learn English? Was it quickly, was it hard? I mean you have a musical ear so I thought maybe English.

A: Language was hard. First you have to see something in the language. Never mind what language. It was very hard.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

Q: I thought because you had a musical ear that you would pick up the language easily.

A: Language became, English was the language to learn but I was --. Much later in my life I became aware that I was very jealous with my sister because she learned English. She had to. She went to school.

Q: Yes, she was younger.

A: And we would meet at 3:00 or whatever it was for a cup of tea and she would start about coffee breaks and tea breaks and doughnuts. I didn't know what a doughnut was. And she said you want my doughnut. I said I want it but I don't know what your doughnut is. It became very complicated. I remember when I learned the word doughnut. I didn't know the word doughnut.

Q: You stayed with her during the years of the war?

A: Well, yes but then I got my degrees. I got American degrees and then everything became better.

Q: No, you're still in England.

A: English degrees, I'm sorry. Because I got European degrees, music degrees.

Q: Music degrees.

A: Not English or American, music degrees. I got a masters in music in England and then I got one in America again.

Q: When did you get your English master's degree? You don't know. Was it during the war time or after?

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

35

A: Yeah. They may not have issued it then but yes, I got it then. I was one of the people who had play. There were not so many people who could play, you know could really play. I could play.

Q: What kind of violin did you have? A very good one?

A: Just a violin.

Q: That you brought with you from –

A: No. I got one here in America.

Q: When you were in England. It was the one that you brought from Germany. No? Did you bring, were you able to take a violin out of Germany?

A: I don't know that.

Q: You don't know, ok. So then you got –

A: I didn't know that we could. How was --. I really fail to know that. It was a bad time and I don't know what we knew and what we didn't know. We also didn't think that anything we knew on Monday was necessarily true on Tuesday. So I, I'm being (inaudible) right now. If I ask very long tonight in my bed, I will probably know but not important.

Q: That's ok.

A: The war was on. You know that was the big thing.

Q: Very difficult time. Anything else during the war years that you wanted to talk about, before the war was over?

A: Nothing.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

Q: Cause you stayed and music was your life and as you said you went to school.

A: Yeah I got my degrees in –

Q: And you got your degrees.

A: I got my best degrees here in America but I got a few in England too.

Q: When did you hear about your parents? What happened with your parents? Do you know when you heard about that?

A: See I can't tell you that. Because Hans would know because it was gradual. There would be a letter here or there and then they couldn't write and then I am very bad at remembering dates. He's extremely good at remembering dates so I know all the kind of things that I should know but don't know. But he knows them. He's very good at it. We're exact opposite (inaudible) or flats.

Q: Now the war is over. Let's move along.

A: Let it be over for a long, long time to come.

Q: Absolutely. So the war is over. What happened?

A: Come to America.

Q: Specifically when the war was over, do you remember celebrating or hearing the news?

A: Yes, we celebrated the war over wherever you were.

Q: What did you do specifically?

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

A: I don't remember. Whatever you celebrate, you are very happy that it's over. And that you have communication again when communications were so difficult. That's the kind of thing that you knew.

Q: It's 1945, the war is over.

A: 46 yeah.

Q: And you stay in England for a time and then –

A: Came to America.

Q: Because your brother Hans wanted you to come to America? Is that why you went? Did you want to go to America?

A: This was not a matter of desire or want. You couldn't stay in England. I mean you could but you had visitors' visas. It's very complicated. In America you can stay if you get the right visa, you can stay. America is a wonderful country. I mean it has its problems but I tell you.

Q: Did you and Ursula come together? To America?

A: Yes.

Q: You were able to get papers and transportation?

A: That was no problem. If you have the money, you know, you paid for it and then you came.

Q: And you had the money obviously.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

38

A: Well my brother was here and my father was in Germany, would have done anything to get us out. Money didn't count. Money was never, to my now very limited knowledge, money was never a question at all. It may have been for them, but for me, for them, for us, you did what, what you could have done. And if it cost more or less, didn't matter. You did it because you had to.

Q: How did you know you had the money? Did you have accounts, bank accounts?

A: My brother always had a brother.

Q: Did you have bank accounts in England?

A: What?

Q: Did you have bank accounts in England in your name?

A: Oh, no bank. In America, yes, not in England.

Q: So your brother arranged for the passage?

A: Probably or my, my father did in Germany. Whatever. It was done, it was done on a very big scale all over the world, concerning these things. Many, many people came out of Germany.

Q: How did you come? By boat?

A: By boat.

Q: Do you remember the name of the boat?

A: Yes. Uruguay.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

Q: The Uruguay. Under what line? Do you know what line?

A: Yeah it was, SS Uruguay was Belgian. Belgian.

Q: What was the voyage like? Were there other people like you, other –

A: Probably yeah.

Q: Did you talk with them about what you were going through?

A: I'm sure we did. And so it's so long ago and times were so different then. The future was so obscure. Specific questions have no room. Because they change all the time.

Q: So you were what, 22 about, I'm trying to think how old you were.

A: We came to America, yes. And we were here.

Q: So you got here to the United States. What did the United States mean to you as a young adult who had gone through war time?

A: Safety and a brother and a possible life. And not be called refugee anymore and lots of nice things.

Q: Did he meet you at the boat? Did Hans meet you at the boat when you came in?

A: Yeah, I think so.

Q: Do you have any memories of that?

A: Yeah, well it was so, so long ago.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

Q: Then did you stay in New York or what did you do when you first arrived?

A: We were –

Q: Did you move in with Hans or –

A: No we went to Worcestershire if you know England. I went to a little town where they put us up and did whatever work there was, shifted all the time. Me and Lela shifted all the time.

Q: When you came to the United States?

A: Oh, United States. I thought you meant England.

Q: When you came to the United States you said Hans met you at the boat when you arrived. And then I said where did you settle then? Did you stay –

A: Oh I had a wonderful aunt. I stayed all over the place. We had people here, relatives here in New York.

Q: In New York. And Hans was where at that time?

A: Washington. No I think he lived in Seattle or Brooklyn. I don't know but. He continues being a good brother.

Q: What did you do? You kept up obviously with your violin and your music.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you go to any more schooling?



**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

A: Yes. Got all my degrees here.

Q: Where did you get your degrees?

A: Manhattan School of Music.

Q: And then you lived, did you live with your sister?

A: Well not so much with her anymore. She did other things but I went – then I became a real official musician and make my money that way.

Q: When did you become a citizen?

A: After six years so –

Q: In the early 50s, in the 1950s.

A: 42 I guess.

Q: 52?

A: Yeah, something like that.

Q: Can you describe that feeling when you became an American citizen?

A: These were just happenings that happened to you and you better became aware of it and –

Q: Was it a special day for you or a special time?.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

A: Probably but I forgot. There have been many special days since. No really I mean. You were in America and that's where your brother was. And you were – I didn't like America at the beginning. I didn't like New York.

Q: Why not?

A: Too big.

Q: Did you plan to move out of New York?

A: I don't – you didn't plan so much. You hoped somehow there was a way by which you could have a life. You didn't plan. Planning was, you were mad to plan. You couldn't plan. You didn't plan. I didn't plan. My brother planned because he was in a situation where he went to school and he could plan this that and the other. And he planned for his younger sisters, very ably and wonderfully. And there were lots of problems but we had relatives here and we stayed with them for a long time. Very, very long. We all became American. Eventually, there were none of them born here. Isn't that amazing?

Q: You got involved with the New York musical scene.

A: Well I certainly ever have been. With it ever since but it took a little while.

Q: You started teaching. Did you teach adults and children or – in your apartment.

A: Well in schools, in music schools there were.

Q: What did your sister do? She went to school and she –

A: She went to school. She went to regular school.

Q: Did she go to college here? In the United States.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

A: She went to college too.

Q: She stayed in New York after that also.

A: No she went to weddings. She was all over England. She went to different places, wherever she could get a good deal. She went to school.

Q: I'm talking about in the United States now.

A: Once we came to the United States we were already, we became American citizens. As soon as we could.

Q: Did she stay in New York like you did?

A: Yes. Right. That's what you are after, right.

Q: You two were both in New York?

A: Yeah more or less.

Q: Do you remember hearing when the war was over about the news came out what happened to Jews? Any memories of that? No?

A: Life, a life you know one has a life. You can't put that so quickly. Life, the main difference between now and then is that life changed all the time. It didn't stay alike. It's not for a week or a month. It just totally changed all the time. And you didn't know which way and you were dependent on how it changed, but it's very, very long ago. And then I got all my degrees here and that was a good thing.

Q: Are you still teaching? You are? Wonderful? That's wonderful.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

A: I don't know whether people find it wonderful. I find it wonderful.

Q: No that's wonderful and you're still living in your –

A: Well you standards go up and your possibilities go down.

Q: Can we talk a little bit about your thoughts, about your background and so forth?

A: What background.

Q: What your life history has been. Do you think you would have been a different person?

A: If what.

Q: If let's say you had not gone through what you had to go through?

A: If what.

Q: If you had not gone through what you did go through and what your family –

A: Who is to know that? Who is to know whether they would be different if they hadn't gone through whatever they went through? Who, who would know that. There's nobody who could know that. I wouldn't know that. I wouldn't have become a refugee. It's a question you can't ask.

Q: Did you think, having to be on your own made you more independent?

A: Probably. You can say that. If it's a happy thing to say, you can say that it is. Whatever experience you have, for whatever reason changes you and my -- I have much reasons to often change my life.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

Q: Do you consider yourself still German?

A: No I'm American.

Q: Your first adjective.

A: I've been German for a very, very long time, god forbid.

Q: Why do you say god forbid?

A: Because I'm very glad to be American. I've been American for a very long time. Probably longer than many people I know.

Q: That's your first adjective.

A: Why would you, why would I want to be German. My god.

Q: What are your thoughts about Germany today?

A: Well complicated.

Q: Have you been back at all? Have you ever gone back?

A: Yes. I've been back briefly. Used to be a wonderful country. It still could be but it's very complicated. It's a very complicated country. Have you been?

Q: Just for a short time.

A: You know all over Europe, people are either French or English or Italian. Here they are American and that sounds like just a word but it's much, much more than a word. Here you

## **Interview with Grete Hirsch** **July 4, 2016**

46

travel for night and day for three days on end and somehow English will be spoken. Maybe they'll say things that you don't quite get but it'll be English. You travel for half an hour in a little place in Europe. They speak Belgian. They don't know how to speak any other language. It's a totally essential difference. English has taken over now as a main language. But not necessarily for instance in France. We have very good friends. They don't like that idea that English has taken over. They want French to be language. I have a very good French friend. She was born in Berlin but I met her recently. She said what do you mean I'm French? I said excuse me, excuse me.

Q: Do you think in German or do you think in English or both?

A: Can't answer that. Do you think in a language? Do you think you do?

Q: The only one I can think of is English.

A: No I speak English so I probably, I probably think if I think at all I probably think in English but I don't – I'm not aware of thinking in English. I'm thinking in – I don't think in a language. I don't know whether one thinks in a language.

Q: Do you have any moral thoughts, any moral judgements about Germany or Germans?

A: Who wouldn't?

Q: What are some of them?

A: I was thrown out of a country that was very beautiful and have tried very hard to come to terms. It's a very complicated question. I mean you can't answer that so quickly. They're trying very hard and they're very different from what they were. They will never be what they were and that's just as well. America has taken over. There's no question. Whether you like it or not. Everything is American now. Even England.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

Q: Are you more comfortable with people like you who were born in Europe than others who were born in this country? Do you feel more of a connection?

A: I've been living in America so long that I feel that's where I belong now. When I went back to Germany it's a very strange country. It's divided in all these different groups that we don't know in America. My brain knows it. I don't know how they live there in some ways. It's very different. We have – it would be good for me to find a way of saying in some kind of a language the difference between thinking in English and thinking not in English because that is a different, different way. I don't know that I think in the language at all. I don't think I think in the language but in Germany, you speak German or you -- everything is different you know. This is a glass of water here tastes different from a glass of water in Germany. It does. Different water.

Q: Because you lived in a country that denied you your rights obviously and forced you to leave, do you think that has affected you politically in your political decisions?

A: You know when you're old like I am, you try very hard, I try very hard to understand things from a bigger point of view. And the bigger point is international, not so nationally because you know it was all either German or English or French or Italian and it's all European or American now. It's very different now. If I, if I had a very young child now, they would find the world a very different place from the world I found, the same world, you would find very different. You're not united the way we were. We are differently united. We have altogether very different. And England, England won over, definitely won over, wasn't necessarily true when I was young.

Q: Is it for the better? Is that what you're saying?

A: History had, it's very hard to understand history, very difficult to understand it. Why anything happens ever. You try to find reasons and sometimes you think you have them and they're probably all wrong.

Q: Have you been to Israel?

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

A: Yeah.

Q: What are your thoughts when you go there?

A: Interesting country.

Q: In what sense?

A: Have you been?

Q: Yes.

A: Well what do you think?

Q: Well I want to know, it's more of the discussion what you think.

A: I think Israel is a made up country. It didn't exist. It now exists. It exists very, very strongly with very strong feelings for Israel. It's new. It's as new as they come. There is no country newer than Israel.

Q: Do you remember your parents being Zionists in the 19 –

A: My parents were not Zionists. My parents were German. They were not at all Zionists. They were the opposite of Zionists. They didn't like Zionism. These are all modern ways of thinking that one didn't have. It'll be interesting what'll happen in 50 years. We won't know. America will lead. It's leading already. And English will lead. I didn't think the English would make it as a language. When I was younger I didn't think so because English is, English has sounds that no other language has. You may not know that. I know it because I'm of that type. T-H's, the way you teach T-H sound pronouncing is not like this in any other. W's, they exist as a sound but not



## Interview with Grete Hirsch July 4, 2016

49

as the same sound. It's a totally different sound. Villiam, William, thinking, sinking. It's a very different thing.

Q: When you went back to Germany, were you relaxed while you were there or was it a more tense experience.

A: I think we spoke English. Everybody speaks English now.

Q: I just meant walking down the street when you were in Germany?

A: Forgot. English is my language now. I mean I speak German but I speak **Swakan** [ph]. I don't even speak good German.

Q: Do you remember the Eichmann trial at all?

A: Who?

Q: The Eichmann trial in Israel?

A: Yes I do remember.

Q: What were your thoughts? Did you follow it then?

A: I did.

Q: And what were your thoughts when that was happening?

A: Can't say. I probably thought what everybody else thought about it. Complicated affair. It was a very complicated affair. Depending where you came from. If you were German, you -- it was less complicated. If you were American, it was more complicated. Difficult. What did you think about it?

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

**50**

Q: We can talk about that later. Would you look forward to going back to visit Germany now?

A: No. Well and so visit yes, why not. It's a beautiful country. I won't know it anymore. I won't know German people anymore. They're very different.

Q: Now you said you became more Jewish once you came to this country.

A: We all did, all of us did.

Q: How did that change your life?

A: Life has changed it.

Q: Life has changed, but in what sense or how does it manifest itself? Being more Jewish?

A: I was born as a German. I happened to be a Jew. Did I know it? My brain knew it but nothing else knew it. Now I'm a Jew and I happen to be German. Or American or whatever.

Q: How does being Jewish manifest itself?

A: In every way. There is no way it doesn't manifest itself.

Q: Can you give me an example?

A: Israel. There is nothing that you could possibly forget that you are Jewish anymore. But when I was young it was had very little meaning.

Q: In your daily life, does it manifest itself? Do you observe holidays at all or any customs, any rituals?

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

A: American, I'm American. I'm an American Jew.

Q: Do you observe any holidays, any Jewish holidays?

A: Some I do. I have a brother who's very Jewish minded.

Q: But on your own, you don't?

A: No, you do because it's sort of a festivity that one shares and sometimes does. When I was very young, we celebrated Christian holidays, Christmas because I was born at Christmas so Christmas was a very important holiday in our life and now we celebrate Hanukkah.

Q: When you celebrated Christmas when you were young, did it have a religious aspect to it or was it just a national holiday?

A: No, when I was very young we didn't celebrate Christmas. It existed but we didn't.

Q: Your family did not celebrate it?

A: Well I mean my brother was very interested in things Jewish so he became very Jewish.

Q: Did you have a Christmas tree in the house?

A: Eventually I think we did. Til he took it down. He didn't like it. I love Christmas trees. Don't you love Christmas?

Q: Was it more for the staff of your house? Or –

A: No inside, inside, inside, not outside.

Q: People working in your house.

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

A: Now Christmas tree is definitely Christian. It's not just Christmas but then Christmas was a holiday that everybody had.

Q: So it was more of a national holiday?

A: Yes, that's right, that's right.

Q: Are your friends today mostly people who were born in Europe or are they mostly people who were born in the United States?

A: Mostly not at all. Mostly here there and everywhere.

Q: it's not one sided.

A: I've lived in very many countries and have luckily friends in many, many different places.

Q: You've lived in Germany and in England and in the United States. Have you lived in other, have you gone away for a year or two. Have you lived in other countries?

A: Oh I've lived, I've been, but not all that long, for very long. In Israel and in –

Q: You lived in Israel? No you visited Israel?

A: Only visited. Israel didn't exist when I was young.

Q: Right it was Palestine.

A: That's right, that's right.

Q: Do you think the world has learned anything lessons from –

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

A: I think the world learns lessons every day of its life but you learn very different lessons and you need to learn very different lessons. The lessons once a long time are different from what they now you need to know. Now we need to learn to get along with one another and wasn't so important at one time. We need to learn it because we have very different constitutions and do very different things and they are very different the ideas of what should be and what should not be. It's going to be a problem in the future. We have to learn that. We have to get along. Otherwise they will come from the moon and then, I'm serious. I mean why are all on the earth. It doesn't have to be on the earth. We can be elsewhere. We have to get along on earth and it's going to be a big question and it's getting more complicated not less, but that's a private personal question. And I am sort of hope you don't share it. Do you?

Q: Again we can talk later.

A: You'd rather not.

Q: You get your joy from your violin, I hope. Still, you're still teaching

A: Yes.

Q: Do you go to many concerts in New York? Are you able to?

A: Well right now it's fading out. I'm getting less, I teach a lot more and play a lot less.

Q: Is there anything else that you would like to say that we haven't covered?

A: You've said everything one can possibly say that concerns the earth. You want to wish good luck to the earth because it needs it. It's going to be in my books, it's going to be ever so much more complicated. On certain levels simpler because we learn certain simplicities but on the whole we have very different ideas, what's right and what's wrong. And sooner or later they will

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

come in contact with one another. And I hope we have enough sense to say ok we're different, let it be. We won't be one world. We cannot be. I don't think we can be.

Q: Are you angry that you had to go through what you went through?

A: You can't be angry at --

Q: And sustain the losses that you had, when someone else who was born in this country didn't have --

A: No, can't be angry. If you have any sense at all you learn that what you have to learn you have to learn. It's not a matter of anger or not anger. I mean if it's going to rain for three days am I going to be angry that it rains? No. You're going to make out, you have to make it out. It's going to rain.

Q: Yes, but those of us who were born here didn't have to go through what you went through, what your family went through.

A: You can move to another place and as long as you can still move to another place you will in America because it's a big, big country. We do, we keep on moving. Everybody moves all the time in America. Don't they? Where were you born?

Q: I was born in this country.

A: But where?

Q: Here in Washington. Anything else that you wanted to say.

A: We said everything one can possibly say. Wish it luck, wish us all luck. Wish luck, love, luck to understand what another, even when we have very different opinions about many, many, many things. And I'm not talking about food not simple things like that but complex things. It's

**Interview with Grete Hirsch**  
**July 4, 2016**

55

going to be the problem of the future. One constitution. We try in America and it's very complicated. It's just too many rules for too many people in too many things. Eating is just a very little problem. That we can, it's difficult enough to solve, but you can solve it, but there are many more dying and coming to life. It's very complicated. What are you doing with your life? How can you do it? How can you get along with people who have very, very different ideas than I do. And we have that now. We have people with very, very different ideas and there are only two ways. Either we keep away from them or we make war. There is no other way. Or we try to make peace and understand it and just let it be. That's how it is. Leave it alone. There is no other way. These three possibilities. There is no other, not to my knowledge. What do you think?

Q: As I said we can talk about that in a moment. Any other thoughts?

A: You confer all the good talks for some other time.

Q: Let me just close by saying thank you for doing --

A: I'm being as helpful as I can under the circumstances.

Q: Thank you and I just want to say that this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Grete Hirsch.

(end)