

--9, reel 3.

OK. I was looking for a water closet, or WC, and didn't find it. And so I decided, since I'd been looking left and right, that maybe I'll circulate the boat and look only on one side and then go over and look on the other side. But I didn't find it. And so I asked one of the stewards or one of the people who were working on the boat, where is-- in my best English-- where is the water closet? And he said, we don't have one. And so I said, where is the WC. We don't have one.

And all right. Well, if he says we don't have one, then I guess there isn't one. But what am I going to do? I mean, it's not urgent now, but 6 o'clock tomorrow is when we arrive in England. And I don't think I can wait that long. And so I, by midnight, when the motors were all revved up because the boat was going to leave at midnight, it was pretty urgent for me to go to the bathroom.

I decided-- we were not supposed to leave our cabins after, I think, 10 o'clock or so. I went up on deck. And there was a waterfall up there that I created. And I was much relieved after that.

When we arrived in Harwich, we immediately were put on a train. And I don't know whether this is what I remember is real or if this is a figment of my imagination, but it was a super modern train, as I remember it. And there were no compartments. It was just a big carriage. And there were swivel kind of chairs at different places all over this compartment. I don't know if that was really so, but this is what I seem to remember. And I was fascinated by this kind of train. I'd never seen that kind of train before.

And we arrived sometime, I don't know when, but that morning at Liverpool Street Station. And we were taken to a huge hall. And there were children crying, and there were lots of people behind a barrier. And we were told that the names of the children would be called alphabetically. And then whoever's name is called should come forward to this desk.

And my name, at that time, was-- so my maiden name was Wachenheimer, which is with a W. So I decided it's going to be a long time before my name is called, and so I didn't really pay much attention to the first names being called. But I looked around, you know, who-- because Mrs. Mayer was going to pick me up, and where is she? Which one of these many women is she? And after a while, I got bored with it all and apparently fell asleep sitting on my suitcase.

And at some point, I woke up, and there was hardly anybody there. There were only about two children left and not many adults. And I started to cry. You know, I've not been picked up. And then somebody came over to me and said, who are you? And I was wearing a tag with my name on it. And they said, oh, there you are. We've been looking for you. There is somebody waiting for you.

And that's when I met Mrs. Mayer, who was frantic because she'd been waiting. And they'd called my name, and nobody responded. And they were worried whether I'd gotten lost somewhere.

And she spoke no German. And my English was so limited. I had no idea-- she kept on talking to me. I didn't know what she was saying to me. And she took me to the subway. And I don't know what subway station that was. And we-- I know there was a huge, steep escalator that we had to go down. And she just walked ahead of me and assumed I would follow.

And I had never been on an escalator before in my whole life. I'd never seen one. And I had a suitcase in my hand, or two suitcase. No, she had one suitcase, and I had another suitcase. But I had a hat. And the hat had an elastic band. But the elastic band had broken. And it was sort of a pillbox. And so I had to carry the hat because otherwise it would have fallen off.

And I had a pocket book, and I never had had a pocket book before, and an umbrella. And somebody had brought some cookies to the train station for me. And so I had those. And somebody else had brought me a book, and I had that. How am I going to get on this escalator? I need to hold on both railings, and I don't have any free hands. And in the meantime, Mrs. Mayer is down at the bottom. And she's motioning to me and calling to me. And I'm petrified.

And other people are coming, and I'm just motioning to them to go onto the escalator. I'm petrified. And I can't get on this thing. And so finally I decided to put all my belongings-- I put those on the escalator. And I figured Mrs. Mayer is down there. She can take them. And then maybe if I hold on both sides, I will go there. And I did, but it was a really frightening experience for me to go down that escalator. And it was so steep.

And then when we got down there, it was noisy. The trains were coming from both directions. And we got on this red subway. It was-- at least I remember the train. The carriages seemed to be red. And it was very noisy. And Mrs. Mayer keeps on talking to me. And I mean, not only that I didn't understand English, I couldn't hear because I wasn't used to that kind of noise.

And we traveled and traveled and traveled forever, it seemed. And all of a sudden, we come out into the daylight. And I think that was in Hendon. And we go a few more stations, and we arrive in Edgware. And we get out of the train. And then she takes a taxi, and we drive to the Rose house, which is on the-- was on the far end of Edgware, near Mill Hill or Mill Creek. Mill Hill, I think it is.

And the family was waiting for me. They had three children, a daughter Eunice, I think, who was 19, I think, at the time; and another daughter that's about the same age as I, whose name I can't remember. And then there was Pamela, who was two or three years younger.

And I shared-- I was told I would share a bedroom with the girl that was the same age as I. And I had all these cookies and chocolates and stuff that people had given me. And so I gave that to Mrs. Rose because you don't take that into your bedroom. I mean, I didn't do that at home. And I didn't know where to put it, so I just gave it to her. And that was the last time I ever saw that.

And then Mrs. Mayer talked to Mrs. Rose for a while, and then she left. And I knew that I wouldn't see her until sometime the end of summer or early fall because they were leaving on Sunday to go on their holiday to France. And I also was told that the next day I would be taken to school by Mrs. Rose to register me for school, and I would probably start school on Monday. And I was very excited about that.

And I was getting hungry, but I didn't want to say I'm hungry, because I had only had had breakfast that morning. And I-- and I saw them. Then the table was set in the kitchen, and they all sat down, and they ate. And I was told to go outside and look at the flowers in the yard. And I didn't understand that, why. But I did.

And then when they-- then I came back in after I looked at the flowers for a little while, and they said, no, no, no. Go back out there. Go back out there. And I went back outside. And I stayed outside because I didn't know what else to do. And then finally I was allowed to come back in, and the table was cleared. And I was told to sit down, and I was given two pieces of toast and butter and a cup of tea, which I didn't really want. But I was thirsty, so I drank it.

And I was hungry, and so I ate the toast. And then I thought, well, what will I-- maybe that's how one starts a meal in England. And so I just sat and waited. I would get something else. And then they said, no. They said, you're finished. Or they indicated to me that I was finished. And I thought, well, I don't know. But I wasn't too worried yet.

And as it turned out, that really basically was my diet for the next 10 weeks. For breakfast I got a piece of toast and butter and tea. And for lunch-- and I used to have to walk home from school, and it was a long walk from school. I got two pieces of toast and butter and cup of tea. And for supper, I get the same, two pieces of toast and butter and a cup of tea.

And on Sundays, Mr. Rose used to come to serve all the family and me also a cup of tea and a cookie in bed. And so on Sunday morning, I had the addition of a cookie and an extra cup of tea. After a while, I got a little bit smarter because at first I drank the tea just plain. And then because there was milk and sugar, and I poured some milk and some sugar in there because I knew that had some nutritious value, and I would get a little bit extra.

In school, the children, you know, would have candy or cookies. And they would, of course, offer me some. And I was

dying to have some, but I was-- I didn't accept it because what could I bring them? I had nothing to bring them. And the chocolates and the cookies that I had brought with me from Germany, I had asked for them. And I was told that they had eaten them, that I had given it to them as a present. And they were all gone.

So I had nothing to give to the children. And so I didn't ever take anything.

What were they, the rest of the family, were they things sort of normal food?

Yes. Yeah.

So was there any explanation given?

Yes. The explanation was that in Germany I was starving. And now that I see food is plentiful in England, I want everything. And it's not good for me because I need to start to eat-- increase my diet slowly for health reasons. And I tried to explain, and it was difficult because I didn't know much English, that I was never hungry in Germany. I never starved, that the only thing that was rationed was butter. But that didn't mean that I was ever hungry.

And what I also found out after a while is that my parents had been sending me things. My mother would bake some cookies and send them. But I didn't know that. And they kept them and never told me. And at one point, my parents wrote and said, you know, you don't have to say thank you for the things we send you, but you at least should acknowledge them. Because if they don't arrive, we won't send anything anymore.

And like one of the things they had sent was a new bathrobe for me, and I never got it. But I noticed that this girl who was about my age, at one point had a new bathrobe. But I didn't know that that was for me. I just thought she got a new bathrobe.

And so I figured it out from what my parents were saying that, apparently, these things are arriving but I'm not getting them. And so I wrote to my parents, please don't send any more of anything because I have plenty of everything here. I didn't want to ever tell my parents. They never knew what was going on in this family with what was happening to me because I didn't want to worry them.

And so I said, you know, don't send anything because it's just I have too much of everything here. And so my parents didn't send anything anymore. And--

This family, were they Jewish?

Yes. And I didn't tell the rabbi. I didn't tell anybody. I didn't tell my parents. I think I would have told Mrs. Mayer or Mrs. Simon, but they were in France. And I didn't know where they were in France.

And sometime in, I think it was the middle of July, I got a phone call from Mrs. Mayer. She said, we have come back early because it looks like there might be a war, and we didn't want to get caught in France. So we're back. And how are things? And how are you? And for the first time ever I said, I'm hungry.

And it was about 4:30 in the afternoon. So she said, well, when do you eat supper? And I said, it doesn't make any difference. And she said, what do you mean? And then I felt uncomfortable to talk because I was in the Rose home. And I didn't know who was listening. And she noticed that I was reluctant to talk. So she said, well, why don't you come and visit us for lunch on Saturday. And Mrs. Rose can give you directions how to get here. You'll have to take the subway or the underground, I guess you call it in England.

And so I said, I can't come. And she said, why can't you come? Are you doing something else? And I said, it costs money, and I don't have any money. I had left with 10 German marks. But I was not going to touch those. Those were when things get really, really bad. And so I was going to use that to go on the subway.

And so she said, well, don't you get an allowance? Well, I didn't know what that was even. And so she explained to me,

doesn't Mrs. Rose give you some money so that you can buy yourself something if you need something or want something? And I said, no. And so she said, well, let me talk to Mrs. Rose.

And the two of them talked. And then I was put back on the phone. And I was told that Mrs. Rose would give me some money so I could come to visit her, and then we would talk. And I did go there that Saturday. And I think I ate the whole time that I was there. And I was told, you know, you can eat as much as you want. But you know, maybe you shouldn't eat that much because you might really get sick. I mean, it's there if you want it.

And I said, I don't care if I get sick. I'm going to eat and eat. And I ate, and I ate. And I told them what was going on. And so Mrs. Mayer was saying, well, school will be out in about two weeks. And I'd like you to stay there for the remainder of the school year. And I'll give you some money, and you can buy yourself something on the way to school and on the way home. Don't say anything to the Roses.

I will try to find another family for you. And I will handle this. Don't say anything at all to them. And so every day then on my way to school, on my way from school, I bought myself Cadbury's chocolate, milk chocolate with hazelnuts. I had smelled some of the-- when some of the children were eating it, I'd smelled it. And it smelled so good. I wanted that more than anything else. And that's what I ate every single day.

And when school was out, I was picked up by Mrs. Mayer and taken to her home because she had not yet found another family or was in the process, and then stayed there about a week. And all I did was eat, eat, eat, all day long. At night, when I went to bed, she used to give me a big plate full of sandwiches and fresh fruit. And by morning it was all gone.

And of course, I had to tell my parents that I had a different address. And my parents then wanted to know why. And then I told them why. And they were very angry with me that I didn't tell them. And it created a problem of trust. Well, can they ever believe me, what I tell them from here on in? And I promised that I would always be honest and tell them everything. Even if it's bad, I would tell them that.

And after about a week at Mrs. Mayer's home, I was placed with a second family. And their name was Simmons. And they lived also in Edgware, but at the opposite end of Edgware. And they had a son who was a year younger than I, David, and a little girl, Janice, who was about seven at that time-- six or seven.

And this family was financially much poorer than the Rose family. But I think, if anything, they would have taken something away from themselves in order to be able to give it to me rather than have me suffer in any way. And they knew that I had been hungry in the other family, so they almost force fed me. I had to finally say, please, I can't eat anymore.

And in September, I went back to school. And by that time, somehow over the summer, I seem to have somehow picked up an awful lot of English because I was able to really begin to participate in what was going on in school and in the classroom and so on.

I wish I had kept the essays that I wrote because they must-- the English must have been really strange. While I was-- soon after I got to the Simmons family, because I got there in late August, the middle of August I think, 1939, I remember that Sunday morning when war was declared, listening to the radio and war being declared and realizing what this meant, that now my parents couldn't get out of Germany, that now we would probably not be able to correspond with each other anymore, and wondering how long will this last, thinking World War I lasted four years. Is this going to last four years?

What's going to happen to my parents? What's going to happen to me? I just-- the whole thing was a big question to me. And I remembered after listening to it on the radio, almost immediately afterwards, I think the air raid siren went off. And we all crouched underneath the dining room table.

And we had already been issued gas masks. And I remember, I took my gas mask out of the case and had it ready to slip on because I was sure it was going to be-- I was going to need it immediately. And after the-- and being absolutely petrified, knowing that we were going to be bombed and that we were going to be bombed. This house was going to be

bombed, and there was going to be gas and so on.

And when the air raid warning cleared I really wanted some time alone by myself, and I wanted to go upstairs to be by myself. And as I was going upstairs, I put my hand on the banister, and there was a bee there. And it stung me. And I guess I'd never been stung by a bee before, and I had an allergic reaction to that bee sting and passed out, fell backwards down the stairs. But the family didn't know that I had been stung by a bee. And they didn't know. They thought it was probably I was upset, which may have helped. I don't know. But when I came to, by that time my hand was all swollen.

My parents and I were able to remain in contact with each other though, not the way it was before, not as frequently. For instance, we had friends in Switzerland as well as in Holland. And both of them being neutral countries, my parents, for instance, would write to those people. And they would take it out of the-- would write a letter to me. And they would take it out of the envelope and readdress a new envelope and send it on to me. And I did then the same thing.

And then there were also Red Cross messages. But you could only write 25 words, which wasn't very much. And also, you had to be careful. I mean, I couldn't talk about London because in case the letters were opened by the censor. And some of them were opened by the censor. I don't know. Maybe all of mine were opened. I don't really know this. But I know some of the letters that came from Germany to Holland or to Switzerland apparently were opened by the censor.

And there were a number of things that happened in Germany, in Kippenheim and to my parents that I never knew, that all these things I found out much later. For instance, my parents had to move out of the house because Jews were congregated together in one area. And so they were not allowed to-- but I didn't know this. And the village was-- and the families who forwarded the letters also didn't say this to me. And maybe they didn't know. The village was so small, all you needed to do was write the name and the village, and it would arrive there.

We continued to stay in touch with each other until October 22, 1940. All the Jews from that section of Germany were deported to France. I learned about this from somebody who was from Kippenheim, who lived in England, who read it in a paper, showed me the newspaper. And I denied it. I said, but not my parents. I will get a letter from my parents. It takes a long time these days for mail to come, but I will hear from my parents. And they are still in Kippenheim.

And he tried to convince me that that wasn't so. But I denied that. And I think that was perhaps the first time that I was-- or the beginning of many years of lots of denial on my part. I finally did receive a letter from my parents, from France. And their new address was at the top of the letter. And my father writes saying, as you will notice from the top of the-- the address on the top of the letter, we moved.

That's really a euphemism. I mean, they were deported. Apparently they were given an hour's notice. I mean, this is not something I know from my parents. This is all information I found out afterwards. They were given an hour's notice. They were allowed to take with them 100 pounds of whatever they wanted to and some money. It was a fixed amount of money. I don't know how much.

Much of that, what they took with them, was taken from them by the Nazis on the train on the way to France. They were sent to Camp de Gurs, which is in the foothills of the Pyrenean mountains in France. The camp, prior to that time, had been established during the Spanish Civil War, when refugees were coming across the Pyrenean mountains into France. And they were housed in those camps. When the Jews from that section of Germany where I come from were brought there, there were still some of those Spanish refugees there. Not many, but some of them were still there.

Men and women were separate in the camp. All of my family were deported there. My mother's father became ill very quickly there. He had to keep a special kind of diet because of some stomach condition that he had. And of course, he couldn't. And he died there in December 1940. My mother wrote to me about this.

But my parents never, ever told me the horrendous conditions in this camp, that they were starving, that the sanitary conditions were awful, that it was bitter cold there. There was no heat. All of that I found out much, much later.

In the spring of 1941, my father was sent to another camp, to Camp des Milles, which is near Marseilles. And in order to stay in touch with each other and with me, because they were allowed only to write one page a week, and that much

they did tell me then, my father would write one page, send it on to my mother, and she'd write on the reverse side and then mail it to me. And then the next week, she would write one page, send it to my father, and he'd write on the reverse side.

And I have, to this day still, all those letters that my parents sent to me. I, of course, was able to write to them as often as I wanted to and as much as I wanted to. And it was perhaps an aberration of the war. But they were able to put a French stamp on it and send it directly to England. It would always go through the censor and be opened. And I'm assuming that my letters were also opened.

At one point in 1940-- early 1942 I believe it was, I learned that one could send money to the camps-- I mean, to the people in the camps, and that there was a canteen there where you could buy such exotic things as bananas and oranges, when they were on a starvation diet. And I sent my parents money. And the money that I sent them came from a stamp collection that I sold in England.

And the stamp collection has a history. When I was leaving Germany, I wanted to take it with me. And the Nazis did not permit that I take that with me because it was something of value. And so my parents told me, you can't take it. And I was not going to leave Germany if I couldn't take my stamps. And my parents said, well, you know, we'll get-- we'll leave them with somebody, and we will get them someday. When we leave Germany, we will leave them with someone. We'll get them someday. Don't worry about it.

But I was not going to leave without my stamps. And so before I left Germany, every night for several nights in a row, with a flashlight underneath my covers in my bed, I took every stamp out of the stamp album. And then my suitcases had been packed under the supervision of somebody from customs so that when I get to the customs center I wouldn't have to go through my suitcases being inspected and having to repack them.

--sign, reel 4.

So I took this tremendous risk. And my suitcases were on the-- kept on the third floor of the house that I lived in. And at night when my parents were asleep, I crept up the stairs, and the stairs were squeaking. And I was afraid my parents would hear it, but apparently they didn't. I went up there, opened up the suitcases-- and there was a little give on that wire that was put around the suitcase by the customs people-- and put each stamp individually into the suitcases, the two suitcases that I was taking with me. I got all of my stamps in there.

And I remember, I wrote a note and said, my stamps are my picture albums. And I put that note in my father's desk. And when I-- before I left Germany, when I was already on my way, my parents traveled with me to visit an uncle and aunt of mine before they put me on the train. I told them, when you get back home, I want you to look in the desk, in the middle drawer in the back. I left a note there for you.

And my parents said, well, what did you write? Well, you just have to wait until you get back home. And then when I got to England, and I opened up my suitcases and they were full of stamps everywhere, I had to shake everything out because there might be a stamp in there. I wrote to them, my picture albums have arrived safely. And then my parents, of course, found that note-- my picture albums are my stamps.

And my parents were very upset with me and wrote to me and said, don't ever do anything like this anymore and so on. But it's those stamps that I sold because I didn't have any money really. And my parents didn't know that it came from the stamps. And so my parents were able to buy themselves something to supplement their horrible diet, which I'm very glad they were able to do.

They didn't get all the money. Probably for every dollar or every shilling, I guess I should say-- for every shilling that I sent, the Nazis probably kept 90% of it and only gave very little to my parents. But still, it meant-- it was something. And the last amount that I sent, they never received because it arrived, obviously, after they were already gone from there, knowing when I sent it and having found out later when they were sent away.

In July 1942, my mother was deported from that camp where both of my parents had been originally, from Gurs. She

was deported to Camp de Rivesaltes, which is halfway approximately between Gurs and Milles, where my father was. And my mother writes a beautiful letter from there describing her trip from-- I don't know if she was on a train or if she was on a truck. She doesn't say. But they came past Lourdes, and she got a glimpse of Lourdes. And she describes the beauty of Lourdes.

And then apparently at some point she got a glimpse of the Mediterranean. And she describes that. And she describes the undulating wheat fields and the oranges on the trees and the flowers and the other blooms that she is seeing. And I just took that to believe that she was on a nice journey. And she wrote this beautiful letter describing all the things she saw. Never-- because she didn't say anything bad, I wanted to believe that all was well. She just moved closer to my father. Maybe one more move and they'll be together.

And then I got a letter from my father written the 12th of August 1942, where he says, tomorrow I'm going to be deported to an unknown destination. And it may be a very long time before you hear from me again. And then there was a letter from my mother, written September 1, 1942. And I would like to read an excerpt of that into this tape, if I may. My mother writes in her letter dated September 1, 1942-- and I'm only going to read parts of the letter.

She says, "It's very difficult for me to write to you today, but there's no use. It has to be done." And then she refers to some mail that she has received from me. And then she goes on. "The last few weeks have been very upsetting for all of us, but especially for me. Your dear papa was deported from Camp le Milles on August 12. And unfortunately, I do not know where he was sent.

The last mail I had from him was dated August 9, in which he expressed the hope that somewhere on route we would meet because the transport from here left at the same time for an unknown destination. I remained here because your dear papa lately was a forced laborer."

And that's the only time that I've heard that mentioned. I never knew that.

"But now there is another transport leaving from here. And this time I am leaving on it. My only hope is that I will still meet dear Papa somewhere. And then we will carry our lot, no matter how difficult it may be, with dignity and with courage. My dear, good child, I will try in every way possible to remain in touch with you. But it will probably be a long time before we hear from each other again."

And then still later in the letter she says, "Continue to be always good and honest, carry your head high, and never lose your courage. Don't forget your dear parents. We shall continue to hope that one day we will see each other again, even if it takes a long time. My dear, good child, let me greet you and kiss you heartily. I will never forget you and deeply love you, Mute."

And then there was one more postcard that I got from my mother, dated September 4. And it is mailed in Montauban, which was northwest from where she was at the time. But she writes in the postcard, and it's real shaky handwriting-- "Traveling to the east, sending you from Montauban many loving farewell greetings." That doesn't really express it as strongly as what she's saying. But she's actually saying it's a very final goodbye.

It's not possible to translate that into English the way it is said in German. And I, being in the denial stage, I, until not too long ago, until just a few years ago, read that postcard to read, "traveling in an easterly direction." And that she's saying, you know, goodbye. I'll be seeing you again soon because I'm going on a trip.

And it's very clear what she's saying. But I did not want to understand that. And I think that was my coping mechanism. Had I understood or tried to understand, I don't think I could have really survived it.

And so I waited and waited and waited. And how long is a long time? Is it a week? A month? A year? 10 years? And I decided maybe I need to wait until the war is over. And then the war was over, and I didn't hear. And so then I made all kinds of excuses.

I've moved several times, and the post office may not have forwarded the letters. They perhaps have lost my address.

Maybe they're suffering from amnesia. Maybe they don't know how to find me. But someday I will find them.

And it wasn't-- well, I was back-- I went back to Germany after the war was over. And I will talk more about that later. And I was in Germany until 1948, March 1948. I was not able to go back to the village where I came from until the summer of 1947 because-- and I think the reason I was not able to is, had I gone back before, I would have had to admit that they are not there. This way I could still fool myself. Maybe they're in Kippenheim.

But if I go there and they're not there, I can no longer use that. And so finally, at one time I actually was on the train going there. And when the train stopped the first time, I got out and went back to where I was-- because I couldn't handle it. But finally in August of '47, I said, my stay in Germany is coming to an end. And I either go there to Kippenheim, or I won't go there. But I've got to decide. And so I decided to go. And of course, they were not there.

But that still didn't make me realize or understand or accept what may have happened to them because I still kept on hoping to hear. And while I was in Germany, I visited displaced persons camps. And I tried all kinds of organizations to find out where they are, looked at all kinds of lists. And they weren't on any lists.

In 1956, I received two letters, one pertaining to my mother, one pertaining to my father, from a French organization, which stated that on the 11th of September 1942, both of my parents were sent from a camp in France, from Drancy, which I later found out was sort of a transit camp where everybody from all over France was brought there before they were sent on to concentration camps or extermination camps in Poland-- that my parents were sent on the 11th of September 1942 to Auschwitz.

That was the first time that I had that much concrete evidence. And so I still said, well, people survived, and they may have survived. And I still kept on hoping to hear from them. In 1980, I visited the various camps where my parents were, not all of them but some of them. I visited Camp de Gurs. I visited Dachau and Auschwitz.

And when I stood in Auschwitz on the ramp where the decision was made by the camp administration as to who will live and who will die, that's when I finally suddenly accepted the fact that my parents, indeed, are no longer alive and did not survive this. This was September 1980. That's a very long time.

I think before, I probably intellectually knew but emotionally couldn't accept it. But by September 1980, I was able to emotionally accept that.

Last year, in the fall of 1990, the Soviet Union released some information about what happened to people in various concentration camps, including Auschwitz. And it was possible to fill out a questionnaire at the American Red Cross, which would be sent to an International Tracing Service in Germany. And I immediately got those forms, but I didn't fill them out. I wanted to, and I didn't want to.

And in June of 1991, I was in Germany on a speaking tour and realized at one point that I was very close to where this International Tracing Service is and decided to go there. And I met a marvelous woman there, a warm, loving, kind, sweet, gentle woman. And with her help, I was able to fill out the application form to see if that information that was released would give some information about my parents.

She told me it probably wouldn't because the information basically are death certificates. And death certificates were issued only on people who lived in Auschwitz for a length of time and then died for whatever reason. And my parents probably, by the time they got to Auschwitz, if they even survived that trip, probably went straight to the gas chambers because they had almost two years of camp experience behind them and probably were not in very good condition. And so probably I won't find out anything.

And this woman said I would have to wait about a year to hear because they've had so many requests. And they're going to take them in the order they received them. So there was even, as late as this 1990, '91, some denial on my part still, or trying to deny, or trying not to want to know and yet wanting to know. And I'm not sure, you know, what I'll find out. I think I know, and I'm not sure how I will deal with that. That's still something to be seen.



Maybe I need to talk about myself in England. I remained in school and remained with the Simmons family until July of 1940. Mrs. Simon, who paid for my board and lodging, informed me shortly before my birthday, my 16th birthday in August of 1940, that in England one only has to go to school until one is 16 years old. And since I was going to be 16 on August 15, I needed to drop-- at the end of the school year, which was the end of July, I needed to drop out of school and go to work and earn my own living so that I could have a roof over my head and be able to support myself.

And I was just absolutely flabbergasted and shocked. I mean, here I was supposed to go on to college, and I hadn't even finished high school yet. And dropping out of high school, I had never heard of anything like that. And what would my parents think? But I couldn't-- couldn't and wouldn't tell them. I could, but I wouldn't tell them that.

And I said to her, I don't know how to find a job. I have no skills. I don't know what I can do. And so she said, well, I'll see if my daughter can help you. And she would always call on her daughter. And so Mrs. Mayer found a job for me with a cantor, who lived on the same street as she did, who was either divorced or separated. And he had a 14-year-old daughter who lived with him. And he wanted me to be a companion to this 14-year-old girl, who had really no friends.

She's a nice little girl, but she had no friends. And so I was to walk her to school and pick her up from school. And my other job was to dust in the house. It was a big house-- dust the furniture every day. And that was basically my duty. And I had free board and lodging that way and got five shillings a week.

And I thought I was on my way to being a millionaire because I never had so much money. I still had the 10 marks from Germany. I hadn't touched them because nothing really terrible had happened that I needed them for.

And shortly after I got there, the air raids started. The heavy raids started. I remember, I believe it was on a Saturday evening, we looked out the window to the east, and the sky was all red. And it was when the East End was on fire. The East End of London was on fire. And it looked as though the sun was, setting but the sun doesn't set in the east.

We spent-- when the raids then became fairly regular, a shelter was built inside the garage. And there was-- the household there consisted of the cantor, his daughter, myself, but there was also another man living there, who was a refugee from Germany and a friend of the cantor. So there were-- I assumed that four bunks would be built in the shelter. But there were five bunks built in the shelter. And so I had to rationalize that. And so I thought, well, maybe his wife is coming back, and that's why.

And once a week on Fridays, a woman whose husband also was a cantor, she and her husband also were refugees from Germany. But her husband was interned in the Isle of Man. This woman came on Friday morning and cooked a meal for the-- the Sabbath meal and some meals that we could warm up during the rest of the week. And then she always stayed on Fridays and had the Sabbath meal with us.

And then I don't really know what happened because the little girl and I would leave, and we'd play or do something. And so that was it. But then we moved into this shelter. And we finally decided, when the raids came fairly regularly and lasted a good part of the night, we just are going to sleep in the shelter instead of going to the shelter and going back to the bedroom.

And one night I woke up in this shelter, and some-- there were two double bunks and a single bunk. And something was going on in this single bunk. I didn't know what it was. I sort of risked one eye and was petrified. And the next morning the little 14-year-old girl said to me, was there a lot of bombing last night? And I knew somehow intuitively that she probably saw and heard something and wanted me to explain it to her. But I didn't know what it was. And I didn't want to admit that I didn't know.

And so I said, I don't know. I slept all night. I have no idea. But whatever went on in this bunk went on then night after night after night. I became increasingly more fearful. And so one day, when I was alone in the house, I called Mrs. Mayer. And I said to her, I can't stay here any longer. She said, why not? What is wrong now?

And I said, I don't want to witness a murder. And she didn't ask me to explain anything. But she said, are you there alone? And I said, yes. And she said, start packing your suitcase. I'll be right over. And I said, but I have to pick up the

little girl from school soon.

Never mind. Don't worry about it. I will take care of everything. Go to your room, start packing, and open the door when I ring the doorbell. And I will be-- I'll bring you over here. So I went back to Mrs. Mayer's house again. And she told me never to have any contact with this family, that everything's been taken care of, and not to worry.

And I stayed with her for a few days, with her and her family. And then she placed me into a girls hostel on Belsize Park-- in Belsize Park, actually. And it was on Belsize Park. Number 27 Belsize Park was the main address. But there were three houses. And I was put in the house, number 46 Belsize Park.

This hostel, there were-- the women-- because some of them weren't really girls. They were women. They were women in their 20s, some of them even older. I was, at that time, the youngest to arrive there. After that they even took younger girls.

We were all refugees from Germany. And the home was run by a Mrs. Glicksman, who was herself a refugee from Germany. And she was a rather exploitative woman. She took whatever she could from us and gave little in return. The meals, for instance, I don't think I ever knew what I ate. Everything was ground up something. I mean, it was never recognizable.

And for instance, the building that I lived in, number 46 Belsize Park, in the winter there was no heat. And when the pipes froze, there was no water. Number 27, on the third floor, is where Mrs. Glicksman lived. That building was heated because she wanted heat. And I, after quite some time, I was successful in being able to move into number 27. So at least I had some heat. I had some warm water. I had water to wash myself, to wash my clothes.

I mean, I remember having literally a brown crust on my body during the winter, my clothes having some unrecognizable gray color because I had no way of washing them while I lived in number 46. We sometimes got candles, and we would put our hands around the candles to keep warm.

Anyway, when I arrived there, I was placed in this room with-- there was eight of us in this room. And I was told that the women in this room don't really speak English, so I'd have to talk German to them. And this was the first time that I was going to talk German. I hadn't talked any German. Though I wrote letters in German to my parents, I hadn't spoken German. And so I was-- and I should introduce myself when I get there.

So I walk in, and I'm trying to tell them who I am. And I wanted to say I am the new girl in this room. And instead I said, I am the new maid. And they immediately showed me where the broom and the mop was. And I started to cry, I am not a maid. But that's what you told us.

And so that was just very temporary. And I was the youngest one in that room. And they wanted to know, of course, what happened, where was I, and why did I leave. And so I told them that I didn't want to witness this murder. And they all started to laugh. And I said it wasn't funny. I mean, how would you like to witness a murder.

And so this one woman, she was probably about 20, took me aside and explained some of the facts of life to me. And I said to her, you have a dirty mind. My parents wouldn't want me to associate with you. I am never going to talk to you ever anymore. And she said, how do you think your parents had you? And I said, I don't know, but not that way.

And for a long time I didn't talk to her. Eventually I did. Eventually I did learn some more and realized that she-- what she was telling me was not dirty but were the facts of life.

This Mrs. Glicksman ran a doll factory in this home, where she employed some of the people that lived in the home. And I started to work there. So I learned how to make dolls and how to make dolls clothes. I learned how to sew on a sewing machine. So I finally learned some skills.

And we-- after I had done this for quite some time, and I don't remember exactly when-- though I still have my alien registration book from England, and I could probably verify the dates from that. Another woman, young woman, who

also worked in the doll factory with me, she and I decided we were going to strike out and we're going to find a job someplace else using our sewing skills.

And we both got a job at Harrod's in where they were-- in the department where they were making children's clothes. In fact, that department made the clothes for the now queen of England and princess Margaret. But we weren't allowed to do that because those clothes had to be perfect. And I learned how to smock there. And in, I believe it was in 1943, late 1943, I decided that I really needed to do something about the war effort, and I needed to work in a war factory and contribute something to the war effort. And so I left Harrod's and worked in a factory.

And the first job that I had, I was put on a manual press. And I worked that press for about a week. And I thought, I need to do bigger things, more important things. And so i-- I had no idea what I was doing on this machine. Nobody knew what they were doing.

And I asked the foreman on the Monday of the second week there if I couldn't be put on one of the bigger machines and do something more important. And so he said, well, I can put you on a power press. And he showed me how to use it. And I had an accident on that machine because the machine was defective, which he knew and didn't tell me. And I lost the tip of my right index finger.

And I was not able to work for about seven weeks. And then-- I had joined the union during that first week. And the union helped me find another job. And the company had to pay me my wages the seven weeks that I wasn't working. And they were very angry when I then didn't come back. But I found out that there were several defective machines in this shop and several other people had been hurt. And so I did not want to go back there.

And then I worked in another factory. We were making bullets. It was very obvious we were making bullets. And we were rotated. There were different things you did to these bullets. And we were rotated so that nobody ever did anything for any length of time. I guess to avoid boredom.

And after I-- and I was there, by the way-- I remember this very clearly-- on D-day, the 6th of June 1944. I remember hearing the planes overhead, one after the other.

After I was there about a--