

Ilsa Friedman, April 29, 1987

Q: Today is Wednesday, April 29, 1987. This is Fern Niven, in Sarasota, Florida. I am going to be interviewing Mrs. Isla Friedman, who is a survivor of the Holocaust. Mrs. Friedman has agreed to share her experiences with us, so that other people may understand what the Holocaust was about.

Q: Mrs. Friedman,..uh.. as I explained to you when we were talking a few minutes ago,..uh.. we would like you to tell us about some of your early life. uh..Your parents.. what they did for a living...where you were born..uh..how many brothers and sisters you had..whatever you can think of that would (be) present a rounded picture of yourself.

A: Eh, you want to know my age?

Q: If you would like to tell us.

A. I am born in 1914, in Dortmund, in between Rhineland and West Berlin, and, uh, my mother was Gentile (..I'm sorry..) when she married Father but she converted in 1912 to the Jewish religion and she was one of the most remarkable women I have ever seen. The most remarkable Jewish woman. She made the best Jew out of me..the very best, and, so, we had a wonderful life together. My sister was born in 1924, and she was 10 years naturally, 10 years younger than me and we had birthdays the same day..and..Father had a haberdasher store in Dortmund, and, (we) our life was wonderful together until the Nazi time, naturally. I went to school. I had high school and graduated from college.

Q: What did you major in, in college?

A: It was just...I did not go to college to ..er..major in anything. I just made it to the ..they call it "abitur" in German.

Q: Meaning what?

A: Meaning like ..uh..how can I say..like I am ready to go to college.

Q: O.K. like a preparatory school..

A: That's right.O.K....and I went from Dortmund during my school time, I went to Elbefeld..and that was already the beginning of the Nazi time, and..

Q: When do you date the beginning of the Nazi time? Can you give it a year for yourself?

A: Yes, the Nazi time started in 1933 with Hitler, but before, there was constantly a..an..how can I..I will get the words I am missing, you see.. they were constantly uh..advertising..advertising for the regime. And, while I went to school in Eberfeld, there was a girl who was wearing the hotencrass..

Q: The German cross?

A: The Nazi cross..the swastika..and I told her one day, "Why do you do that?" "That is the future." she said. And we had a terrible fight. We hit each other and I succeeded. She couldn't wear this sign any more. That was my first encounter with the swastika. So, then I graduated and I went into Father's business. In 1936, I married my husband. You don't want to know any details. How I met him or..

Q: No, but I would like to know whether you family were..well, you said your mother made you into a good Jew..

A: Yes, she converted..

Q: That means that she practiced..

A: Judaism was important. Yes, she went to the synagogue and with ten years on Yom Kippur, I fast already half a day. You know, that is all the upbringing of my mother. Father was in business, but she did all this good work for me..

Q: When you were growing up, as a child, other than this girl that was wearing the swastika, were there anti-Semitic events that occurred to you..?

A: Ya, there were, but, not it deterred me. Only when I was Elbefeld, I was grown up enough that it deterred me mentally. There were plays in school, when, ..uh..these are German children's plays..and there is a word..Monsieur Schmidt, Monsieur Schmidt, what brings the Jewli, Euli, is the name..that is why I asked you if I should go into details because it is very difficult to tell this, to translate this in English..what brings Julie with herself..and when you sing it, it comes out like Jude, you know..

Q: Yes, yes..

A: So, one girl came to me.."Da Jude..you are the Jude.." What I answered I don't know, but it still was in my mind. That is really was I can say. The only thing I had in school, a girl friend, a Gentile girl friend..only Gentile girl friend..I had a few Jewish girl friends, but with the Jewish..with the Gentile friend, I was much more close. We were very close.

Q: Did you go to any religious school?

A: Eh, we had the, eh...I did not go to a religious school, but we had the religious service,..not service...,learning in the school where we learned all the other\_\_\_\_\_.

Q: A public school, but with religious instruction? Did they \_\_\_\_\_Judaism?

A: Ya, Ya. High school. Ya. That's right. And I am, what you call it, confirmeered..

Q: Confirmed

A: Confirmed. At fifteen years, I was confirmed.

Q: So your family were reformed Jews.

A: \_\_\_\_\_reformed schools. So I couldn't allow myself. That saved my husband's life.

Q: So you were brought up in a practicing Jewish home but one that was reformed.

A: Reformed. That's it. Ya

Q: O.K. You mentioned you met your husband in 193\_.

A: 193\_. I met him much earlier but that he was interested in me..that was in 1936. and we married the 4<sup>th</sup> of October, 1936. That was already during the Nazi time, and we ..but I am going too fast..there was a time, between '33 and '36 it started after '33, around '34 that the Jew couldn't go any more to no bathing

Q: Beaches

A: Beaches..no more beaches..not in restaurants.. and not in cinemas, and so on..that started already. And, few of the Jewish friends said to me, "But, you, you look so Gentile, you can go all over, but it never occurred to me that I could go..

Q: To take advantage..

A: To take advantage.

Q: Did you have to wear a yellow star or..?

A: No, that was much later..that was much later. I did not wear a yellow star. So I married my husband...And in '38, we only were married one year and a half..first of all, I was from a good, well-to-do Jewish home, and my husband was a very well-to-do man, and in '38, he tried to emigrate, but he wanted to have little money in Belgium or Holland, so..

Q: To where did he want to emigrate?

- A: Most probably to Belgium..Eh..he worked in Cologne with a steel company and, naturally, as a Jew, he was the only Jew there. They were all jealous about his making his money, because, in '38 already, Hitler took power in '33, they were all working for the war machine, so the steel was a very big business, and he made quite a lot of money, and he tried to bring 10,000 mark over \_\_\_\_\_ Germany to Belgium, and he did hide it in his car, but there was one man in the company who was always jealous about his, my husband's job, and wanted to have, naturally, Mr. Gottshalk, my name was Gottschalk when I was married, and my maiden name was Goldschmidt, I forgot that...and he always wanted to have the job, my husband's job...so he...we learned that much later..he,...uh..how would you say...denounced him...he denounced him and reported there is a car with that and that number from Cologne, with the name of Herbert Gottschalk, coming through and it is very suspicious. Naturally my husband was taken. They found the money and...
- Q: Were you in the car also?
- A: No, I didn't know anything about it. Nothing whatsoever that he was....he was 15 older than I am...I was 21 and he was 36 when we married..So, I was \_\_\_\_\_ and I was so.....my parents were very strict, you know, so he made a woman out of me....so I was for him a little girl..
- Q: I understand.
- A: You understand. So he did not say anything to me. So he was taken to prison and, ..uh..., and he was..how do you say...veruteiled..condemned for ten months in prison. So, after her...I don't remember..it's such a long time...After he was in the prison for about 5 or 6 months..
- Q: This was a prison, now, not a concentration camp.
- A: No, that was a prison. After 5 or 6 months, he became ..uh. a kidney infection and ..uh..but that was not all..he had to go to the hospital, but that was not only infection. It was t.b. ..
- Q: Tuberculosis?
- A: Tuberculosis. And, as he was not nourished very well, the tuberculosis went into wander ..went around in his body..
- Q: His whole system..
- A: His whole system...and stopped in the testicles.
- Q: ..Mmm...

- A: I was married one year, one year and a half. So, when he came out ten months later, he was a sick man. We went home..we had to have emigration to Belgium. Otherwise, he would have come in a concentration camp..in a regular concentration camp, and we had the emigration..
- Q: I am not sure what you mean, “otherwise you would have been in a regular concentration camp..
- A: ...Because he was in..in a prison. The prison is not a concentration camp. Otherwise, if I would not have had..could show that he had the emigration to Belgium, then, they would have put him right away in a concentration camp.
- Q: I see.
- A: So, but we had this because his relatives, Gottschalk, are mostly Belgium descent. So, I picked him up from the prison...the emotional things...I say I picked him up from the prison..the emotional things, picking up the husband, who did nothing at all, just bringing his own money, that we could live and not going over the \_\_\_\_\_ of his ten marks, it is...for a young woman..it was terrible experience...
- Q: Yes, as you were saying it , I was reacting the same way..You make it sound so simple..
- A: Ya
- Q: But even to get papers in order and to be ready to emigrate...would have been \_\_\_\_\_ experience.
- A: It was just awful and, so, ..eh..now..I picked him up and we went right away over the frontier with all the papers, and nothing..usually much later there were very...the Gestapo was at the frontier and they hit all the Jews who want to go out of..the...uh...of Germany, you know. I find out that..
- Q: They hid them?
- A: They hit..I tell you later from my parents. Father had a concussion. Ya...ya.
- Q: Mm. Mm. \_\_\_\_\_
- A: It...I find out it is very difficult to tell all this in the English language, because my real emotion I cannot show..show..
- Q: Well, you are doing very well.

A: You think so? O.K. Fine, if you think so. All right. Eh..When we were in Brussels, my husband became very sick from this t.b. which came..were ..in his testicles. I guess I told you.

Q: Yes.

A: ..And he had what they called it..I don't know how you understand it..or if it is a French word or Latin word..epididymitis..I don't know if you understand it..

Q: A skin condition?

A: No, it is not a skin condition..It has to do with the testicles. Both testicles were affected and they were very, very swollen and enlarged, and there were pus in it.. So, I have to emphasize that I was only married one and a half years and had just started to live. So, that was him. When he came out of the prison, the 15<sup>th</sup> of February, 1939, and then we..when we were in Brussels, we did everything we could to take my parents out and my sister.

Q: They were still in Dortmund.

A: They were still in Dortmund, and they had to move from their apartment into a much smaller apartment because Jews were not allowed to have big apartments.

Q: Were they moved into a kind of ghetto situation?

A: No, no. No. No. In another Jewish home, where they gave them, I guess, two rooms and a kitchen, too. And we had a nice, very nice apartment in this \_\_\_\_\_.

Q: Was you father's business confiscated?

A: Ach, I forgot all this. My God, that was the worst thing! You see, I have a \_\_\_\_\_. Good that you asked me. Can I still add?

Q: Well, of course.

A: Ya. In..yes..when was Crystalnacht? In '38. November '38 was the Crystal Night, and my husband was in the prison at this time. And, naturally, I was in Elbefeld with my mother-in-law who was very sick. My late husband's mother.. And they had destroyed the whole..my father's whole store..everything was destroyed..everything...\_\_\_\_\_ and Father at this time did fly to Cologne and I told you I had a Gentile mother, and, her sister..she had two...three...two sisters..two sisters..One sister was marvelous. The other sister was..it is not worth to breathe and sound about her. And, this sister was hiding my father in Cologne..

Q: How did she hide him?

A: In her apartment.

Q: In her attic, in an attic, or ?

A: No, no, no...in her apartment..in her regular apartment..So Father came back to Dortmund after everything was passed by, and, you heard it certainly several times. At this time, they took a lot of Jews to Oranuborg..you heard about that...that was a concentration camp, naturally,..not something like Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. And, uh...lets turn it off for a moment, I have to concentrate.. The Crystal Night was in November, and I stayed partly with my parents and partly with my mother-in-law and my father-in-law. My mother-in-law got..uh..uh..you see the most of them..the very little words are missing now because I am very excited. She got a stroke and passed away from that stroke. While she was lying dying, that night, Crystal Night, they did throw a stone into the bedroom window where my mother-in-law was lying dying. We were all together. Nothing happened. Nothing happened. ...It's a joke... {LISTEN TO THE VOICE HERE}

Q: Was she aware of...there?

A: No, no, no, no. She was unconscious. So, then, later on she was cremated...not cremated...she went...can you imagine, I can't find the words...

Q: That's all right. Take your time. You don't have to worry about that..

A: Buried. Can you imagine, she was buried and uh.. then I stayed with my father-in-law and my husband had two brothers.

Q: Was there a problems in having a Jewish funeral in those days?

A: \_\_\_\_\_ No, wait a minute...my..my grandmother passed now. There was not problem at this time. No, there was not problem. My grandmother passed away in '36. So, at this time there was not problem. In '38, when my mother-in-law passed away, I really can't remember..But, there must be nothing because she was buried in Eberfeld on the cemetery. Every time I went to Europe, I visited her and everything...the stones were there...and she was buried regularly. Nothing at all. Uh...and then, so, at this time from November till February, I was preparing the emigration from Germany to Brussels for my husband, late husband. And..don't let me say ..always say "My late husband..". I'll say Herbert, ya..

Q: Right, we'll understand..

A: Ya

Q: You present husband is Ernest and Herbert was your first husband.

A: Ya

Q: O.K.

A: \_\_\_\_\_

Q: It's nice to have such good memories..

A: Oh, I only have such memories.

Q: Terrific.

A: Naturally, we had little arguments, too.

Q: Well, \_\_\_\_\_to appreciate the good times even more.

A: So,...and then, we prepared the emigration of my parents and my sister from Dortmund to Brussels, which was not very easy, but the relatives of my husband were very helpful. The war started in September, I guess. No. The war with...No, there was a war between Poland and Germany already before.. It was...

Q: They had just invaded it..

A: They invaded it. They invaded Poland. I don't remember the date and the month, but in October, my parents came...had the visa to come over from Dortmund to Brussels. In Aachen, what is Aachen in English?

Q: Aachen.

A: In Aachen, is the frontier where you go from Germany to Belgium, or from Germany to Holland. In Aachen, they were taking out all three out of the train, and, they were put in a small room. Father in a different room. Mother and my sister in another room. And, Mother did not had the passport with Sara. You know we Jews always..all had to have a passport with name of Israel Herbert Gottschalk oder Sara Isle Gottschalk. That was the sign that we were Jewish. Mother didn't had it because she was not born Jewish. She had on "Elizabeth Gottschalk". And my sister had the Sara Margaret Gottschalk. And Father, naturally did. So,.



Q: I had never heard that. I had just heard that the passports were stamped with a large letter “J”.

A: Ya, “J” too. That was a large “J”. But this is something new for me...ya

Q: {comment not understood}

A: So, I was Sara, which is a beautiful name. They didn’t anything do to my sister because she was 12 or 13 years old. And they came out of the room...that is, I didn’t see it...that is what Mother told me...and you have to realize Mother was like a curasier. She was alike a Brunhilde...can you imagine Brunhilde in a Wagner opera, tall and ..

Q: statuesque

A: statuesque...very strong...and..but when she said something that was said. So then she heard next door, like somebody hit somebody and chairs were falling off...and Mother opened the door and there was a small man...(I have to watch my language)..There was a small man...Father was on the floor and he...

Q: kicked him?

A: ...kicked him, in his head and all over, and Mother took that man and she grabbed him, and said, “You will not hit my husband. That is my husband, and I am Gentile...She was not Gentile, but she said that. So, he let go, and said, “Get out of here.” So, my father was dizzy. He could not, almost that they had to carry him. And people out of the train came and picked him up into his compartment. So, he came three quarters dead to Brussels and we had to have an ambulance to bring him to the hospital, but he came out of it.

Q: The train that you came out on—was it a normal passenger train?

A: Normal passenger train. First class. Yes, if you had the money. At this time, yah.

Q: O.K.

A: And my parents, too. So, then they were in Brussels. That was in October. And we all lived together.

Q: How did people manage financially under these conditions when you weren’t allowed to bring out money..

A: They brought out 30 marks. But they brought out, before I came here, I did \_\_\_\_\_ a little doggie, stuffed doggie, and Mother took out all the insides from the doggie and she stuffed it with money.

- Q: All right. 30 marks would be what? 30 dollars?
- A: Yah, and my husband, he worked for a long time, because they question is legitimate. My husband, before Hitler, he always brought his money he earned to Belgium or to Holland, so he had different accounts in Belgium and in Holland.
- Q: Did he suspect that there was going to be a problem? Is that why he did that?
- A: No, no, he was just ..he thought the situation in Germany is not so **stabil** and it is better to have money in another country than in Germany.
- Q: That was very far-sighted of him.
- A: Ya, he was very far-sighted. So, when...I forgot to tell you when we came to Brussels, there was a cousin from Holland. He arranged quite a lot for my husband in Belgium with the family, with the Gottschalk family..and he succeeded to get the money my husband had in a safe with an aunt. Ach, that is such a long story. My husband's aunt was in Holland, married ..eh..to a professor, in Masterick, and, but is that interesting for you hear all this?
- Q: Well, I am going to let you decide how much is relevant to your experience.
- A: Only to show you how ..uh.. how people..how relatives can be to other relatives..that I like to mention..
- Q: Go ahead..
- A: Maybe it's not good. I don't know.. But he doesn't live any more anyway. So, and ...he succeeded to get  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the money my husband had in Holland from my aunt to help Herbert to come out of Germany. This money was lost.
- Q: In what way, lost?
- A: He took it!
- Q: He took it. So, relatives are not always good people.
- A: No, no, no. Relatives are not always good. That is what happened. But, anyway, there was still a little bit left, and, before the 10<sup>th</sup> of May, my husband, with, what did you say, what he was, very far..what did you say before, he was very..?
- Q: Far-sighted.
- A: Far-sighted. He, from Belgium, he took the money to America, so, but and left a little bit for us here. We did not know what would come, but that was 2 or 3 days

before the 10<sup>th</sup> of May. The 10<sup>th</sup> of May was the start of the war with Belgium and France. I don't if you have heard about it.

Q: It really wasn't much of a war. It was more of an invasion.

A: Ya.

Q: Especially with Belgium and Holland.

A: Sure, Belgium, Holland and France. It was like an invasion. Ya, but they were in war with France. But it was just a little bit playing here and playing there. It was not a regular war. Eh...On the 10<sup>th</sup> of May, they arrested Jew or not Jew--all the Germans in Belgium. Because the Phipps Color-- I don't know if you heard about it--the Phipps Color -- that was that what Hitler did behind the front here in Holland and Belgium and France. There were these were Germans. There were working against...for...for the German Reich, but everything was done this way that it was not possible for the Belgium, Holland, and French army to have all the munitions they needed to fight the German invasion. So, that was why they arrested all the Germans in Belgium. How they did it in Holland, I don't know. So, my husband, was between them because he was on the street and everybody could see that he...the immigrants looked not like Belgians. \_\_\_\_that you could see that.

Q: But you said that he took a great deal of his money to the United States.

A: Ya.

Q: And then he came back? How did he get ....?

A: He did sent it from one bank to another. I'm sorry....

Q: So he remained in Belgium and that's why he was\_\_\_\_\_

A: He stayed in Belgium. Yes. He should have gone to America.

Q: And what about the rest of you? Were you also picked up because you were Jews?

A: No, not the women. We were not picked up. And Father was lucky. He was at home. Nobody asked for him. But Herbert was gone.

Q: Again.

A: Again. And he was sent to South of France to Saint Supriel. Did you ever hear about that camp?

- Q: I do have a Mercur. Uh, but it doesn't show that.
- A: No. That is here.
- Q: Almost on the French Riviera.
- A: It was on the French Riviera. But not in this section. It was near Spain. Near Paquinon. Paquinon is the frontier between Spain and France. That runs here. And, in his condition. In his health condition, it was just terrible. He was under doctor's care. He got injections for the t.b., but it did not help very much before, you know, before the camp, it did not help very much. His testicles stayed swollen and he was in very deplorable condition.
- Q: This is what year now. May 10 of 19..?
- A: 1940.
- Q: Did you know where he was?
- A: No. I didn't know anything where he was until months later..it's getting late...
- Q: No, I'm just watching because the tape is going to run out.
- A: Uh, huh. Until months later, letters came from friends and they saw Herbert Gottschalk, and they wrote to me that he is fine and that he was trying to reach me. I went to the Swiss consulate to go over the diplomat mail. Maybe I could get a letter from my husband. It was not possible. But then I got one letter. One single letter, I had. And, he wrote to me that he is quite in good condition. That he lying in the sun nude, which is very good for t.b., but the food was not the best, I shouldn't worry. That is all he wrote.
- Q: What were the conditions of your lives at that time?
- A: I was with my parents, and the condition was very...how you mean "condition"? You mean...
- Q: Did you have enough to eat?
- A: Ya, we had enough to eat. Oh, sure, we had enough to eat.
- Q: You could buy food? You could buy clothing?
- A: At this time we could buy enough food. The hunger came much, much later. There, we had enough to eat and we..not that I remember...maybe I like to block it out. I don't know. I don't remember having seen one German soldier in Brussels. Maybe I like to block it out.. I don't know..

- Q: What were you doing with yourself on a daily basis?
- A: Nothing at all.
- Q: Just keeping house.
- A: Just keep...I was with my parents at this time, and with my sister, and I had my Jewish friends, even from Dortmund a Jewish friend, and we went in the park. We walked around and we tried to get contact with the husbands. She was lucky. She got contact with her husband, and, if I would tell you all the little situations we will sit here for a year. It's impossible.
- Q: I understand. Were you afraid during that time? Personally afraid for your safety?
- A: No, not yet. Not yet. We knew it will not stay this way all the time. We knew that it will not stay this way all the time, but we were not afraid. So, then, through, that is, you see, I told you, I cannot tell all the stories. For instance, there are things which play into your life, like, during the good time, we had Swiss friends who lived in Saint \_\_\_\_\_, and through them, I got a letter. My husband wrote a letter to the Swiss friends, and they wrote to me. And then I wrote to the Swiss friends and they wrote to Ernest. And that were very, very wealthy people. And they did send him money. They did send him things to wear, because he just had his shirt and a pair of slacks on his body, and, when he, I guess it was in October, .that the camp was not guarded, or, I don't remember....He did fly....flew...flee....how do you say that?
- Q: He flew, or he did fly. Whichever way you want...
- A: He did not fly. He went out of the camp.
- Q: Escaped.
- A: Escaped. He escaped with two or three other friends out of this camp and they walked, I don't know how many miles, through the...through the vineyards...and they lived for two or three days, from...just from grapes, which is not a bad....very bad...
- Q: Diet
- A: Diet. And, with the money he had from the Swiss bank, he came to...uh...they came to a station, where they found there were trains, and they took a train to Lyon. So, now he was in Lyon, and ..uh..how this all went, I can't remember. Maybe, he certainly told me, he found a couch...he found an apartment with a Jewish woman...a Jewish family, and they rented to him a couch in the living room for nights. So, he wrote to me, "I am in Lyon and, if you can, it is better you

- come, but, I guess you had better stay with your parents. Luckily, I went. In, on December...
- Q: So, these people who were renting him the couch, were really running a risk because they were harboring an escaped prisoner..
- A: That's right. That's right. But, I guess they had no books or anything else to uh..uh..know all the names of the prisoners. There were thousands and thousands Germans, Gentiles and ...and Jews, you know. I don't think he was ever missed there. I don't think so. Eh., but they was running a risk because he was not...he was not announced at the ...at the Surete, that is the ..
- Q: Police
- A: Police. So, that he did not do. Everything you can buy with money. Some way he paid for his ..uh..card..identity card..
- Q: Identity card
- A: Identity card, but not a French one. That he is escaped from Germany, and he is a Jew, and so on. He had to fill that out and he got a card from ..uh..from the French...from the French government that he can stand for the next four weeks or the next months. But it always had to be...
- Q: Renewed.
- A: Renewed. So, my parents were absolutely against it that I went to France to see my husband. I said I have to go to Herbert and I have to stay with him and uh..that is the thing I will do. So, I went from Belgium to Lyon. But that was not very easy because I knew he had no money, and I had a little. I guess it was maybe two or three hundred dollars in Brussels. So, I asked a friend. I had a small suitcase. To make a double, double bottom and he put those two or three hundred dollars into this suitcase. And, with this suitcase I went to Paris. In Paris, I had to get... Now, that was not as you go from here to New York, believe me. It was..
- Q: Much more complicated.
- A: (laughter)Complicated and dangerous. But with my uh..punim--you know what that is?
- Q: Head?
- A: No, not head, my punim--my face. With my face, I was maybe a little lucky and nobody suspected that I was Jewish. So, in Paris, I needed it...Oh, yah, I had a letter from his doctor that he is critical sick and I had to go to see him (not that I would stay, you see)...I had to go to see him. And, with this letter I went to the

German embassy, or German Gestapo. I really don't know what it was. But, I got the permission to go from Paris to Lyon. There was a demarcation. I don't know how should, how I should explain it. That was a partition between the North of France and the South of France.

Q: Say that word again, please.

A: De-ma-DEMA..maybe R ..KRATION. Demarcation..

Q: Oh, demarcation. O.K.

A: Ya. And, uh.., when I would have passed that, then the danger for me to get caught as a Jew was a little less. Because this part was not as dangerous. The South of France was not as dangerous as the North of France. Not yet. So, during the ride from Paris to this part..to the demarkacion \_\_\_\_\_ I was standing... You know the German uh...uh..trains.. There they have this walk from the... You sit in the compartment..

Q: So then there is a hallway on the side...

A: A hallway. I was standing outside and next to me was standing...I'll never forget it...a German officer. High placed person. And, we came in conversation, and he was a very nice gentleman. I don't know what was his name. And he said, "Why are you going to Lyon? What are you travelling here?" I said that I am going to Lyon to see my husband who is a very sick man and, uh, I wanted to know how his feelings were. I said my husband is Jew. "Ach", he says "That is terrible what they are doing \_\_\_\_\_." I did not tell him that I was Jewish. Uh. That is really terrible. And he really did feel for them. How he was later, I don't know.

Q: At that time, how much did you know about what they were doing to the Jews? You know, that was not... (overlapping)

A: We knew they would do something. We did not know anything about extermination. We only knew that they wanted to take the Jews out of Germany and we only knew that there will be a time where we will come in concentration camps. That we knew. But, when it would be, we did not know.

Q: How did you know about concentration camps, then? They were already taking..

A: That word..concentration schlage..that was a word which was constantly used. That was a word which was constantly used. Uh...so we came to the demarkation \_\_\_\_\_ and my little suitcase..If he would have taken out all the things of the suitcase, he would have found the money, because it was done very badly. So, as I was talking with this German officer, he was my big help, you know. They saw

him. They talked to him, and they thought maybe I am his girlfriend, or whatever, and we were passed.

Q: What a lucky break!

A: It was a very luck break. So, I

#### Side B

A: Where should..When I came to the house where my husband was?

Q: Yes.

A: Ya. I did uh..ring the bell and the lady opened the door and “You must be Ilsa”. I said, “Yes.” “Your husband is waiting for you.” And, I, uh..she opened the door to the living room where he was lying on the very small couch and, uh..so..I told him that..He said, “Ille, Ille, how..how could you come here? We have no money.” I said, “Ernest..(laughter)..Herbert, I brought money and I did show him the little suitcase. When he saw the suitcase, he almost fainted, because he said, “Ille, if they had found it, you..you would have been dead because they would have found it right away.” And I told him the story. So, in this, on this very, very small couch half of this here, I was sleeping with him for two weeks..And when he turned around, I had to turn around too. (laughter) But that did not matter.

Q: It didn't matter. You were together.

A: No. Oh, my God, we were together! And, so, right away, we went to a doctor, a specialist for this, as I told you, epididymitis, and he said he has to be operated, so that at least the pus is going to be taken out. So he was operated, and,if I remember, I guess he didn't take anything for this operation.

Q: No anesthesia?

A: No, he did not take no money. No money. He did not take any money.

Q: He didn't take any money.

A: Money. He did not take any money of ..of..uh this operation, and he was a wonderful, wonderful doctor. So...but we could not stay in Lyon. We only got the permission to stay in Lyon for such and such time. And then we had to go in the vicinity from Lyon and we found, in a village, which is, you will hear later, very important village, Chapon.. how far are you?

Q: CHAPON..

A: ost.



Q: That's the village near Lyon?

A: Near Lyon, about ..uh..by streetcar maybe an hour. We found a very small apartment and, uh., oh, yah, our friends from Switzerland had a friend with, by the name of Monsieur Kornier. He was an officer in the French Army and he was ..uh..and he was working in the French underground. And, we met him in Lyon, while we were still in Lyon, we met him in Lyon, and, uh., he was very, very nice to us, and he said, "Whenever you need me, let me know." My husband, who was a very suspicious man, said, "Ille, be very careful. This Monsieur Kornier is a German spy, and his name is Koerner.." So, I said, "That's not true. You are (can I say mishuga?)

Q: Yes, you can say mishuga..crazy.

A: Yes, you are mishuga. You always are so suspicious, and he is so wonderful to us. And he says "Don't ever tell him where we are going." So, he knew nothing from, of Chaponost because Herbert didn't want it, so I didn't do it. So, we were in Chaponost in 1941 and we met there other Jewish friends. And, he was married to a Gentile girl. But, she stayed Gentile and the children were not converted either. One day, in '42, September '42, he came to us and he said, "We have to go away from here. The situation is getting terrible. We cannot stay here. They will come and take us. We have to try to go to Switzerland." So, Herbert said, "How can be go to Switzerland. We cannot take a train. We have to go to the frontier by train and from there we have to go over the mountains into Switzerland." That is a terrible part that I tell you now. So we had very little money, and we found as guide who would us taken over the mountain into Switzerland. You were never in Europe?

Q: Yes, I have been in Switzerland, and I am envisaging you crossing the mountains. It sounds almost impossible. Those are very steep mountains.

A: Where were you in Switzerland?

Q: In Basil, in Zurich and

A: Not Laclimond...in Geneva?

Q: Geneva.

A: Ya, there is Laclimond. That is the, what is the lake? Oh, no. Uh...Montre? You were in Montre?

Q: No. I was not in Montre. In Lucerne.

- A: Lucerne. O.K. eh..This \_\_\_\_\_ because the name was dark Dutch. Let me start from the beginning. We went by train to the frontier. There we found this guide, this French guide. We gave him the money. It was almost all we had left.
- Q: There were just the two of you now?
- A: Ya, there were the other family, but that takes too long to tell you.
- Q: All right.
- A: They were lucky to stay in Switzerland, but we were not lucky. It takes too long. And, it was just with them...but we found this guide,and he took our money and he said, "I bring you up to the Dondorsch." I don't know how high the Dondorsch is. Let's say like Mt. Washington.
- Q: In New Hampshire?
- A: In New Hampshire. Maybe a little higher. It was in October already snow on top. My husband had a certificate and a letter from the doctor that he was operated and his health in a very bad condition. This letter he had with him for the Swiss to..uh..in the frontier to \_\_\_\_\_.
- Q: The border guards?"
- A: The border guards. So...we went the whole night. We walked up the mountains. It was bitterly cold. And, you know, we didn't had the right shoes for things like that, and for an hour or two we went into a stable to get warm, and then we went further to the mountains. On top of the mountains, were a little...how you call...hut, and in this hut were two or three men who make cheese, and there we should find the guide who would take us to Switzerland.
- Q: Was this on a paved road, or a trail?
- A: Are you kidding? That was over stones and, uh.., and..stoney..and not paved roads. It was through..first through the woods and then later on through the stones, and there, on the top of the mountains, there are no trees. So, we stayed a whole day. He never came. He was gone and the money was gone. So, my husband said...And that...Those men said, "Now you go down." We had to go down again to go into Switzerland. The name of the... We should have gone to Aguna. That is already in Switzerland. But the frontier was .. there are two Saint Gan Gall. One Saint Gan Gall is French. The other Saint Gan Gall is Switzerland.
- Q: I don't understand the word, Saint Gan Gall.
- A: Saint Gan Gall is a village. St. Gingolph, I suppose, but I can look it up...So, there are two St. Gan Galls. One is Switzerland, and one is French. It's a lake. We

walked and we walked and suddenly we see a Swiss guard, and he came to us. We showed him our passports. We showed him that we are Jews, and my husband showed his letter. He was very nice. "Come with me. We go to my higher place.."

Q: Commandant?

A: Commandant. We came to Saint Gan Galls to the commandant. The room was..uh..Oh my God! {listen here} The room was a little bigger than this one here. So, the commandant, heavy, Swiss, like the Swiss are cursing, he said, "We don't want you here. The time has passed where we accepted the immigrants. We just...maybe two or three days later where they opened the frontier to the immigrants. You know, that they go from France into Switzerland.

Q: But now it was too late.

A: I said to him, "Please read this letter. My husband is such a sick man." He didn't even read the letter. He said, "If he can go over the Dondorsch, and he is not sick. That is a fake..it's a fake letter. And he had there three or four guns. I said to him, "Please don't send us back. Kill us here." And he hit me so terrible. {Listen here} He gave me seven ..how you call it?

Q: Slaps.

A: Slaps. \_\_\_\_\_. And then they took my Herbert, two officers took Herbert under the arm and I went with him to the frontier. They opened the...there is such a ...how can I say...?

Q: Barricade?

A: Barricade. They opened the barricade and on the other side was the French Gestapo, and there we were...Three years ago, I witnessed my husband, with \_\_\_\_\_ and I saw exactly the same thing and \_\_\_\_\_ in the same way. I'm sorry, I can't control myself..

Q: That's all right. This is really hard on you.

A: They took us and naturally, many other people tried to go over the frontier, from France to Switzerland. They caught them all. They caught them all. There were maybe three hundred fifty people. Some stayed in the prison, in Saint Gan Gall, and some, who had money, could stay in a hotel. We had a few dollars, a few francs left, and we said we wanted to stay in a hotel. So, we ...oh, no, oh, my God, we came to the gendarmerie...

Q: To the police station..

- A: To the police station, and they took all..Herbert's name and all the things what you have to take if you have a prisoner. And, then, they started with me and, you know, what I did. I said, "You have nothing to do with me, I am Gentile." So he said, "O.K. You are free."
- Q: Just like that.
- A: Just like that. It was..I will tell you stories..you will not believe it...you see God. And then I guess my Mother gave me \_\_\_\_\_. I guess she did that. So, he says, "You are free, I don't need you." I said, "I'll stay with my husband, but I have to go to the toilet, and another man came with me outside, and, in a little box, I had the jewelry from my mother-in-law and from my old jewelry. And I gave him the box. I said, "Please, take all this, and let my husband come out with me." He says, "I can't do that." He couldn't do it.
- Q: So, he was imprisoned.
- A: With me, in the hotel. We were in a hotel, but in front of the door were policemen.
- Q: You just had to stay in the hotel room?
- A: We stayed in the hotel room until the next train would go to Redersad. Did you hear about Redersad? It is near Saint Prien, near Perion, too.
- Q: That was a camp?
- A: That was a camp. It was the camp for going to Drancy. From Drancy to Auschwitz.
- Q: Go ahead.
- A: So we stayed in the hotel and I washed ..I washed my husband's things that he would look clean because you told me about people who kept themselves clean. That was the only thing I \_\_\_\_\_ took care of, to be clean. To look clean and to be clean. So, uh..and..in front of us was the lake. Herbert couldn't swim, and I am a good swimmer. If I would have been alone, I would have swum through the lake to the other side to Montreux. We saw on the other side of the lake, Montreux.
- Q: Why would you have gone there? Would it have been safer?
- A: Montreux? Montreux is French..is..is Switzerland. Montreux is Switzerland.. So, but I couldn't leave him here, so we..I stayed with...Will you believe me, we made love there..

- Q: That's a reaffirmation of life, isn't it?
- A: Ya, I guess it was. So, the next day, we were 350 people, women, children, men. A family Friedman, whom I recall from Czechoslovakia. My husband is from Czechoslovakia, but no relatives were with us and we came in..all..in those few hours very close. So, we went into the train, and the whole night,...oh, yah..and the people next to the window on the train, to the window which went outside...they were all on chains...can you imagine..?
- Q: They were all...?
- A: On chains.
- Q: On chains.
- A: Yah, it's unbelievable.
- Q: This was what kind of a train, now? \_\_\_\_\_ cars or passenger trains?
- A: Oh, no, regular passenger trains, French, French and the guards were partly German and partly French. So..Yah, and then one came and said, "What is this woman doing here?" (me) And he said, "She, ...she accompanied her husband into the camp.." What I would do there, I don't know, but everything what I tell you now was guided by God. You can think I'm michuga, but everything what you will hear..it's like being guided by God. What I did, I was not a \_\_\_\_\_ to do that, really...I was guided by God.  
So, the whole night through, we drove, and, uh, and I guess we had together one slice of bread with us. Now the hunger started, you know. And, we came to Bibezat and we came out of the train and then, what you see in the movie, rush, rush, rush, rush, in the camion in those trucks. And, I was constantly standing next to my husband and we came into the camp, and...Men right, women left. \_\_\_\_\_. "What is this woman doing here?" "She accompan.."
- Q: Accompanied.
- A: Accompanied her husband. "What are you doing here?" I said..uh.."I am Gentile and I am with my husband." "Out, out!" "I will not..""Out, out.." I have to tell you, my husband told me before "Ille, you believe in everything and in everybody. For once, listen to me. Don't have confidence in your money. Don't tell them that you are Jewish. Don't tell them that you have..." I guess I had 10 or 20 dollars..that was about all the fortune I had.. "Don't tell them anything." So I went out and I was crying my heart out.
- Q: Did you still have your box of jewelry?

- A: Yah, I had the box of jewelry. This little box, I had until we came here. Then, I did throw it away.
- Q: I would have thought you would have kept it as a remembrance.
- A: Well, I have no children. I couldn't have children on account of Herbert. That was the worst thing for him. \_\_\_\_\_it happened that he couldn't produce any children. I have to mention that all the time he was sick, he always...he could ...we could love each other, but he could not produce children. So, he was in the concentration camp\_\_\_\_\_. That was not...i was a camp where they gathered all the Jews together, children, women and men, for transportation to Drancy.
- Q: I think they called those "transit" camps.
- A: Transit camps...and from Drancy, there were two Auschwitz \_\_\_\_\_. Uh..while I was going to leave there, to take a train, I did not know where to, a man came behind me, a tiny man, I forgot his name...a Jewish man.
- Q: They made you get off of this train? They made you leave your husband?
- A: I left my husband. I went out of the camp, and while I was going toward the station, Revesald station..this train station, somebody went..came behind me and saw that I was crying and he said to me, "What happened?" I said, "I brought my husband into the camp and..uh..."But why aren't you in the camp?" I said, "I am Gentile. I am not Jewish." "Oh, I have the same thing with my wife. My wife is Gentile and I am Jewish. But, your husband will come out. They will let him out here in Revesald. If you are not Jewish, they will let him out, and if you would be pregnant, that would be even better." So, for three months, I didn't had my menstruation, with all the commotion going on..but, I knew I couldn't be pregnant. I went right \_\_\_\_\_. So, I went, ....he said, "You know what you have to do? You have to go to Perignon. There is a Jewish committee and they help a lot. And they know what they can do for your husband." So, I said, "How do I go to Perignon?" He said, "You take the train from Rivesad to Perignon. I take a train to Perignon, too. I live in Perignon. And, do you have money? I say I have a few francs. I will see how far it can go. I almost told him that I have dollars. We went to Perignon. He asked me a few questions, but, as Herbert told me "Be careful!" I was very careful with him, you see. So then, he said to me "The Committee is there and there. I forgot the street. It has been so long ago. And you go and ask for Mrs. Blass. Her name was Blass. I said, "Please, as you know everybody here, do me a favor, come with me and introduce me, so it is much better to have somebody,..to be introduced." So, he didn't want to come. But, finally, he came with me. He opened the door, and just across was Mrs. Blass. She said....He said, "There is Mrs. Blass." I was in the room and he closed the door. I went to Mrs. Blass and I told her, and I gave her all my heartaches I had. I told her in Jewish, and I said, "I am not Jewish, and my

husband is in the camp, and if she could do something for me, and I have very little money. I..If she could help me. \_\_\_\_\_.  
I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it. I said, "Is there nothing what you could do for my husband? Maybe you can bring him a letter." She said, "Nein, I can't do anything for you." That was all in French, nit Jewish.

Q: This was a Jewish lady.

A: That was the Jewish, Jewish committee, for people from Riversad to Drancy. That was the committee who did everything they could to help from the nebish... from Riversad to Drancy. That is maybe a night or two or a day or two trip. So...

Q: So you were terribly disappointed because you were counting on her to do something..

A: Very disappointed. I told you, listen to me, you will hear how God was with me. You will not believe. You \_\_\_\_\_, you laugh,:

Q: No, no, I told you. Go ahead.

A: Maybe you think I am a little meshugah...So I went out and I was hungry. At this time I was still...it's a small story, but I must tell it to you..I was a very heavy smoker. And, there was a small café, a bistro, and I went into this bistro to have a cup of coffee, and, uh, and while I was sitting there, I saw half a cigarette sitting there, unsmoked. And, from somebody else, I took the cigarette and smoked it. But, I took something, and there asked for a telephone book. And, through this telephone book, I went through all Jewish names--from A to Z--Abanzol, Ezaksol und..and all the Jewish names. I went further and further. I couldn't find the right name. Finally, I came to a name, Weil.

Q: What was the name?

A: Weil. Weil.

Q: W E I L?

A: E I L.. I don't know why I used it, but I used that name Weil and I wrote down the address and I asked there and they told me it's about half an hour,three quarters of an hour a walk. So, I walked to Mr. Weil. It was a hot day. Perignon, down in the South, it's like here. It was very hot. And hungry. I was hungry. Nothing to eat. So, I did ring the bell and Mrs. Weil opened the door and, I guess, for the first time in my life, I collapsed. I collapsed.

Q: ..just on her doorstep..

- A: On her doorstep. I couldn't..my knees...I couldn't. So she brought me into her living room, and the first thing they gave me was a cognac. That was not what...what I needed--a cognac. And I asked her if she has a piece of bread. And I told her my story and Mr. Weil was with her, too. And,...uh...she was Catholic, and he was Jewish. He was..They were married and she was Catholic and he was Jewish. And, uh..until bread I could talk, I could collect myself. He says, "Didn't you go to the...in Perignon to the consulate?" I said I was at the consulate to Mrs. Blass, but she was so reluctant to do nothing...she did not want to do anything for me. So, he said, "I can't understand it..She is doing for everybody something. I can't understand it. Maybe she didn't believe you, as we, in the beginning, didn't believe you. Sometimes the Gentile face is not good either. You know.
- Q: Well, all right. But go ahead. I think it is remarkable that you chose a name almost at the end of the alphabet.
- A: I told you. HE was..HE with big letters, HE was guiding me. So, he took his bicycle, and I walked next to him, and we went back to this Committee, and he opened the door. He must have been a very well-known person with the Committee. Maybe he was a donor. He was French. So, I was sitting next to Mrs. Blass and she looked at me and she said, "How do you..did you meet this man who came with you." I said "It's...\_\_\_\_\_at the camp back where I brought my husband." "What did you tell him? Did you tell him that you are Jewish?" I said, "No, I didn't tell him anything." "That is the biggest spy we have here in Pergignon.
- Q: Mr. Weil?
- A: No, this man who brought me into the committee..
- Q: So, that's why she was so hostile to you.
- A: Yah, that is why she was so hostile. Now I was introduced and now the whole committee was working for Herbert Gottschalk, but they couldn't do anything. They could have brought him something to eat and they brought him a fold cot \_\_\_\_\_, but there was nothing they could do for him. And..
- Q: Were they allowed to go in and out of the camp?
- A: Yah, yah, they were allowed to go in and out of the camp at this time. Maybe half a year later, they had to fly to...not fly..they had to go away...
- Q: Escape?
- A: Escape from Pergignon to...into Spain. So, but at this time they could do that..and, uh..., and they gave him money. The committee...I didn't want to have the money. I said, "I have here a few francs and I have a few dollars. You take the



money, and after the war, you'll give me the money back and they have found er..a room for me where I could sleep during the night without being..because I couldn't go to sleep because I couldn't go to the police. Everything was clandestine. How you could say that?

Q: uh..Secret.

A: Secret. Yah. Everything was secret. Uh..uh...The third..uh afternoon, third morning, I came to the ..uh..Committee..uh and they said Herbert is going to \_\_\_\_\_ to this \_\_\_\_\_ to France this afternoon. I said to them to do something--he should not go. Whatever \_\_\_\_\_ maybe he can help himself as he cannot...as he is not the type to do that. "Come this afternoon. I bring him bread. I bring him the last greetings." They brought me his ring, you know..".and come this afternoon and I tell you the last words." I went away. I went home to my room. Now, I tell you something what nobody can understand. Never, never ever in my whole life I would be able to pray like I prayed this afternoon. {Listen here} I don't know what I prayed, but I did not pray loud. I had to pray...

Q: ..that was all there was left to do

A: Yah, but I gave him the strength. I gave Herbert the strength. With my praying, I gave him something that he came out of the train. He didn't go. When I came to the ....I would have died...\_\_\_\_\_I would have died. I wouldn't have stayed alone.

Q: He did not have to go to Drancy?

A: No. When I came to the Committee...oh, yah..the people who did the most for these desperate people who were in the train for the Drancy..it was Rabbi Fuchs. Please I would like that..if I could find him--this Rabbi Fuchs--Rabbi Fuchs and I guess he had a brother, Fuchs. But he was a Rabbi, and he knew Herbert very well through me, and he did most..mostly the conversation between Herbert and me, und me and Herbert, you know. I mean, he brought what he said..

Q: He carried messages back and forth.

A: He carried messages. So, Rabbi Fuchs went with, I don't know how many loaves of bread to this train, where Herbert was inside. He was...Herbert was standing in the window, and Herbert...I tell you know what Herbert told me...I didn't see that. That is what Herbert told me how he came out of the train. Uh..He went to the window, Herbert, and he took the bread, and he had..Herbert always had such a green hat he looked like a Gestapo man when he was wearing that hat.. I always said, "Don't wear it." "And, how is my wife?" he said. Impitoriable. What is impitoriable?

Q: Imperturbable?

A: What is that?

Q: Not upset.

A: Very upset. Yah. Very, very. Untrostlich auf Deutsch. In German. You can't give her any comfort. You know.

Q: Inconsolable.

A: Inconsolable. \_\_\_\_\_. So, he said to himself, "I cannot stay here. That's why I have to go out. They should kill me here. Instead...then she knows where I died..instead in a concentration camp. So, he took his hat, and, uh.., he went to the through...these were trains like all the other trains with this walk on the outside. He went on the outside and just when he came to the door, two Gestapo men came in and said, "You are not (I have to translate from German) you are not going out! My husband said, "No, not at all, I have to help here. They have to have bread. So he went to Rabbi Fuchs and hollared to him, "How did you come out here?" "I just went out here. I told them I had to help with the bread." But, as you see, we have no bread. We have to go in the village for bread." So Rabbi Fuchs said, "I understand." And he took Herbert. And there were on both sides, uh, with the, uh, I don't...I only know it in French..there were on...they had to go through, through...you see the Gestapo on the right and the left side and you have to go through this..

Q: Turnstile?

A: No, not a turnstile. Like a way, where you go through.

Q: A walkway?

A: A walkway. They were standing on both sides with the gun on their shoulder, just ready to shoot. One asked, "Where are you going with this man?" "We have to buy bread in the village." So, they went out. They took the car. They went to Perpignan, and he did hide Herbert in his hotel and when I came into...into the committee, he was waiting. So, he winked to me and he said, "Come, come." I said, "Where is my husband? Where is my husband?" "He is here." "Where, where?" "Well, I bring him." And I had him back. I had him back.

Q: How long did that last? How long did you stay together?

A: From there on, we stayed all the time together until we were liberated, but that is not the end of my story. This story, yes. Yah, from there they gave us forms, identity cards as French people and we went from uh..from Perpignan to Lyon to a little, but a little, not a little..like a chateau..to a house, a chateau. Herbert met a

- gentleman in Chaproneau, who had a very, very big estate and they were very close. He was a very old man and he liked Herbert. Herbert knew that he knew that Herbert was a Jew and that we both were Jewish. So, we went to him and we asked him if we could stay with him in a small room. Uh. Maybe until the war was over. That was in '42, October '42. We married the 4<sup>th</sup> of October in 1936, and the 4<sup>th</sup> of October, I had my Herbert back again. Can you imagine?
- Q: That's quite a coincidence.
- A: That was the 4<sup>th</sup> of October. So, yah, I have to tell you a little story from this train. We went from Perpignan to Lyon. We were sitting very ..uh..I have to say that...
- Q: Timid?
- A: Timid. Very timid. We were sitting in the corner of the train and on the other side, on the window side, were a mother with her daughter, and next to Herbert was a good-looking young man. And this was the daughter and this young man, they were flirting. And it was such a...you see, I never forgot that, it was such a lovable thing to see, the innocence. There, we were sitting there fighting for our lives,...
- Q: A bit of normalcy in the midst of all of this \_\_\_\_\_
- A: Of all...yah, yah...
- Q: This was in 1942. The war didn't end until 1945.
- A: Yah, but there is a lot of stories..Should we stop it?
- Q: Mrs. Friedman, will you go on and tell us the rest of what happened to yourself and your husband after you two got back together again. You described how he and the rabbi had left the camp, ostensibly to get some food, and made their escape that way. So, you go on now, and tell your story, whatever...
- A: Again..I told you already about it, that I..my husband came out of this train. Who went to this train was destined for going to uh..now what is the...
- Q: Drancy..
- A: Drancy..and from there, to Auschwitz. I guess I told you, so that's...
- Q: Go ahead, that's O.K. with me..
- A: Ya, to repeat myself. So, the Rabbi Fuchs told me that, after three days, my husband had to..was on the list to go to this camp and to go into the train, and, naturally, I was very devastated, and, uh, he told me....um..the day the train

should leave..in the afternoon. He told me in the morning, "Come in the afternoon, when the train has left so I can give you the last words of your husband." And, uh.., I left and, there was this little room where I could live without any cards..identification cards and, uh, I was praying, as I never could and never will in my whole life. What I was praying, I do not know, but I begged God to give me my husband back.

So, I guess the last time I forgot to tell you..this..I told you about this Mr. and Mrs. Weil who were so good to me..

Q: The people whose names you got from the phone book..

A: From the phone book, yes. This Mrs. Weil said to me, uh.. "Before you go to the..uh..to Rabbi Fuchs..before you go to Rabbi Fuchs, come to me and have a cup of coffee with me." So, I went to her before I went to Rabbi Fuchs, and, uh, we talked. Naturally, we talked about my husband. I told her about our marriage. We were still young, because we married in '36 and this was in '42..so it was only six years. And, when I left, she said, (I'll say it in French now) "Embrace-moi. Je vous acouche voleur." That means, "Take me in your arms. I'll bring you luck." And, she really did. She brought me luck. So, I went to the..uh..to the Rabbi Fuchs and to Mrs. Blass, and when I came into the...I opened the door...the Rabbi Fuchs winked at me and I said, "Where is my husband?" And he said, "He is here." I say "Where?" "He is here." And he took me by my hand and he brought me into his hotel, in his room, and there was my husband. He was all eaten up from ...from..bedbugs, which was not very important and he was hungry. He was so hungry. And, he got a piece of bread. In a way, it was...this moment...it was very unimportant to be hungry, because we were together. We had each other back. And, it was the first of October...the same day we married, six years ago. So, then, the next day...he slept with me in this one bed. I only had one bed. It was a small...very small room...and he nothing...because everything went, naturally, with this train to Drancy, and, so, I had a pajama. So, I don't remember any more if he was wearing the upper part, and I, the lower part, or he, the lower part, and I, the upper part. But, at least, we were together. And, the next morning, we went back to Rabbi Fuchs, and to Mrs. Blass, and they gave us uh..false..you say "false card identities?"

Q: Yes.

A: False identification cards. I don't know what my name was..Elizabeth..no, Isabel...my name was Isabel during the war time, and Isabel Gebart..once I was Isabel Girard..and I had so many names...we had both so many different names because we changed constantly our domicile...you say, "domicile?"

Q: Residence.

A: Residence. So, they gave us money and we bought tickets for the train to Lyon.

Q: You were in Perpignon at this time?

A: In Perpignon at this time. And, so, we took the train. But, if I tell you now, we took the train, it is not like you take the train here at Grand Central station, or somewhere else in America..you take the train, and you have your heart beat in your throat, because, any time, somebody could come and ask your..to show your identification card, and then, you are so nervous that everybody knows and feels right away something is wrong. Right? So, but we went into the train. Nobody asked us, and, I told this story with mother and daughter and this gentleman in the same compartment, which was really so innocent and so very nice. And, there, Herbert was sitting across of me and we looked at each other with such heavy hearts and with so much pain to see these young people, who had a whole life of them..and for us, any minute it could be finished, you know. That somebody, the control came into the train. It could be French control, or German control. Some control could come and take us out of the train. But nothing happened. Thank God. I told you last time that God was always with us.

Q: Where was this train headed?

A: For Lyon.

Q: That's right, you said that.

A: For Lyon. So....

Q: Lyon was where you had tried to cross the border before..

A: There is no border. There is no border. Perpignon and Lyon is France.

Q: No. But, wasn't it from Lyon that you had tried to cross into Switzerland??

A: Oh, that was...that was uh..much before then.

Q: Yes.

A: Yah.

Q: But in the same place??

A: No, no, no. How can...

Q: Why were you going to Lyon?

A: Because, we lived in Lyon before. That is a good question. And my husband make friends with one elderly gentleman. He must have been in the seventies, and he lived there with his..what you call..the lady who takes care of the house...

Q: Housekeeper.

A: Housekeeper. Elderly housekeeper. And, he was an engineer, and, as Herbert was before the war, he was in the steel line, so, they had a lot to talk about, and, uh, Herbert was a highly intelligent man, so they had really some conversations..so we did not know....You asked me where we want to go. We had only one place to go, that was Lyon, Chappaneau and we wanted to ask him to stay in his house which was like a little chateau. Uh.. It was an ....how you call those big houses? Uh...a mansion. Uh. It was a mansion, but village style. You know, there was a big garden, and with chickens...and little...

Q: It sounds like a place where you can hopefully escape being noticed..

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

Q: Ilse, was there, in France, like there was Vichy, France, and then, there was another...there were like two parts, and one was more controlled by the Germans...

A: That was when I talked to you about the demarcation lingen...that was the north of France which was more controlled by the Germans, and then, the south of France, which was, at this time, the south of France was at this time controlled by the Italians.

Q: In the south of France..

A: Yah, there was still..

Q: Lyon was in the south of France?

A: It was in the south of France. It was behind the demarcation lingen. And, so we went to Lyon, and then we went to Chappaneau. This place I told you before, and we asked, and Herbert asked this friend if it would be possible to stay him and, but nobody should know about it. The mayor of this village was for the Jews and for the Jewish people and for..uh..yah he knew that we were Jewish people from Germany. And, he gave us...So, the engineer said, "Sure, you can stay with us. The whole house belongs to you." But I didn't want to have that. We slept in the bunker. We had a bunker where the two people who worked for him were sleeping, but there was nobody anymore because he was an old man and he let everything go very slowly. He had a big vineyard, you know.

Q: Uh, huh

A: And we slept there. It was very primitive. Very primitive...no water. I had to carry the water from the brunnen.

Q: Well?

A: From the well. That was in October, and, his house...what did you say, what she was?

Q: Housekeeper.

A: Housekeeper. The housekeeper, she..you could have killed her. She would not have told nobody about us..That was fine till December. December, there came an invasion from German soldiers. They had to live in this chateau and with horses and so on...So we were full of fear. If they would find out that there lived there and there were German Jews they wouldn't have made a long story with us. So, ..

Q: You stayed there despite the fact that they occupied the chateau?

A: We stayed there. We didn't say anything. We just spoke French and they never found out. They stayed about 8 or 10 days. I don't remember.

Q: You didn't stay in hiding. You just spoke French so they...

A: Yah, yah. And, then we worked, naturally we worked for him...for this engineer. My husband worked for him in the garden, and I helped the housekeeper. I scrubbed the floor. I washed the linen, and so on and so on and so on. What you have to do, like a maid. But, in a way, I was with Herbert and besides the fear we had that somebody could find out, we were happy. You know, we were happy. We didn't had...We were not hungry, because this engineer, he got a lot..people brought him something from the farm. And, this housekeeper, she was so nice always something came to us, a little piece of butter or another piece of bread or something like that. So, that was quite a good time and then, in 1943, the 20<sup>th</sup> of February, there was, I don't know how you call that in English, somebody who takes care of the village, who goes around and tells people what is going on and so on. Maybe that does not exist here...in

Q: Like the town crier?

A: Yah, yah. Like a town crier. And, if he did it by himself, or if the Gestapo came to him, we never found out, but he got some money for..to tell the people where we lived.

Q: Mmm.

A: So, one morning, the 20<sup>th</sup> of February, this housekeeper, she came to us. We were still in bed..it was early, maybe 7 o'clock, or 6:30. The housekeeper came and said, "Madame, you have to...there are two policemen, French policemen..you have to come and show your cards..the identification cards..." And I said,

“Fine.” So, I said, “Herbert, you stay.” I was young, and I was very pretty at this time.

Q: You still are.

A: No, no. I was young. And, you know, a young woman, if she looks good, she has an influence on gentlemen. So, I came with my card. One of the policemen said, “Your cards are not in order. You have to come with me to the gendarmerie, to the office and to have it checked.” I said, “Listen, that is not possible. They are good and they are fine, and there is nothing wrong.” And, so I talked them out of it. They left. And I came...went to...should I go into details?

Q: Go ahead. As much as you need.

A: Yah. I went to Herbert and I said, “Listen, we have to do something. We have to leave. By the way, we always had a small suitcase. We called this the Polish suitcase. It was a suitcase with pajamas and things you need for the first night or two.

Q: So you can make a quick getaway.

A: Quick getaway.

Q: Why did you call it the Polish suitcase?

A: Because we always thought we have to go to Poland.

Q: Oh.

A: We did not know where all the concentration camps were, but we knew we come to Poland. That is what was said. You know, there is, in such a situation, there is a lot of talking.

Q: That would have been the worse place to go in the world, wouldn't it?

A: Yes. So, I said to Herbert, “You know, you can work in the field. Nobody sees you there. And I go to a friend. These were Jewish people, too. Under another name. And I tell them that they have to be very careful. If I talk this language and my vocabulary is very limited, it's first of all, I don't know how to say all those things in which way. In French, in English, and then I am very nervous, and I have sometimes a blackout...

Q: I'm sorry that you are nervous. But, you are really doing very well. I am having no difficulty understanding it.



A: So, I..it was around ten or eleven o'clock and I went to this friend. Naturally there is no car. There is no..yah there are bicycles, but I didn't had a bicycle, so I had to walk about half an hour to them, to this other farm. They had a farm. I warned them. And, he said, "Nothing will happen to us. I work in the French legion and they will not do anything to me." He came from Frankfort, and she, too. Nebish... He was weak. I will tell you later. He was taken. She lives. She is in New York. And he was taken. Even so, he was in the French legion. They didn't make any difference. Wonderful people. So, when I came back, Herbert said...Herbert was.....no, he was not there. And the housekeeper came to me and said, "Something terrible happened." (Sound of hands clapping) I say, "What happened?" "They were here again to take you both, and they were behind Herbert, and Herbert was springing over hedges and into the woods and I don't know..." He told me that later, that they didn't catch him. They were very gay to catch him because of this village crier, or whatever...

Q: Town crier

A: Town crier. So that was...I said Herbert, "You know what we do. I make us something to eat now, coffee, and we are going to leave here. We cannot stay here. Oh, the main thing I forgot, oh, I have to go back...I have to go back to October. I went from Chappaneau one afternoon. I went to Lyon and I said before that we met this Monsieur Conier, who was in the French underground, and my husband was so afraid of him. I told you about him. And, he was so afraid of him. I went to Lyon for some reason, and on the way back, I just caught the last tramway. And, I just caught the last seat in the tramway, and who was sitting next to me? Monsieur Conier. And he was very happy to see me and he said, "How is everything?" I said, "It is very dangerous." He said, "Please, please, if ever something happens to you, I have a farm. I can hide you. Between Lyon and Grenoble. Please have confidence and don't be afraid, and we have to find a way if you are in danger.

Q: Did you say your husband was afraid of this man?

A: Yah, I told you that before. He always said, "Monsieur Conier." He looked.. he went very straight. He was an officer of the French army. And he went always very straight. And Herbert said, "Ille, Ille, he is a spy. His name was Koerner." Koerner is a German name. I told you.

Q: Yes, I remember.

A: You remember now. So, I told him where we lived. Even so, Herbert said to tell nothing at all. And, so, I make with him an appointment to come to our home. And, when I came back, I told my Herbert about this...that I met Mr. Conier, Monsieur Conier, and he was furious. I said, "Herbert, please believe me, he is such a wonderful man. I am sure he works instead for Germany, he works in the underground." That he worked in the underground, we later knew that. So, he

came to us and he, where we lived very...I told you very primitive, and he stayed a while, and in the conversation he said, "It is such a dangerous life for you. It's getting worse. If ever something happens to you, let this woman write a telegram, "Aunt in danger. Come right away." And that tells me that you are in danger, and I have to do something for you." That is what I forgot to tell you. So, now that was the situation. So, Herbert said we have to go. We have to leave. I just had the coffee on the table. The outside bell was ringing. We looked through a little window, and there were not two from the gendarmerie, there was three or even five. That is...I don't... They came with a big truck to catch us.

When we moved in this little chateau. Herbert...You said before when I talked to you last week...he was very far-sighted. He went all the way up into the little tower they had. You know like the chateaux have towers..

Q: Yes.

A: And he went up into this tower, and there was a little window high up. And he said, "Ille, if ever something happens, we go here in this little room and maybe we can go on the roof from there." And so, we ...when we saw that they were standing in front of the door to catch us, he said, "Let's go on the roof. Let's go in this little tower. Let's go in this little tower." And this housekeeper, she was running behind us. "What will happen to you, what will happen to you (hands clapping). We say, "Don't tell nobody what we are doing. Don't tell nobody." So, they came in. We were not there. They saw the hot coffee on the table. They said, "They must be in the house." In the meantime, we went into this very small room. It was not bigger than oh, how can I say, half of this room here. And this window, the wall was straight like this straight wall, and this window was not open. Somebody had to go in. So, Herbert was standing so on my, with his foot on my hand, and then he went on my shoulder, and there was a little hook, and he opened the window. And he went outside on the roof, the 20<sup>th</sup> of February. And I was standing there. He leaned out. He gave me his hand, and I was going up straight the wall, into the window. Sweethear, how I did it, I don't know. How I could carry my husband, who was about 160 lbs. at this time, and how I could go up the straight wall...

Q: Fear gives you strength.

A: ..gives you strength. So, there we were on the roof, sitting there. I was shaking so much, that the tiles were making noise.

Q: The tiles on the roof?

A: ..on the roof were making noise. So we could overlook the whole village..part of the village. And what I tell you now I tell you because it is very important. This, ..this was a faint village. It was a very small...it was not a paved street...it was like...

Q: An alley?

A: No, not an alley. Like, uh, uh, ....not...earth, it was earth, you know,...

Q: An unpaved road..

A: ..unpaved road, like in a village, and to turn a car, you had to go farther out, where there was a round, like a curve, to make a turn to go back into the village. The chateau was a little bit outside of the village. So, they even came into this little room. The window, we could close from the outside, and we heard, when one of them, I don't know who it was, said, "They must be here. If I find them, I have no pity, I kill them right away." That's what we heard.

Q: That's very frightening.

A: Yah. They left. And they asked this housekeeper. She said she did not see us. She did not see us. She does not know where we are. That we must have left. So, they left in this car...not car..in this...

Q: Van?

A: ..van. They made the turn. They didn't see us. They didn't see us. That is why I told you before--that God made them blind, or he made them think we were not there.(crying). I don't know what happened because we went in '57 or '58 we went there, Herbert and I. We walked there. We looked at the roof. It was impossible not to see us. The doctor from the village came with his bicycle to visit a sick person. He saw us, he saw us on the roof, but, they didn't see us.

Q: You really were being watched over. Were the housekeeper and the engineer in danger because you had been living with them?

A: No, no. We did not live in the house. That is what we didn't do. We lived next...we lived in the bunkers, you know. And the engineer, he was an old man. He was at this time feeble, with 70 years, living in a village, are old people, and he was a little bit senile, too, so he didn't know what was going on.

Q: How long were you up on the roof?

A: Well, may be a half an hour, or three quarters of an hour. So, we went down. She came already up the stairs and said, "What shall I do, what shall we do?" I said, "You write a telegram to Monsieur Corier, and write him, "Aunt very sick, come right away." So then, we went, with our little suitcase and Herbert with knapsack, out of Chappanon. We walked into the next village where we knew somebody who could let us stay overnight. Now, I don't remember any more was this address through the housekeeper or through somebody else. I don't remember.

It's so long ago. But, it was..we had somebody there.. I feel a little nauseous.. My husband should give....The good thing was that we were together, Herbert and I, so we could help each other mentally. Physically, we were very strong, but mentally, sometimes, we were very upset. either he or me. Uh... We walked out of Chappaneau, and, not to be seen, we went, uh..through..uh a mine, where they were cutting stones, and it was very high, and I fell,...the hole...it was like a little mountain. I fell down and I hit myself very much. To this day, I have trouble with my back on account of that. But that is so..we got very scared, but we managed, and we walked about two hours to the next village, and there was this house. This shed where we should stay until Mr. Conier would come to pick us up and...further, when he would come, we did not know but we knew he would come to pick us up. We had a bedroom. I have to tell you this detail. I don't know if you remember things like, if there is no toilet, there was a thing where you uh...turn it off please.

So, the next night, I said to my husband "I will not stay here, in this bed, anymore. I sleep in the..in the...can you imagine, I can't find the name of the...rabbit. We will sleep with the rabbits. There was straw, and we could sleep there, and, if we had to go, we could go outside. Right? But we still had nothing to eat, and this peasant, who lives there, or maybe he sold his rabbits, but he was very poor. He asked a lot of money compared..a lot of money for this night we were there. The morning, he gave me three potatoes, three small potatoes, and a small head of cabbage and he said, "With this you'll make a soup." Oh, yah, and then he brought me bones--veal or beef bones with a little bit of meat on it..Unbelievable what little you had. So, I had three potatoes and a head of cabbage and I said, "Oh, I can make a nice soup for each dish with that bones, it would be very nice. So, I put the soup on the stove. It was a wooden stove. We had no coals. And, I went out doing something, I don't know... And, I came back, and the pot, who was so big was filled up with water. So, I said to him, "Listen, Mister, what did you do?" He said, "We are tonight six people. We have to have...everyone has to have..."

Q: Three potatoes and a head of cabbage.

A: It was more water than potatoes and cabbage. They had the bones. We didn't had the bones. They ate the bones off and we had, naturally, it was not enough for him, for Herbert, it was not enough for me. It was very little to eat. I was very, very hungry. Very, very hungry. The next day Monsieur Conier came. I don't know how many kilometers. It was on a Sunday. He made..he walked. How many kilometers he walked to see us. He came in and said. "Tomorrow, I meet you in Lyon." I said "How can you meet us. How can we come from here to Lyon?" "You take a bus." "Yah, how can we take a bus? Every minute, somebody can halt the bus and ask us for identification cards. They are not valuable any more." And he says, "Will you stay here and be caught? So, here you have the opportunity...he was very rough, you know, which was very good for us, because, at this time, we were very much in the dumps. "So, you take the bus to Lyon and

in Lyon there is such and such church. You go in the church. You pray, and I will meet you there.” So, we went with the bus, and everything went fine. We met him in the church. He had already tickets to go from Lyon to, I guess the name was Verdier, but I don’t..it could be any other name, too. I don’t remember any more. Where we had somewhere in the woods, where he had two or three cows and little animals, which were taken care of from another young man from the underground, who did not go to...it’s O.K.?...

Q: Yes, I’m just checking..

A: ...who did not go to Germany to work for the Germans...the French. So, he went with us and from the train station, we had to walk another two hours. We were constantly walking, in terrible hunger. We didn’t had really, really, really for two or three days, almost nothing to eat. So, we came to his shed, and he showed us where we could sleep. It was one bed. No water. And, it was straw. No water to wash. And nothing at all. It was a kitchen with one stove, and it was three chairs...I don’t remember...it was...but we were, as he told us, “Here you are hidden. Nothing can happen to us. Or to you. We stayed with him--that was the end of February. We stayed with him until the middle of March...

Q: Of ’40?

A: ...of ’43. In the meantime, this Monsieur Conier got contact with a priest, a Catholic priest, Pierre Challiet. This Per Challiet, not only that he gave us false card identity--he saved, I don’t know how many Jewish children in France. He brought them over to Switzerland. His work was underground. It was terrific. Absolute terrific. So, Monsieur Conier got with Pierre Challiet in contact, and he got other French cards, identification cards, and he came to his..Monsieur Conier came to his farmhouse, whatever you call that..and he brought us his false card identity and he said, “You can’t..After two weeks you can’t stay here any more.” By the way, there was no water, but there was a brook, and, in March, the brook was ice cold, and we..I find my way to wash myself.

Please turn off that...I have to tell you....

Even so, everything was so primitive, and I had no water, but I could wash myself. The legs, I would let hang in the brook and I brought the water in and had it warmed up a little bit and I could wash myself. That was very, very important, to keep the body clean. If the body is clean, the whole person is clean, you know, the mind, everything is clean. So, yah, he came with this identification card, and he said, “You can’t stay here. The German feld gendarmerie, (that means..feld gendarmerie means field gendarmerie..field control of the...how can I say it?... around the neighborhood) it’s looking around here and it is too dangerous for you, it is too dangerous for my boy here. We have to close up and we have to leave.” “But”, he says, “I have this contact with Pierre Challiet. I went for you to Grenoble, where... which...Grenoble is occupied by the...excuse me...by the

Italian..uh..Italians, and nothing there...they don't deported the Jew to any camps. You are safe there. And, I went to the ..uh.. Mayor of Grenoble, which is a very big city, so he has an entrée all over with his background of being officer and being working for the French people." And, so we packed again, and he went with us. He, Mr. Conier, went with us to Grenoble in the train. Nothing happened. Sometimes the train has to stop,..you know..as...it happened, if you take the train and the train stops for any reason, it doesn't matter. It doesn't bother you. But, when...if the train stops there, in the middle of the road, you got scared...

Q: Of course.

A: ..you know something will happen. And still, now, if this happened, the first thought is, "Ah, it's like in France.." You know, you never get rid of that..never...ever. So, we came to Grenoble, and we stayed in a small hotel with a lot of bedbugs. They did not go to me, but they went all to Herbert. And, we had an audience with the Mayor of Grenoble. German German, German Jews and refugees. And, the Mayor was like a brother to us. It really was wonderful, marvelous. So, he says, "I give you two weeks. You cannot stay in Grenoble because you have to go around Grenoble in uh...maybe thirty kilometers around Grenoble, you have to look..for a way to stay." And, so, every day, we went to another village. Did you ever hear of Oradur-sur-glon...

Q: No.

A: ..in France..During the last month or two, before the war was over, that was in '44, some officer or some soldier was killed there... German soldier was killed there. The whole village was burnt down, Oradur-sur-glon...the whole village was burnt down... and there was not one person who came out of this village alive. We were there, not to the town, but we were looking there for a stay...for apartment..apartment...a room and kitchen to stay..and we found something which we liked. It was a little hidden and nobody in the neighborhood. So, we begged this woman to give us this room. She says, "I cannot, it's promised, and I cannot give it to you." Again, a sign from God that we couldn't get this. So, finally, I will make this long story short--because we were looking every day and every day somewhere--we came to a place, St. Pierre de Chartreuse. That is the place where they make this beautiful liqueur--the green chartreuse and the yellow chartreuse. And, in this village, St. Pierre de Chartreuse, we went to a hotel and we asked the owner if there is an apartment where we could live. He says, "I have here, across the street, it's very primitive there, if people come and bring their car or their horses, there stay the kutchak, what is a kutchak? the chauffeur?"

Q: Chauffeur. The person who drove the car.

A: Chauffeur. The person who drove the car, he stays over there. So, we looked at it. It was very, very nice. For us, it was luxury, and we asked him if we could have

it, and he gave it to us. We got this in April and we lived there..for..as Belgian people.

Q: Belgian people.

A: Belgian people. We... The Pierre Challiet brought us another card identity. And he was searched by the Gestapo in the train because somebody must have found out that he was working for the underground. And, while they were searching the train, he hid, under his...how you call this in English?

Q: His robe.

A: Under his robe. He let these two cards slip down and he pushed them underneath the seat. So, when they came and searched him, he didn't had our card identities. He brought them to us, and I always had them...all this I threw away before we came here. And, you could still see the scratches where he pushed it with his foot. So, we lived there from April till September quite quiet, and Herbert worked with me. Even had something to eat there, because I worked in the farmer's house. I even learned to give injections because my husband needed every day and every day injections for his t.b. (tuberculosis) how you say?

Q: Tuberculosis.

A: Tuberculosis. Uh....so with this, we didn't want money, so they paid us here a potato, there two or three pieces of bread and once we got a rabbit. I wouldn't eat it now, but I ate it there. So, and...Herbert worked in fields. He knew how to cut..uh.uh..to cut the trees..uh..from his father's farm, when he was a young boy. So, we really had a...it was not a bad time from May to September. Uh...We made contact, at this time, the next village. St. Pierre Chartreuse was on a...on a..in the mountains, and further down, the next village, further down to the valley, was another village, St. Laurent du Pont. We made...That was a little bigger village, and we made contact with the mast...post-master, and the gendarmerie, who know exactly what was going on with us. And, they knew, were hearing during the night, England. You know, the Beethoven's Fifth Symphony?

Q: Oh, yes.

A: Da, Dat, Da, Da....And, one day, they came up, the gendarmerie, one Monsieur Perret, and he said, "You have to hide. Something is going on..We don't know what, but something is going on. You had better go in the woods." so that night..it was Rosh Hashanah..that night we slept in the woods. It was already quite cold, but, who cares? Eh...There, the Gestapo and the German soldiers....eh... In St. Pierre Chartreuse was one very nice hotel. Not that one from where we had the apartment. There was another hotel and there the Jews from Grenoble celebrated Rosh Hashanah in this hotel. The Gestapo and the German soldiers, they came to this hotel and they arrested all the Jews.

- Q: I was wondering how they could do that without being conspicuous.
- A: They arrested all the Jews. What became of them, I don't know. So, Herbert said, "Ille, this is...we cannot stay here any more." And..uh.. so we went to the butcher with whom Herbert worked out..worked to...in the fields and that night, we slept, not in the rabbit..
- Q: Hutch.
- A: ...hutch, we slept with the horses." (laughter) We were so used to those little fleas, that really, we didn't feel them any more. So, the next night, it was almost...October, we went down to St. Laurent du Pont. And Pierre Challiet came again and brought us another card identity, and we got another apartment there and we stayed there from October, over Christmas, New Year's '44, till August. It was.... Herbert did not leave this room for ten months. When we rented this small apartment, the kitchen was very small. The bedroom--there was only one bed, and uh..armoire (a very big closet), an armoire, not a closet. And, wherever we went, we started to clean first. To get rid of all the little box which were there. So, we, Herbert and I, we took apart the bed. We cleaned the bed, and then, Herbert said, "Let's clean behind the armoire". I said, "Herbert, you are crazy. It is so heavy, what can we do?" He said, "Let's clean behind the armoire." We opened...we pushed the armoire aside and, behind the armoire, was a niche...
- Q: A niche.
- A: ...a niche where one or two persons could stand, and Herbert said, "Ille, whenever something happens, we will go behind this niche." And, he made a hook on this armoire....
- Q: So you could pull it toward you..
- A: He was very very invent...
- Q: Inventive.
- A: ...inventive. And I had to lift up the armoire. Underneath the armoire, he put little rollers, you know, so that we could close. So,...but anyway, he did not leave this....
- Q: hiding place
- A: ...hiding place for ten months, and uh..I went out, b`ut this ten months were.....nothing happened to us, but it was very, very difficult to find something to eat.



Q: Everybody, or just because you were in hiding?

A: We were in hiding. But the other people, they didn't had a lot to eat either. Uh..sometimes we had one piece of bread to eat for the whole day. And, another time, we had two or three potatoes. It depends. You know...I went from..

Q: Who would bring you...how would?

A: Nobody brought us anything. I just wanted to say. We went...I went...he did not go...from one peasant to another. For a whole day. I left at nine o'clock and I came back at four o'clock. Sometimes, I had one piece of bread. Sometimes I had three...three potatoes and two eggs. While we were in St. Laurent du Pont, we got news that from Gers..you know Gers--Gers, it's a camp--concentration camp, from Gers came about twenty elderly women. If there ..men were..no..there were no men, just women. Eh...maybe seventy, seventy-five, eighty years and they were accepted in the hospital in St. Laurent du Pont. How this happened, I don't know, but it was this way. I went up once a week, to this hospital to greet these German Jewish women, who came mostly from the South of Germany, Mannheim, Frankfurt,..Carls...it doesn't matter. Carolina Dreyfuss--I mention the name. If ever somebody hears it, was my darling. When I had two eggs, one I gave to my husband. The other, I gave to Caroling Dreyfuss. But, I did not tell her that I was German. I was speaking German, but with mistakes.

Q: She thought you were French.

A: Yes. So, after we were liberated, I went up with my husband to this hospital and I said to Carolina, Carolina Dreyfuss, and to all the other ladies, " I am a German Jew like you." and Carolina said, "I always knew it. I always knew it."

Q: Tell me what when you were liberated. How did you know the war was over?

A: I tell you...would you like to know...it was the most beautiful...

Q: Yes.

A: ...that is the most beautiful thing in my life. So, the middle of July, one morning, we each...we hear shots all around. A company of German Gestapo and German soldiers came to St. Laurent du Pont, because that was the center of the underground. I...through the Postmaster, we knew quite a lot what was going on, and, he gave me sometimes the order to...if somebody from the underground was hurt, to bandage him and to give injection, so, if they would have found us, really they would have made chop meat out of us. Absolutely. So, it was..there was..there were shooting all over, without looking. They were shooting people in the field. In St. Laurent du Pont was a farmer. His name was Monsieur Bosier. Write it please down. His brother was a Monseigneur in Lyon and working 115% for the underground in Lyon. This Monsieur Bosier was the brother of this Bosier,

the farmer Bosier. The Germans took..the Gestapo took..the Nazis they took about ten or twelve..now, what is the name of geisel...people what you catch and you hold them until something happens, then shoot them?

Q: Hostages.

A: ..hostages. From our... We had a small little window. From this window, we could see how they were standing against the wall. The others went from house to house to look for under...people from the underground. They came into our house, too. I was there. Herbert was behind the wall..behind the armoire. There were three or four rooms on this floor. They went in every room. They did not go into our room.

Q: You were very fortunate.

A: I told you, if you hear the story, it is like He was holding his hands over us. We..It was not the time for us. Absolutely not the time for us. So, uh...there...after..uh...that was in the morning....it going until three or four o'clock and they left with the geisel..with the hostages and this farmer, Bosier, was killed right away in St. Laurent du Pont. Because, on account of the brother..who was... And he was working in the underground, too, on account of the brother who was in Lyon and a Monseigneur. I don't know how you say that in English..an Excellence..high placed....

Q: Monseigneur would still be the word.

A: ..high placed person, in \_\_\_\_\_. Herbert said to me, "Ille, that is it. That is it. Now we will see the liberation. Now we will see the liberation." So, that was the middle of July. The Germans took, in Grenoble, every pound of flour, every potato, every sugar, everything what was there. There was nothing to eat, except what the farmers made for themselves. The last three, four weeks were horrible. And, turn this off, please. Now, so, the 25<sup>th</sup> of August, we went to this, I told you before, this little brook, where we went to wash ourselves. We went ...on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August, we went to this brook That was our day where we washed ourselves, and the underground was standing around and sitting around, and when we came back, we..it..was such an excitement. And, we said to the underground, "What happened?" "Everything is going well." So, we didn't know what it means. We came to the village. All the French flags were out. They were playing the Marseilles..(crying) and it was such a wonderful day. We were celebrating the whole night through.

Q: You thought the war was coming to an end.

A: Yah, we were liberated. We were liberated. But, Paris was liberated two or three days later. So, now came the time where we had to go back to Belgium. We wanted to see our parents. We had everything in Belgium. And, in...we stayed the

winter over in St. Pierre Chartreuse. We went back to St. Pierre Chartreuse where we had real vacation. We skied and it was really wonderful.

Q: But the war was still on.

A: No. Not for us. We were liberated. France was liberated. But...No, not France. The North of France was not liberated. They still had the Battle of the Bulge. But...

Q: The war didn't end until May 1944.

A: Yah, but we were liberated. And the Germans were no more. They were all prisoners.

Q: Oh.

A: ..they were all prisoners and uh...there are little situations I can tell you without that we have that thing on. So, on the...we went to ...from St. Pierre Chartreuse, we had no money. They lent us the money to go back to Belgium. We went to Paris. We went to the Belgian embassy. And they said, "I am very sorry." We told them that we are German Jews and that we spent the war in France. "Yah, we cannot let you into Belgium. You need a visa." I said, "We don't have a visa." And Herbert was talking. So, he says, "Go to the frontier. If the man has a good mood, he will let you in." So, we came...we were in the train towards ...from France..to the frontier..Belgian frontier..in the train were American soldiers, and I said to Herbert, "You know, I speak a little English. I ask the American soldiers if they can help us." I did not know how, but maybe they could help us. And, then I talked to one, and he understood me. Maybe he was Jewish. He understood a little bit of German. And he asked all his friends. What he was talking, I don't know. It was a big \_\_\_\_\_, a big hello in the train. So, we came to the frontier, and Herbert and I showed the Belgium surete, that is the ...

Q: Police

A: ..police our cards. And he said, "No, you can't go in and I said, "But we are under the protection of the American soldiers." They were all standing behind us. And, he made this movement, "So, go ahead, go ahead." And you can't imagine, they were carrying me on their shoulder, and they were Herbert carrying on their shoulder. It was such a geschrei. It was terrible. But it was such a lucky geschrei. And so, we came in the train, and we went to Brussels. And my parents did not know if we lived or not. And, we had here and there a letter from them and they had a letter from us. How it came, I don't know.

Q: That must have been quite a reunion.

- A: And, then we came up the street, and I was standing in front of the house. I couldn't breathe any more. And I was yelling so much. But I do not know that then. My mother said to Father, "Get out, get out, somebody maybe is taking...the car was running over him." And it was nebish, me. (laughter) And so, I had them back. My parents, too. My sister, my little doggie. The dog did not left my knees...my leg...did not left the leg. So, then we tried to go..that was in '45, because we stayed in St. Pierre Chartreuse until the whole... everybody was liberated and we had peace...armistice. Right?
- Q: Armistice.
- A: And then we tried-that was in '45-and finally in '48...It's a lot of story in between but I like to make it short. It was very, very hard to come to America. It was very hard. In '48, we got the visa. My parents left in '47. We had no..nobody was giving us affidavit. Herbert had a brother here. He was negligent to help us.
- Q: In those days you had to have someone who would agree that you would not become dependent on the Government for support. They had to agree to take care of you until you could take care of yourself.
- A: Yah, yah. But he neglected all this. We could have been here before the War, and Herbert could have been a healthy man with penicillin. But he was not here, so.... And, in '48, we came here to this country.
- Q: By boat?
- A: By boat.
- Q: So you came into New York Harbor and saw the Statue of Liberty.
- A: ..And, I saw my parents again which I didn't see for seven months. But, that was not as bad as during the War time, and we started in one room. With cockroaches with us. I did not used to them. I was used to bedbugs and fleas but not to cockroaches. (laughter)
- Q: Was this in New York City?
- A: That was in New York City in Washington Heights.
- Q: At least cockroaches don't bite people.
- A: No, they don't bite people. And, so we started really...so far, we started from nothing. And from this one room, one year and a half later..I mean I cannot tell you all the stories, how we started. We really started with almost nothing, and we rented a very nice, tiny, tiny apartment, but it was adorable. We were very happy there.

Q: Was the United States the way you expected it to be?

A: I was...I tell you the truth, I was very unhappy in the beginning. I loved Belgium. I lived in Belgium before the War and I lived three years after the War, and I loved Belgium. But, we couldn't stay there. And, Herbert could have gone back to Germany. His old company was still there, because it was Gentile. But, he went to Cologne, but I said, "I can't stay here. I am going to die here." And Herbert couldn't have done it either.

Q: You could not stay in Belgium because the Belgians would not allow it?

A: It was the...We could have stayed if he would have worked for this German company, we could have stayed in Holland or Belgium at the frontier, or in Brussels, or wherever. We could have done that. But, I did not feel comfortable. Maybe I should have done it on account of that sick man of mine. He wouldn't have worked so hard here, because, with tuberculosis, it is not good to work hard. You know...

Q: That's right." It is constantly undermining your strength.

A: That's right.

Q: What kind of work did he do here?

A: He..uh..he..was travelling. First, he was...he always said, "Ille, if somebody gives me old nails, I am going to sell them." He was a terrific salesman. Terrific. He couldn't speak English. He had Latin, Greek, French--he spoke a fluent French, much better than me, and German. But not English. So he had to learn English. And, I went to.. I was working in a shipping room doing what I had to do to make a little money, and, uh..then he learned English, and one day, he met a friend of his...an acquaintance of his from Cologne, who was in the same company, steel company where Herbert was in, but he couldn't succeed because he was very dumb. But, here he was not very intelligent either, and he did not do very well. And, Herbert said, "What are you..are we still in time?"

Q: Uh, huh.

A: Herbert, what are you doing?" And Herbert said, "I have nothing. I have to learn English. I cannot..." You know, at this time, he made application to go ...by the way, you find out how much easier I speak now than I spoke when I had to speak about my time during the war...He said, "uh" He tried to go into the steel line, but in '48 they did not accept Jews. What is your religion? And Herbert wrote, "Jew." Nothing doing. So, he met this friend. And he says, "You know, Herbert, I am selling something nobody heard about. Glove rings. I don't know if you heard.

That was a ring where you put the gloves in and you did hang on your pocketbook.

Q: I remember.

A: ...Instead of losing them. But, so they lost the ring and the gloves. But it was very good. So, Herbert said, "You think I could sell them?" "Yah, he says, I'll sell you a few, maybe two dozen or three dozen." It took half a day. Herbert sold two or three dozen, with not knowing English in New York. But, then, he found out...and he gave him always more, always more. And then Herbert said, "You know, we make that half and half. And, what about if we have now, after a while, after half a year, I have now nice customers. He travelled by bus. We didn't had a car at this time. By bus he travelled to New Jersey, and there he sold the glove rings and he made nice customers and the orders came in. And so, they made half and half, and Herbert said, "Now you have my customers, what about your customers? Give me a few of your customers." "No," he says, "that is a long established friendship, and I can't do that." So Herbert said, "Fine." So, he bought a car. Herbert. And he said, "Listen, I bought a car. (I guess it was \$500 an old car.) And he said, "Listen, at least help me out and pay half the expenses for the car." "No." So, Herbert said, "Listen, if you can't do anything for me, I have to do it by myself." "You have no credit. You will never get merchandise." He said, "We will see that." So he took,..Herbert took a few hundred dollars. He went to the company from where he got the glove rings. He bought a few dozen glove rings and he paid cash. So, he had glove rings and the whole...the whole...he did it by himself now.

Q: He established credit.

A: He established credit and so, it went always up and up and ever up and with this we started our business and then we had wholesale in novelties. First the glove rings...glove rings was gone. Then, we had powder boxes and pill doses... ..pill boxes and eyeglass cases and cosmetic bags, and I don't know what. It was a nice established business when he passed away.

Q: So you really prospered in this country.

A: Yah.

Q: That's a nice ending to that.

A: Yah, it's a nice ending. And, when he passed away, I took over his business.

Q: In what year was that?

A: '69. We just came back from Florida. I told you this...

- Q: You were still living in New York City?
- A: Yah. We were still living in New York City.
- Q: Well, I have asked you a lot of questions and you have told us many things. Is there anything else you want to add?
- A: Yah, I..I thought when you left, I thought over...I forgot to tell you something from 1938, after the Crystal Night. That the next morning, I went in Dortmund I lived with my parents..during..my husband was arrested in Germany I lived with my parents, and the next morning, I went to the place where the synagogue was standing where I was confirmed, and I married in this synagogue, too. And, all the Hitler Jugend and the high placed SR and SS people were standing in front of the synagogue and then they give a sign and the whole Hitler Jugend went into the synagogue and there was a lot of going on in the synagogue, and the Hitler Jugend came out of it with the prayer shawl around their heads,..
- Q: A real desecration...
- A: Oh, it was...I never forget that...it will always be with me. They started to demolish the synagogue. They broke it up. And, now they have ..it sparks a little...it's gone, it's gone..
- Q: But the memories are not gone. By telling us what you have told us, you have helped to keep alive the important information that people should never forget.
- A: It's very important not to forget that, hopefully, that this..such a...such a terrible time will never come again. Never come again.
- Q: Well, I am going to thank you for what you have done in sharing with us your experiences and what I know have been very painful memories. As I told you before we started taping we are doing this so that, hopefully, this will never happen again. So that people will not forget. We thank you so very, very much.
- A: I cannot say it was a pleasure. But, I did it for my late husband.
- Q: Well, thank you. That's...
- A: ..Because he, all the time he was with me..but really he was with me....