National Council of Jewish Women
Sarasota-Manatee Section

HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Anita Simon, Righteous Gentile

June 8, 1987
Sarasota, Florida

Today is June 8, and I am interviewing Anita Simon, who served as a ski courier and a guide for Jews escaping from Sweden during the War...from Norway into Sweden, during the War. Uh...first of all, Mrs. Simon, I want to thank you very much for giving us your time and I do have some questions that I want to ask you.

I: Can you tell me a little bit about your background, your growing up in Norway, and your family?

R: O.K. I will. My father is a...was a reserve officer in the Norwegian Navy. He was an engineer. He spent many years in South America, in Chile. When I was a very young child, I lived in Chile. When I came back to Norway, I was about 8 years of age and I went to school in Norway with other children.

I: When would that be?

R: That must have been in 1936.

I: Um...hum.

R: Or something like that. Before the War.

I: And then, in 1939, of course, the war between Germany and England began, and my father was then immediately brought out into active duty. And, um...I have a brother who was two years younger than myself and my mother and I lived alone in Oslo while he was away in the service. And, then, on the 9th of April, 1940, Germany attacked Norway. On the night before that attack, we had a phone call. We had a telephone in the hall, I remember. And I happened to go by the phone, as it rang, and I picked it up, and it was my Daddy's voice, saying, "Anita, we are at active war..." and then he was cut off. So, I said to my mother, "That was Daddy, and he says we are at active war." My mother says, "Can it...can it be true? How can it be true? Why would he say that?" "Well, the line was cut..." Well, she was a little anxious about it and she called a few people and so on...and so forth... In the night of that night, we woke up at about two o'clock when we were being bombed. Oslo was being bombed, and we had a tremendous avalanche of people coming out of the city...I lived outside of the

city...in a city [ ] we lived on a mountain, out of the city. And, people were walking, in April, in underwear and nightgowns and robes, undressed, just disrupted from their lives. I can remember my mother feeding a bunch of people that day. They just happened to go by and tried to get out. And, radios were calling for all children to be out of the city, and I, and myself, and a cousin, and a bunch of children, I think eight other children...we...I had never driven a car. My father had a Packard. It sat in the garage. My brother was two years younger than me and he knew all about the clutch, but he wasn't tall enough...and I had a pillow behind me and I drove the car for the first time in my life. It was a stick shift type, you know.

I: You were about twelve years old?

R: No, I was thirteen, almost fourteen.

I: Fourteen.

R: I was going on fourteen. And, um...we drove out of town. We drove to a farm, in a farm area, where we stayed for a few weeks till we were allowed to come back during this time. I remember my mother gave me 100 Norwegian kronen. It was like a big bill. And, I went and stopped for gas, and I forgot to take the change, and I went off without a cent. But, I got the change back when we came back to the city. And, it wasn't very long after that, after the Germans had occupied Norway, they withdrew all radios and all kinds of things that had to do with communication plus we had no TV in those days. It was just radio. My brother and I had a little radio. We had made a cave in the bottom of our garden. We had a very large piece of land, wooded land. And we had dug a cave - as children. That we had to crawl into on our bellies.

I: Um...hum.

R: And, we had a little radio there. We had put a long outside extension line from an out garage-house. In there, we had covered it with earth, so nobody could see...and we had electric down there. And, of course, when they withdrew all the radios and everything we had in the house, nobody knew about this one. So, it was there all through the war, and during the war, an adult came every evening, at 11 o'clock, crawled through the hole, and took..."This is London with the news," and they took stenography, and someone made a stencil thing, and they made the underground newspaper. From that little radio.

I: From your little radio.

R: One of the last newspapers we had. My brother was a deliverer of that newspaper. It was a very risky business. It was the death penalty for that job.

I: Yes, of course.

R: And, um...I was approached by one of my teachers. I was in what you call Junior High School here, I guess Middle School. And they all knew their students pretty well. ____ was not a very large area. Even though it was in the city, it was in the suburb. And, we had only one teacher that everybody knew was Nazi and we were very cautious about. When this teacher approached me...

I: That was not the Nazi, but another teacher...

R: No, no. And, told me that, would I be willing to work in the underground. They knew my father was...um...by that time my father had been picked up. He was in jail...the longest living prisoner of war, when the war was over...that lived...

I: Um, hum.

R: And, so, he was gone five years - my father - he was in concentration camps. It was only in the last six months of the war that he was removed from the concentration camp to a prisoner of war camp, which is much more classy, of course. Both air and sun and food, which he didn't get in all the others. These teachers knew my background and asked if I was interested. And, I said, "Of course." And, I was pretty good on skis. So, the first year, my duties were to pick up C-rations, bandages, medicines, ampules, things that you give people that are not wounded, and even foods, all kinds of different foods. We had them in rucksacks and we would go through the German barricades, and we would be like little Red Riding Hood, almost. We were going to my Grandma. And, I went through the barricade that first winter. Of course, it was nerve-racking because it was dangerous if they ever checked your rucksack - you...you've had it... And my mother was a very nervous lady. She was not very strong in that department. So, when we were put to bed at night, like all children were, at normal time... As soon as lights were out and everything, I could jump out of a window in the second story, onto a shed roof, in which we had our skis. And, I would get my skis and I would run on skis to my station where I got what I had to pick up and then I ran on skis through the night but I was alone...I was afraid.

I: Always alone.

R: Always alone. And, a few times...I had two pretty close calls in which the owls were my only friends. That's why I was so interested in owls.

I: Explain a little bit about the owls as your friends.

R: Well, I had to run up high in the mountains where they were you would call guerrillas today...you know those people... And, they had no...later on, in the war, they had drops from London where they got everything from planes. That first winter, there really wasn't anything...

I: This was the winter of 1941...

R: 1941. And, see, we were in the war before America.

I: Yes.

R: And, uh... So, when you came up there, we always had these runs in the moon - when the moon was full because you could see with the moon. Also, you were also a much easier target.

I: That's true.

R: So, when we came up beyond the tree line, you were a very open target. You threw a long shadow and it was very still and very quiet and very cold up there.

I: Um, hum.

R: And, occasionally, because owls are up at night. They fly at night and see well. And, they would act like there was other people but me. You know what I mean...you have a feeling that there is some activity here. And, I would rush back into the bushes to a certain spot and I could hear bullets go off. You could hear them go "Cheee...eeee" you know, in the cold air. And it was pretty frightening. You know. I was afraid. Then, I would get back before daybreak and I would get back i my bed, so I could get up when the alarm went off. Then, I would go to school. But, my teachers, they all...everybody in school knew...

I: But your mother didn't.

R: Except this teacher that was Nazi, and I was allowed to sleep through every class. I slept on my desk. Everybody knew. Many children in my class did the same. I wasn't the only one. We all had different duties, depending on our talents. And, I took courage [ ] those things. And, so that's how come I got involved with the owls, and then, when the first Christmas came, after that my brother carved me my first owl. And he had these two black marbles that he loved. When he played "immies," you know, and it was a big honor to get those two black "immies" as eyes for my first owl. So, I cherished that, and from then on, I got this owl collection.

I: Because they saved your life.

R: I felt that they were sort of special. They were special - they took care of me and watched over me, and it was in the second year, in 1942, that I got involved in the Jewish movement.

I: How did that happen? Had you had any contact with Jews beforehand?

R: No. But I had contact with people in the underground. And, you see, when the job I did that first winter ceased, there was really no need for it any more, thank goodness, because it was getting very risky, also. I was lucky not to get caught. And, the people that I took my orders from - and they were all a whole network of people, they knew what type of a little girl I was, and I was asked if [ ] and they knew I could handle skis. So, what I did, in my part, was, I had a dog that was what they call a pull dog. It was trained to pull sleds when people are wounded in the ski...Sundays and stuff.

They were special dogs and I had a dog - that was my dog that was trained, and I had a sled. So, a person that we were trying to get over, for example, to the Swedish border, that couldn't ski or couldn't even walk in the snow, much less - you know, they were just not able. They could be pulled on those sleds. We pulled many people on those sleds. And, we guided the dogs along, of course. Through the woods - towards the Swedish border. You had to get across the Swedish border in the areas where there were very few German guards. At the border, they were thick in some areas where there was a lot of population.

I: Um, hum.

R: You had to get away from where the population was to get people across and be able to get them safely across.

I: And, you were met on the other side...

R: Oh, yes. By all kinds of men. My job was simply to get them to the border and through. And, I didn't have to worry them after that. But, of course, I wasn't doings this entirely alone. I mean, this was not one-on-one - this was groups of people that did this.

I: So, there were a group of you who would meet with your dogs and sleds.

R: Yes, oh, yes. And there were adults. Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

I: You were what, fifteen at the time?

[ ]

...that time, was still in Norway - I mean, he was a prisoner, and he was in the old prison, where the convicts used to be before the war, but, he was the head of the movement, getting the Jews out of the jail. Some of the people we got across, and I didn't know it until many years later.

I: How did they ever work that?

R: I really don't k now how. My father did an awful lot of those things once he became what you call a trusted prisoner.

I: Um, hum.

R: He had been there so long and he was an officer. So, he got a lot of people moved around and checked on and like that. so, that's how I got into that. Strangely enough, one of my dearest friends from childhood was a young boy by the name of Maurice Personsky. I don't know why it never occurred to me. He was dark-skinned and dark-haired and brown-eyed and a darling, darling person. And, one day, I am sitting in class, in school, and the door knocks and in come these two Germans, with the clicking of the heels and "Heil," and all this stuff. And call up Personsky, and the minute they said it, I thought, here I am pushing everybody out of the way, and here I sit next to the boy I was raised...literally raised with...he was raised two streets away from me. And, of course, I never saw him again.

I: Hm...

R: But, so that was how I got into it. And it was, uh...well, I loved it. I thought I did something wonderful.

I: It was. How long were you involved in this?

R: Well, I was involved in the Jewish movement for over a year. Over a year. There were all kinds of things that I could do and help. I can remember...we had...I had an aunt. We lost our house. The Germans took our house and I had an aunt who lived in an old, old fashioned apartment in the downtown area and she had a back step, you know, back stairs in which they used to have maid's quarters, you know. And, in the maid quarters we had a lady who was the wife of the director of the Continental Hotel. A lovely lady by the name of Mrs. Bauman who lived in that room alone for months, before we could get her across to the Swedish border.

I: Can you describe the operation a little? Where did you meet these people? Was there a central point?

R: Yes, there were several central points. I had one central point was at the lady who was the guard at the ladies' room at a restaurant downtown, who was the lady who gave you a towel, and you put a quarter in the dish. She gave me a lot of instructions. I had...I could go in from the street and like...as if I was in the restaurant and use the toilet and the lady would wait and give me my messages that I would have to do. That was one person that I constantly went back to and got new orders from about where to do and what to do. And, we didn't use our names. We didn't use real names.

I: What was your name?

R: One time I was Bette, like Bette Davis, and one time, I had another sort of very exotic name, Sarina, or something like that, that isn't a bit Norwegian.

I: Not at all.

R: Not at all. Something like that. I didn't have it very long. Bette was what I went by the most, and I even, years later, when I came home to Norway one year, when I was traveling the world, I walked down the street and someone called, "Bette, Bette!" and I looked around and it was someone that I knew from the war.

I: Oh!

R: A young man that only knew me under that name.

I: Only knew you as Bette.

R: After the war, when we told my mother. My brother did this underground movement with the newspaper and all kinds of other things that he was into, but primarily the newspaper. That was his...he was in charge of that. But he was two years younger than I was, so he had a big job for a little boy. And, when we told our mother after the war, she did not believe us. She said, "This cannot have happened right underneath my nose." And it did.

I: But it did. And it was a wonderful thing that she didn't know.

R: Yes, if she was the nervous kind.

Well, she wouldn't have. She would not have been able to stand the strain, you know. It is not that she would have meant...she wouldn't have squealed on us...

I: Oh, no.

R: ...but she would not have been able to handle it. And, who knew in those days, anybody that was picked up by the Germans were often tortured to speak, and nobody was allowed to talk about those things. It is so long ago, you know, that I remember so many little vignettes that I heard stories by other people that had things happen to them. We had some close calls. I was once very flippant. You know, youngsters do things that are so foolish when I think back. We used to wear little red woolen caps. They were the sign of the anti-Nazi.

So, all of Norwegian children wear a red ski cap with a little tassel on it and they became sort of a symbol.

I: Uh, hum.

R: And we used to... The Germans used to pull them off our heads. So, we used to put them on with hairpins. They literally scalped us to pull these things off. Plus, we annoyed them and, one time, I was...I was a fool. I was on a bicycle and I was stopped by a German officer who was standing near us. And he says to me, “Tell me the road to so and so.” Of course, most of them knew we spoke German because we had German in school - as well as we had English in school.

I: Uh, huh.

R: He wanted to know the directions to such and such and such and such. I knew very well where that was and I turned to him and I said to him, in German, “May I answer in English?”

I: Oh!

R: And he said, “Yes.” And I said, “I don’t know.” And he grabbed a hold of my red cap and almost drew all my hair out of my head. And things like that. It was not very wise, but this is the sort of pranks that youngsters do. Well, we were very smart.

I: It also relieved some tension, too.

R: Oh, yes. In fact, there was a lot of laughter. When I think about those heavy days, we didn’t have much fun. We didn’t have fun in the same manner as young people. Teen-agers have fun normally, but we had a lot of laughs and enjoyment, making fun and jokes of all this sort of thing.

I: Yes.

R: They were not...I suppose they were not so bad considering they were an occupation force. But, we used to do funny, funny things. We had bunkers. You know, places where people would go in case of bomb attacks.

I: Uh, hum.

R: And, often the German soldiers would be in one of those, sort of smooching with a girl, and we would open the door and call, “Raus!” And everybody would jump, you know, because they were very, very worried about their superiors.

I: How...you said you were involved in the movement of Jews for about a year.

R: Yes, about a year.

I: About how many people did you help, or did you lose track?

R: Oh, I...I don't know exactly, but I would say, several hundred. And, you know, we didn't have many Jews in Norway compared to other countries. The ones we had were very, very Norwegian. They had been in Norway for years. I can remember when the Danish King, you know, said... and when they issued the proclamation that every Jew has to wear an armband...

I: Right.

R: ...with a star of David on it, and, we followed suit there. And I can remember when I got mine. I said, "What does it mean, that blue star?" That's how little I knew.

I: Um, hum.

R: But, it's funny that since then, I was in Israel. I was in Palestine the night it became Israel. I flew into...I became an airline stewardess and I flew into the Middle East. In and out. In fact, I flew all those horrible people into the Nuremberg process.

I: Mm.

R: I met some of the most...worst people on earth that were sent...

I: ... The ones who were coming in were there to be tried.

R: Yes, I remember a lady by the name of Eve Montbeliesse. She was really a terror and she had gloves on. They were made from human skin and had a man's nipple on top of the glove. Just enough to...it's just not explainable how you feel about people like that. You can't imagine it. It's gets me upset to this day and it's forty years ago, or something like that.

I: Easily.

R: So, um...

I: Have you ever had any contact with any of the people you helped cross?

R: Never, never. I met a lady many years later, flying out of...from Amsterdam out to Batavia, out to the Far East. Her name was Berenstein. And, she swore that she knew me. And, I did not remember her. But she says, "I know I met you." I do not know whether she had a dream, but as far as I could figure out from her talk, she had not been...she had been to Sweden. She had not come over from Norway. So, I don't know where she knew me, but that's the only person that ever even mentioned it to me.

I: And you have no idea what happened to these people.

R: No. I met a lot of people during that time, directly after. All the European Jews will all try, ...once Israel became a country...they will all wanted to go to Israel, and then they went back and forth because they had so many problems there.

I: Yes, it was very primitive.

R: In and out...so many times I met the same people twice. took them in and took them out. Once or twice I took them back again the third time, but, uh, no, I never did. But, I had the horrible experience of coming to see several concentration camps, and it was enough to make me feel that, well, I think I became an atheist there.

I: Um.

R: I felt how can this possibly be? How can there be a God in this sadness? How can these be God's chosen people?

I: There have been several people who had had similar experiences visiting the camps - before they were prettied up.

R: It's funny I should marry an American Jew, who spent years in Europe, in the war, and he was one of the first men to open the doors at Buchenwald, and he...when he did, he had his pockets full of stuff and he gave a man a can of sardines. After he...he was so thin that he said it is not possible to describe what this man looked like, and he said, "Oh, I gave him this can of sardines. He opens it up. They are like wild. Everybody is trying to pounce on him and he eats the sardines and he died right there." And then the loudspeakers went off and they said, "Don't feed these people. Don't give them anything. They can't tolerate."

I: They can't tolerate it.

R: And, I know that, because when the war was over, and we got this...we got the Marshall help from America, every youngster in Norway got a quart of peanut butter.

I: That's a lot of peanut butter.

R: And, I took mine with a tablespoon and sat down and started to eat it. I didn't get too far, but I got far enough that I almost collapsed...I almost died. They had to get me pumped. I was rushed to the hospital and after that, I was sent to a farm, a sort of camp place, outside Oslo, where they sent children that have been in concentration camps, and we were fed. I was there for six weeks. Every day, some new thing was added to your diet, so that I learned to assimilate fat, and I

can imagine how...that is very important. You simply cannot eat anything fat when you haven't had anything to eat for so long...

I: There were many problems that arose when the people coming out of the camps were fed. They had to learn how to feed them. Were the conditions so difficult in Norway, toward the end of the war, that...

R: Well, we didn't have an awful lot to eat. You see, what happened was we had ration cards, but there was nothing to be had any more. I remember, my brother and I used to take turns, when we could, of lining up for fish, which is, of course, Norway is oozing with fish normally. We would line up. Let's say, I would start in the evening, at 7 o'clock, to line up, and he would relieve me in the morning, like 1 o'clock or 2 o'clock, and he would be there until the store opened up. And when the store opened up...they had nothing. And we ate a lot of things like turnips, that was kohlrabi, that's fried in cod liver oil...

I: Um, hum.

R: And pretty awful stuff. And we ate a lot of potatoes. And this very heavy weird bread that has a lot of wood in it. You know, they used the wood...

I: Um, hum.

R: It's cellulose.

U: Yes, it's cellulose. How long were you actually involved in the movement of Jews across the border?

R: I would think about a year, approximately. Maybe a few more months than that. I guess it was getting more towards the end of the war. There weren't ... Probably, the people that weren't already picked up...there were no more...

I: There were no more use for it. There were no more people needing it at that time.

R: And, I was getting to the point where I had to get my papers and graduation and I did more school work, but any time there was anything I could do. There was less need because they were becoming very proficient from England. They had professionals doing these things. So that they had the youngsters that had worked so hard...we sort of got the bonus. "You've done your turn and now you can do some school work." You know we let our own work, really everything fall into shambles. So, the two first years of the war were the heaviest for me. It was really difficult because I never had a home during the war. We had moved out...we had a summer house on the fjord that was not meant for living in the winter. It had no water. So we had to... The water pipes were far off because they were on top of the ground and, of course, everything freezes. So, we

almost froze to death. We ended up moving to this aunt who had this big apartment, and I remember sleeping in the hall, in a place next to the window, on sort of a love-seat. We were sore of middle-class. We were...we had a pretty nice lift before the war. So, I wasn't accustomed to roughing it to that extent. But, we had...it really worked out very well and sometimes I wonder if it doesn't make a strong person.

I: Well, that's sort of the hard way.

R: Yes, it is. I wouldn't want it [ ].

I: Having been to Israel, are you familiar with Yad Vashem? This is the memorial to the six million Jews that were killed.

R: That was after my time.

I: Yes. There is also a road that is lined on either side with beautiful trees. And, each tree has been planted in honor or in memory of a non-Jew who helped Jews escape.

R: I have heard this story.

I: Do you know if you are listed there?

R: I am sure I am not. I have never...I have never told anybody these things. I mean, uh...like the lady who told you about me. It must have come about because she asked me about my house, possibly, and maybe my husband. My husband died a year ago, and, he, of course, being a Jew, he heard a lot of stories about me, especially when we went home to Norway, and we would meet friends, and they would say, "You know your wife did this and that and the other thing." They were not really things I told him so much...and I would have forgotten...and my Dad was...has...had his story, which I thought was much more interesting than mine. And so, no, I haven't, and I heard about that. You know, I was in Israel in 1948 when it became Israel, and years before, from 1945 to '48, I flew in and out of Israel every month, but then it was Palestine.

I: Um, hum.

R: And then, I ws there until about '51, '52. But I have not been back since. That's many years ago. Things have changed tremendously.

I: Yes.

R: I have a sister-in-law, who was just there last year. She showed me pictures of places that...

I: ...weren't there.

R: ...that weren't there. Yah. It is just a whole new place.

I: There is this very beautiful avenue called The Avenue of the Righteous Gentiles.

R: What a nice thing that is.

I: It was very important because there were many lives that were saved this way.

R: Yah. I can remember hearing about the Swede...um...Wallenburg. I even heard about him during the war.

I: Oh, really, we didn't hear about him until much, much later.

R: I heard about him...maybe I heard about him through someone who had connections with the Swedish people there. You know, he came from Sweden and I guess we were told stories. We heard so many stories. I can remember those nights when we would listen to the news from London, and Mr. Churchill was on. I was totally taken with him and his voice. And, when he would say, "We will fight them on the beaches..." Ach...he gave such inspiration. You know, we would have done anything. In those years, we lived in a fjord, where it was so cold we had to take a fjord bus. There was no way to get to this island without this fjord bus. It was like a little boat.

I: Uh, huh.

R: And, my husband went with me. I showed him where we lived and he said, "I cannot believe this." In order to get the bus, I could get to school. See, the schools were doubled up. So that, I had to go to school from like 2 in the afternoon until 6 in the after...evening, or something like that...or 7 in the evening. And, in order to do that, I couldn't get on the morning bus, so I had to get up, like 4 in the morning to get on the bus, that would leave at 6 or something from where I had get to the water...to the pier. And, then I had to wait at the pier till my time to go to school. And, then I missed the evening bus...the afternoon...so I had to wait for a night...that would leave at 9, and wouldn't get home until almost 10. So, it was a very long day. Yes. And, um, I took my husband down to see a bunker, that I knew was used during the war. We once hid people in it, that was made in the first World War. It wasn't made by our Germans. It was just something that had been there since before the war and I knew about it, and I took him down to see it. And, he stood there, I remember, and looked at this tough granite barrier, and he looked at the fjord and he said, "No wonder you are tough." Of course, I was so little that I didn't look very tough. And, I don't think I am tough but, but, I suppose, with that kind of life, maybe it makes you tough.

I: It does.

R: Um, hum. It does something.

I: You learn a good idea of self reliance and how to live on your own.

R: I'll tell you you are very grateful that you are alive.

I: Yes, I don't think people realize what you go through.

R: No. I can remember, in 194-, in 1940, when the war broke out, the German ship, by the name of Misher, was bombed. it was torpedoed, in the fjord, in the narrow neck of the fjord, and it was oozing with dead people, and they were German soldiers, and it was springtime...it was fall...and we were requested from the school, all children, able-bodied, had to go down and help clear up the fjord. And drag all these corpses out of the water. And, it was a horrendous experience. I was not yet 14, and, you see...you saw limbs, you know...

I: Uh, hum.

R: I hadn't so much of a problem with the bodies...the whole body...as with parts of the body...hands floating by themselves...and legs with boots on...and stuff. It just was enough to make it kind of tough for us.

I: It can destroy you, too.

R: Yah. So, we had some of those things. And I am so glad I came out of it alive, and I came out of it with my eyes. I was always so worried when we would have any kind of bombing, that I would keep my eyes. I would make prayers...just don't take away my eyes...

I: ...let me see.

R: ...let me see. But, so, of course, when the peace broke loose, it was a wonderful day. It was five long years. It seemed long. I was almost twenty years of age when it was over. My whole youth was just about...it was gone. I was an adult by then.

I: And it was the same for your brother, and all...everyone who worked with you.

R: Oh, yes.

I: Everyone of them worked with you.

R: Yes. They all did. And, uh...and most of the young people were very supportive and very good. Of course, there were some that fraternized with the Germans. I

remember we shaved heads. In 1944, I remember a girl I went to grade school with. We had her pegged all through the years. During the war, "We're going to get Jerry..." you know, and I can remember, wanting to, and yet, when it was done, I was so upset. It was...They walk around with babushkas...they are all...

I: And then, you knew.

R: Oh, yes. It was just like a stamp.

I: But, it must be a good feeling to know that there were people who made it out because of you.

R: Oh, wonderful! Wonderful feeling. And I want to tell you that I learned to love those people. they had such inner courage themselves. You know, it was terrible to be ripped out of their roots and I had such a tremendous respect for the Jews, that has never ceased. So, I feel I am a Jew. I remember, when I met my husband, and my father came to visit here from Europe, and I said, "I want to introduce you to a very important man in my life, and I want to tell you that he is Jewish." And, he said, "Oh, that's nice." I sad, "You feel that's nice." And he said, "I, of all people should object to a Jew?"

I: Um.

R: And, uh. He told my husband a long story of how he got many Jews out of jail, which was more tricky than what I did. But, I never knew that part of the orders that I had came from him.

I: Did he know...did your father know that you were involved in this?

R: Not till after. Not till after. Neither one of us did.

I: Uh, hum.

R: I saw my father one time, when he was picked up, and I had a tremendous guilt thing about my father, because I had...when the war started, he was in northern Norway, and he was liaison officer between the English and the Norwegian forces. And the English and the German forces, supposedly. It all ended with a big gang, because, of course, Sweden was neutral, and they had to permit the Germans to refuel in Sweden, just like they would have to permit the English to do so. As we were...they were brought in from the back. So, we had a problem, and it was all over. And, it didn't take more than a couple of days and Norway was capitulated. I remember that my father went North and he had a very small company of men. I think he had about 11 men with him. And he held the fort...in northern Norway, near the Russian border. Far up in the border area. And, he had written a letter, "I would love for you to come up in your school holidays." It didn't go through, because they had been bombed, so the trains and the mails

were very, very iffy. The whole thing. So, I ended up getting up there. And, we were still...he was still flying the regular war flag. I mean, there wasn't a German flag there. There was no Germans in town. He was the big boss there. An old, old fort. Very interesting place. And, he was there until the 11th of November, 1940.

I: That was a long time.

R: That was a long time. And, when it was over, when the Germans came in, I can remember the German officer that took it over came in and my father asked him to come in, and he came in and he sat down, and my father offered him a cigarette. And, he had a table lighter, a steel table lighter, and he picked up the table lighter to light the cigarette, and when he did it, the German pulled his gun.

I: Um.

R: He thought he had a gun. And it was a little embarrassing there. But my father was then allowed to leave with me, and to report from there all the way to Oslo, which is a long country. You see, we had about three days' travel, and, during that time, we were in coastal cities where he was approached constantly by people that had been his classmates in the naval academy to come with the UTB, the boats that came from England, you know. And go. And he said, "I can't. How can I leave this 13 year old child here by herself?" I said, "Dad, I got up here by myself. I'll get home by myself. go, you don't have to take me." He said, "I can't take her to England and I cannot go. I can't leave." I wanted him to leave. I begged and pleaded that he would leave, but he didn't. So, of course, when he came to Oslo and he reported to Victoria Terrace, which was the main place where the German headquarters were, he never came out. He just vanished. And, I had to sit and wait for permission to see him. And, I had to speak German. So, I was elected in the family to sit and wait, for days, for hours and wait, to get what they called a "schein," which was a permit to see him. So, when the first permit came, it was months later, and we still didn't know exactly where he was. As it turned out, it was God's will, because my mother could not have handled that. I got the schein, so I got to see him first, and my mother was furious. And, I can understand it. But, I couldn't say, "Don't give it to me, give it to my mother." "What, what...you don't get a schein at all." So, I said, "I'll take what I can get." And, when I came in, he had been in a dark cell. He had been in a cell where they had just little blue lights, his eyes were like wolves' eyes. He had hair... my father was very dapper...very neat man. He had long hair. He had a full beard. I had never seen him with a full beard that was a little reddish, and he had...so skinny...he had no belt and no suspenders...so he had to hold up his pants. And, he had long nails, because he hadn't had a chance to cut them. And, I was allowed to walk up to him, just to touch. If it hadn't been for that, I wouldn't have known it was my Dad. I knew it was him because I could smell him as I gave him a hug. I knew it was my Dad. And, uh, he looked so

terrible that it was all I could do to keep from showing how horrible he looked. And, in that quick embrace, he was quick enough to say he needed nail scissors.

I: Um.

R: And the German, who was the watcher, said, "What are you saying?" My father said, "I just told her that I loved her." And I came back, and I said, "How am I going to get a pair of nail scissors to my father?" And, I could not think but I had made up my mind that I was going to get margarine or butter and I was going to broil them and put them in the butter. How I was going to get the butter in. You see, this was the beginning of the war, and you could get margarine yet, still. And, I made...started to... In those days, they still had some of the old Norwegian cops. They were still at the police station before the Germans took over completely. I started talking to a policeman and made goo-goo eyes at him, really. I was much too young. He was 24, I remember. I thought he was a very old man, and I was, what...14. And, he did it. He got the butter into my father. And, he said to me, when he went in, "Did he get it? Did he get it?" He said, "He got it. He is one tough nut." I said, "He didn't acknowledge it?" And, I said, "The message you gave me, he didn't acknowledge that he heard it?" Because he couldn't know that the man wasn't a plant, you see.

I: That's right.

R: I said, "Well, I'm glad he is not going to take any chances." Then, I didn't see my father for years. For years, he was in Germany. And, I have a picture of him in all the different places he stayed. For almost five years, he was interned.

I: That's a long time to be moved and to survive.

R: Yah, yah. But, he really met some interesting people. But he learned a few things, and we learned how tough he had been. It wasn't easy. But, he is still very well. He is fantastic. You would never know. The man is in his eighties.

I: Living in Oslo.

R: No, he lives in Miami. He came to visit me. My mother is dead. My stepmother is dead. And he came to visit me when he was downhearted, and, one of my dearest friends, a Jewish lady, a widow, who lives in Miami, who has been my friend since I came to America, came to visit me, and I introduced them, and, they fell in love, and they are married. He moved from Europe and came to live in Miami.

I: And, where is your brother now?

R: He lives in Oslo. And the rest of my...all my family...live in Oslo. But I am delighted to have my Dad close enough that I can go down on occasional week ends, and I speak to him often on the long distance phone.

I: That makes it very nice. Well, I want to thank you. This has been most interesting and most fascinating, and, with your permission, I am going to make some inquiries about...from one of the bigger centers, to see whether or not there is some way that you, too, can be recognized as one of the righteous Gentiles.

R: No. Oh, don't do that. I don't deserve that much. It was just a little thing.

I: It was not a little thing, and there are people who are alive today because, as a gutsy 15 year old, you got on your skis and helped them through.

R: I had a lot of help from other people. I could never do that my myself.

I: But, even so...

R: I tell you, it was a joy to do. I felt very good doing it.

I: Well, I want to thank you, and we will be in touch with you, because it is possible that we may want to have you share some of these experiences with the students in person. It makes quite an impression on them.

R: Yes, I did that in Lake Placid, Florida. For a few years, I gave some...at the end of the school year I did that. They brought them all together in the big auditorium, and I talked to them...little vignettes that...

I: Uh, huh.

R: I may not even remember now. But, you know, they come to you as you chat and it was very interesting how the young people accepted it. I liked it and they felt closer - that it wasn't so far away.

I: Because you were their age when you did it.

R: Yes.
I: And they can relate to that.

R: Yes, and they felt that it wasn't...if I was there, it is not that long ago. I may be an old lady to them. Still, it doesn't seem that long ago.

I: No.

R: Well, if I can do anything that would be of any help to anyone I would be happy to.

I: We would be very happy to ask you. And, that you again so very much.