Interview with Mrs. Rose Meyerhoff
By David Zarkin
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Jewish Community Relations Council, Anti-Defamation League
of Minnesota and the Dakotas

HOLOCAUST ORAL HISTORY TAPING PROJECT

Q: This is an interview with Rose Myerhoff for the JCRC-ADL Holocaust History Project by David Zarkin at Storer Cable Television in Saint Louis Park on June 28, 1983. You're from Minneapolis, is that correct?

A: I live in Fridley.

Q: Mrs. Meyerhoff, I'd like to thank you for being here today with us. Could you tell me your complete name, including your Jewish name, if it is different?

A: My complete name is Rose Myerhoff. I don't have a middle name. My mother used to call me "Ruchale,' So I guess that's my Jewish name.

Q: When and where were you born?

A: I was born in Antwerp, Belgium in 1933.

Q: What were your parents', grandparents or great grandparents' names, and where were they born?

A: My mother's name was Gitlau Genicow and she was born in Poland, and I assume that her parents were born in Poland, too, but I don't know. And my father's name was Hillel Jacobowitz, and he was born in Poland. I don't know about his parents.

Q: What were your parents' occupations?

A: My mother was a homemaker and my father was a cabinetmaker.

Q: And what languages were spoken in your home?

A: Mostly Yiddish, but some French.

Q: Would you say that your family was secular or religious in practice or orientation?

A: Secular. I think I went to one or two Bar Mitzvahs when I was small, and maybe one or two weddings, and that's about it. And that's about the only times I was in a synagogue.

Q: Did your family do business with gentiles?

A: Oh, I'm sure they did.

Q: Did you ever have gentiles in your home?

A: Oh, yes. My personal friends, you mean? Yes.

Q: Did you receive any formal Jewish education?

A: No, none at all.

Q: Between 1930 and 1941, what events, either local, national, international, were you aware of?

A: Well, I knew that the war had started in 1940, because the drafting of men for the army took place. The registration was in our school, so our school was closed to the children so that it could be taken over to register people. The school was just a couple of blocks away, and my friend was by the school, so when I went to her house, I saw people going in to be inducted. And a few days later, we packed up and ran to France. I was seven years old at the time, so I was aware that something had happened, because here we were walking to Paris from Brussels.

Q: Were you aware of any anti-Semitism around you? Or as it may have affected other Jews in your community/

A: At that time, I had no idea that there could be any anti-Semitism. I was very small, of course, so I really can't judge. And as people escaped to France to avoid the on-coming German armies -- because they invaded Belgium in May, I believe, in 1940 -- every type of person went. Catholics, Jews, everybody ran. So it was a whole lot of people walking.

Q: How did the outbreak of the war change your life?

A: Well, as I said, we -- my mother and I -- packed up and started walking with a male friend of hers. My parents were divorced two years before, so that's why my father did not accompany us. We started walking. And we didn't stop until we got to Paris. I don't know how many kilometers that is.

Q: Were there any other members of your family in Antwerp?

A: No, this was from Brussels. We had moved from Antwerp to Brussels sometime before, when I was five, I guess, and so I lived in Brussels -- outside of Brussels in a suburb.

Q: And you had no other relatives then? Brothers or sisters?

A: I had a sister, and she was living with my mother's sister in Antwerp, and I imagine it had to do with the divorce, you know. I'm not sure how come she was living over there.

Q: What became of your sister then?

A: Well, my sister with her aunt and uncle and cousin were supposed to meet us in Paris, and then we were going to decide what to do. I thought that the plan was, at the time, to make our way to the North Sea and get on a boat and go to England, because England was supposed to be safe since the Germans weren't expected to cross the Channel. They were expected to over-run Belgium and keep going to France. But we never made contact in Paris, so we returned back to Brussels. And we couldn't go up to the North Sea, because we heard that the borders had been closed by the Germans, and nobody would be allowed to leave France. So we walked back to Brussels from Paris.

Q: How long of a walk was that?

A: I have no idea how many kilometers. When we drove in '74-'75, it took us several hours going full-speed by car and not obeying the speed limit. So I have no idea how many kilometers, but it took quite a few days.

Q: A week? Or less than a week would you say?

A: I'm sure it took a week. I just don't have any idea, but I'm sure it must have taken at least a week, because I was small and I complained a lot. (Laughs) It's, you know, hard. But there were an awful lot of people with us, you know. Strangers, I mean. Hundreds and hundreds of people.

Q: And you said they were of different backgrounds? Religious backgrounds?

A: I'm sure, because you know, in Belgium there aren't that many Jews, so I'm sure it was just a fear of the invading army.

Q: So then you went back to Belgium.

A: Brussels, yes.

Q: And then what happened there?

A: Well, my mother went to the police, to the missing persons bureau to find out what happened to her child and her sister. And they made enquiries, and told her to come down sometime later. I have no idea of the time. And told her they had found the bodies. Apparently they had been hit by a bomb, and as proof they had a bracelet, a ring and earrings that my mother recognized that was worn by her sister. So when she recognized that, she was quite upset, and realized that, in fact, they were killed. It was a very upsetting experience for me, because I went along and I saw her, you know.

Q: At that point, was there any more discussion among you, and your mother, or other people in the community about getting out of the country?

A: No, we decided, I guess, that there was no place really to go. What happened is the king of Belgium, instead of standing up and fighting the Germans, decided to give up without a fight. I didn't know the exact political terms. But anyway, the Germans were free to go through Belgium and head straight for France without any opposition, and he went to England, the king did. So people in Belgium just all went back from France. They figured they'll be the same, they'll be under occupation whether they stay in a strange place or go back home.

Q: When did the Nazi occupation then occur, do you remember the month and the year?

A: I'm not sure of the month, but it was 1940.

Q: What actions did the German forces take in the early months and years of occupation?

A: I saw them on the streets of Brussels, in, if not May, certainly June. We went to France and came back, and we moved from one house to another in Brussels, to another suburb. We went from Anderlecht to Scarbie. And there was a shortage of food and clothing. You could tell that there was something different, because now you had ration books, and the milk, for example, that used to be delivered every morning to the house was now rationed. You could only get one liter per day per household. It was a limited amount. And my mother was making cake out of chestnut flour instead of regular flour, and you know, there were severe limitations on the food. So I noticed that. In 1942 is when things started to get serious.

Q: What happened then in 1942?

A: In '41 and '42 I continued going to school. And except for the restrictions, the rationing, we managed. But in 1942, the Germans decreed that Jews could not attend school. They were not allowed. So I had to stay home. During the

summer, before this decree, I was going to day camp, and one day we heard that the person who ran the day camp -- he was a Catholic priest -- he was shot by a firing squad, and the reason was because he allowed Jews to attend his camp. So some of the older people, older kids from the camp, they were maybe 12, 13, 14, attended his funeral and my friend was among those, so that's how I know. And then in September the decree came down that we could not go to school, so I continued attending that camp. The camp remained open even though the priest had been punished, so-to-speak, had been shot for having Jews. And I think it was in September that I came home one day and a friend of my mother's stopped me at the door and said, " Don't go in the house. The Germans were here. Took your mother away. Don't go upstairs to the apartment. I'm going to take you someplace." And he just took me. I trusted him because I had seen him many times at home. So I went with him to the train station, and we traveled from Brussels to Louvain, to a Catholic convent there. It was Benedictine sisters who were running the convent. It was, I guess, an orphanage for, I assume, Catholic children, because there were quite a few children there that were not Jews. But they decided to take in Jews, I guess, because there I was, you know, and he knew exactly where to go, it looked like.

Q: Do you remember this man's name?

A; No. I have no idea. When I arrived, there were quite a few Jewish children already there and more kept coming as the days went on. We were all given a Christian name. My Christian name was Christiane DeGraaf. DeGraaf is Flemish, so that was kind of 100 percent safe, I guess. But the reason I knew that there were many Jewish children in the convent is, every morning we had to go to mass before breakfast -- Catholic mass -- so we would file into the chapel -- we all wore uniforms, so we all looked alike -- black dresses -- and the Jewish children were asked to sit way in the back of the chapel and not participate in the Catholic morning mass. So you could tell who was Jewish and who wasn't, because all the Catholic kids were sitting in the front and kneeling and standing and sitting or whatever the mass required, the order of the service, but the Jews just sat in the back and were asked to be quiet and just wait till the mass was over, and then we could all go to breakfast and to school after. The school was in the convent, too -- in one of the wings of the convent. So we never left the convent grounds during that time. I stayed in the convent two and a half years.

Q: During that time, was there ever any encounters with the German army?

A: Yes. As I said, we started by sitting in the back and being separated during mass. But the nuns got nervous, and after a few weeks, I'm not sure how long, we were asked to sit together with the other children and kneel and stand and sit and do whatever, open the prayer book, and act in every way like the Catholic children so anybody looking in would not be able to tell that there was two different types of people. Periodically, SS officers or Gestapo or officials like that of the German authorities would come to the convent, knock on the door and be received, and

inquire that they, ah, heard that there were Jewish people hiding in the convent. And the nuns, I'm sure, denied it, and said, " No, there aren't any." But they insisted on searching the convent grounds each time, and this was quite a large building. It was laid out in four adjacent squares, so to speak, with a courtyard in the middle. And it was about four stories high. Each square housed a different population. There were the children -- the girls from seven to eleven in one square, from eleven to fourteen in another square, and fourteen to eighteen in the same square and then the nuns in the third square and the boys in the fourth square. Somehow, each time the SS officers would come to the convent and insist on searching the grounds, a nun or two would manage to come to the classrooms -- this was always during the day -- and alert us. And for some reason, they were concerned that we don't stay in the classrooms even though we would be all mixed with the other children. And I don't know if there would be any way of knowing which child was Jewish. We all had false names, you know, Christian names. But for some reason they insisted that we leave the classrooms immediately and start running, quietly walking or running in the opposite direction from where the SS officers were coming, so we were always one step ahead, so to speak. If they were coming up one staircase, we would be going down another. So we were always out of sight of them, and we had to keep quiet, and we had to go fast, so it was kind of upsetting.

Q: What were you feeling?

A: Well, we were very afraid, and we managed to keep quiet. I was only nine, but I was put with the eleven to fourteen group, and it just amazed me, looking back on that, that we remained quiet. We didn't, you know, start crying, especially the younger ones. I don't know what happened to the seven to eleven year olds, but they also were kept on the go. And then the SS would be satisfied, I guess, and would leave, and would not come back again for a while. I don't know how many months would pass between, but I estimate that they probably came six, seven times to search the convent grounds and we got exercise going up and down the stairs. They never found us. It's kind of hard to believe, but when I went back in either '74 or '75 with my husband, we found the convent and we went in. and there were a couple of nuns there that had taken care of the seven to eleven year olds, and they reminisced like crazy! "Do you remember how the SS used to come?" And all this stuff.

So then my husband, I felt, he believed it more now that he heard them ask me if I remembered, rather than me telling him, because it just sounds fantastic that, you know, a hundred kids could go up and down the stairs and not be discovered. I mean, our bunch was a hundred, but there were more in the other age groups. So, you know, you can imagine about 300 kids going up and down the stairs -- the logistics. But, it happened.

Q: What else would you like to mention about your life in the convent?

A: Well, I retained a warm feeling for Catholics in general and nuns in particular from that experience, because they were taking care of us for two and a half years under enormous stress. They got this enormous addition of people, we were healthy kids, rambunctious. They punished us and spanked us. They were strict, but they did take care of us, you know, and so I'm impressed. I'm still grateful, I guess to this day.

Q: When did you leave hiding then?

A: It was, I think, at the liberation. I guess the liberation occurred in September -- VE Day. I was in the convent at that time. We knew it was coming, because the school teacher -- they were lay people, the school teachers -- she had access to an underground radio or whatever that's called. So she knew that Allies were planning an invasion and liberation before the summer started. So she promised before the summer recess came, which is, I guess, in the middle of July in Europe -- you go to school from September to the middle of July -- she promised to come in every day if she could, or every other day, with a map and little colored pins -- you know, the pins with the little colored top and flag --and advance them for us, so we could see the Allied advance through France and through Belgium, if they succeeded. So she did come every day, just about, and did her map, but we were scared, so we laid the map out on the floor and crouched behind her desk. We had very tall windows in the classrooms facing the street, and she was concerned if anybody looking through the windows, she didn't want them to see that we were looking at a map and moving flags. She was concerned.

Q: Was this convent located in the country or was it in the city?

A: No, it was right on the edge of the city. We could walk. We walked every Sunday outside of the convent for a short time, a half hour maybe, to the downtown of Louvain -- all of us, in rows -- neat rows, you know. We just walked slowly, and went for a walk to the center of the city from the convent. And since we were all fairly young, I imagine the convent was not located too far, otherwise we could never have walked there and back in a short time. And then when we found the convent, it was very close to the center of the city.

Q: How close did the war actually get to your convent?

A: Well, when the Allies came to liberate, we had quite a few days of bombing first -- all summer, and probably the spring too. I'm sure it was the spring, because during school break, in the afternoon -- we had a ten, fifteen -minute break in the school day -- we could stand in the courtyard and count the Allied planes, the flying fortresses, 200 at a time we'd count, flying over on their way to Germany. So we knew that something was going on from there, because we saw the planes every day -- close packed, you know. We counted 200 in a few minutes. They flew three together. Also we started getting bombing <u>in</u> Louvain, in Belgium, so we spent quite a few nights in the basement of the convent. And the nuns never

knew whether to keep us in the basement in case the convent collapses, and how will they get all these hundreds of kids out, or keep us in the courtyard, you know, and maybe the bombs will fall on us in the courtyard. They didn't know which place was safer, so, you know, they would periodically, "Well, we better go out in the courtyard," you know. And so we'd all get up, go up from the basement, stand in the courtyard, they'd be nervous about that, they'd put us back in the basement, we'd lay down on the floor and try to sleep a little bit. So we had a time with the bombing too, but we weren't afraid. We'd run down the stairs. The dormitory was up on the fourth floor -- on the top floor. So we'd have to run down the four flights, and then the one to the basement. But I remember we were not scared. We were very, very happy that the Allies were coming. And as I say, we knew from the teacher, what was going on. We couldn't wait till they got here, and we just were not concerned about the bombs.

Q: During this time, did you receive any news or information about what was going on in the rest of Europe regarding concentration camps?

A: Well, I knew in 1940 already, that Jews were being taken on trains -- cattle cars -- to concentration camps. And I don't know how I knew except I probably overheard adults speak. But I knew by the time I went to the convent that the reason I had to go and hide is so that I wouldn't be taken too. And when the fellow said, "Don't go upstairs, your parents were taken away," I knew exactly what had happened.

Q: I'd like to ask what were the channels of information at this time? How did you know what was going on throughout Europe?

A: The one that I remember is the teacher. We had school every day, and she managed to keep up with what was going on outside, and not only with the Germans, but the Allies -- when they were planning an invasion. And as I mentioned before, she brought in a map in the summer, just about every day, and showed us what she had found out -- where the English were, where the Americans were, and how they were moving through France, and so we knew just about to the day when they were going to be in Belgium, but of course, not the exact day that they would be in our town. But one night after supper we were playing around in the recreation hall and somebody happened to look out the window. There was only one large window in that room. And that person saw something coming down like snow, white dots coming down from the sky. And then other people came to the window. She must have made some kind of noise, like, "Oh, come and look and see." Pretty soon the whole window was filled with kids looking, and we could see that there were parachutes coming down like snow into the fields not too far from the convent. So we just became completely hysterical. We knew this was the liberation. We ran outside the convent, which of course, you know, we never would have thought of doing, going outside. And outside were all these jeeps and tanks and other trucks and variety of conveyances filled with soldiers. And the population in general was just hysterical! They were

laughing and crying, and the women were jumping up on the tanks and kissing the soldiers and throwing flowers. And us kids, we were just completely out of our minds. We were crying and laughing and hugging each other, and screaming and jumping. You can't describe it! It's just incredible! We knew that now everything would be okay, that we wouldn't have to worry about getting killed, or caught, or sent away. And we came back into the convent and started dancing and jumping some more. It was just one big day!

Q: And then what happened. How long did you remain in the convent?

A: Well, I'm not sure when the Battle of the Bulge took place in relation to this day. It seems to me we heard rumors that the Germans were coming back, and all of us kids were quite upset. And this whole new batch of kids came to the convent, and we found out they were all Jews, and they were running away from this new invasion, so to speak. They had come from Weisenbaek, which is a little bit south of Brussels. I don't know how they got to Louvain, which is north of Brussels, but these kids were running away from what they thought was the Germans coming back and continuing where they left off. They stayed till it was considered safe for them to leave. They came in a bunch and kind of lived in a bunch. These kids were getting some kind of Jewish education where they had come from in Weisenbaek because they knew how to do Israeli dances, one of the things I remember. And they taught us -- the rest of us Jews -- how to dance the Hora and Mai'im and a few other Israeli dances.

Q: Did they say where they had been?

A: They had been in Weisenbaek, they said. That was a home, but I don't know how they managed to learn all these Jewish things.

Q: When you say "home"…

A: An orphanage-type. In those days, before the war, this may not have been called an orphanage. It may have been called a summer camp. You know, like the convent was not set up to receive a large population, either. And the place I went to afterwards was a summer camp, essentially, that was just kept open for us.

Q: So tell me about this second Nazi threat. What did that turn out to be? Was that for real or what?

A: Well, they, I guess, made some headway through the Ardennes in Belgium. And I don't know how far into Belgium they got -- through the Ardennes Mountains. They came through the snow. It was winter -- Christmas. So it was very unexpected, but the Allies rallied and were able to repel the Germans. Many lives were lost in that, because it was the winter and people were not dressed adequately and so on. So the threat was removed again, and everything was okay. It reminds me, though, of another incident. When we would go on our Sunday

walk to town, while the Germans were occupying, the nuns were very nervous, but, you know, "Just everybody stay calm and stick together and it will be okay." But after the liberation, a couple or three times, when we got to a street, all of a sudden we'd be asked to stop and the street would be barricaded because the Germans were hiding in some of the houses. They had to be flushed out, so to speak, and we couldn't go down the street that day, and so we had to find another way to get back. So even though the town was officially liberated, it wasn't completely safe. You know, it was guns shooting and so on in an effort to get the Germans out.

Q: How long did that go on?

A: I only remember that happening two, three times, and I don't know as far as weeks, or anything like that. I left the convent some time in January, it seems to me.

Q: Of what year?

A: I guess that must be '45 now, because '44 was the liberation, and I think it's sometime in January that I left. The Jewish organizations -- I'm not sure which one -- but I knew at the time that some Jewish organization was concerned that Jews don't remain in Catholic environments, like a Catholic convent or a Catholic home, so they were trying to find all the Jewish kids they could, and put them someplace else, secular-type.

Q: Do you remember the name of this organization?

A: No, I have no idea who they were. I just knew it was some Jewish organization. And so we were rounded up and taken out of the convent, and I was sent to La'ilde, which is another outskirts area of Brussels, and I stayed there for about a year or so, a year and a half. This was a summer camp where kids would come for the summer vacation, like Camp Tikvah here. This was a secular camp. The director was a doctor, which was unusual in those days, to have a female doctor. And she ran this camp in the summer, but it was opened to receive these Jewish kids. So even though it was a non-sectarian camp normally, it was opened to receive Jewish kids, so the population was, as I recall, was all -- well, not all Jews, come to think of it -- all orphans, and some were not Jewish. And as I say, I stayed there. It was called a "fresh air camp,' so we did a lot of exercise and walking.

Q: How long were you there?

A: A year, year and a half. Something like that. And I guess nobody really knew what to do with us because we were too young to be sent off into the world on our own, and we didn't have family to go to. Well, we didn't know if we had family to go to. So, we were kind of in a holding pattern.

Q: You knew what had happened to your family.

A: Yes, but I didn't know what family I could go to. You know, they couldn't ask me, "Do you have an aunt or cousin or somebody that you could live with?" because I would have said, "No, I don't know of anybody."

Q: So how was this all resolved?

A: Well, from the fresh air camp, the summer camp in La'ilde, some Jewish organization, it may have been the same, took the Jewish kids out of there, and moved some of us to Weisenbaek, the place where the other kids had come from. And that was some kind of camp. We were all Jewish, in that camp. And in there we learned about Passover and all the other Jewish Holy Days and Yom Kippur. I remember, we all tried to fast for Yom Kippur. You know, that was: We're going to do it! We're going to be big. And we learned more Israeli dances and songs and Hebrew songs.

Q: About this time you were what, about nine? Ten?

A: I went to the convent at nine. I came out about eleven, eleven-and-a-half. I was in La'ilde till about like twelve-and-a-half. And I was in Weisenbaek till about fifteen-and-a-half.

Q: And were you concerned at that time about where you would finally be? Or were you content to be in Belgium? Or did you have any thoughts about that, as to your future, at that time?

A: It's hard to say. In the convent, I was one of the younger people, so I had the older kids kind of look after me. But in La'ilde I was one of the oldest, so I became busy taking care of the younger kids and that I knew were orphans, I guess I thought they had it tough. Like I took care of a little boy, he was only five, and he didn't have parents, and I gave him a bath and made sure he ate and so on. And then in Weisenbaek, I was one of the older -- well in the middle. And I don't remember thinking what would happen to me. Somehow I thought things were going to work out. I don't know. Maybe that's when you're a child, you're not as smart as an adult, and you don't think of that. I don't remember worrying about what would happen to me, because I wasn't an adult yet, and I didn't have a place to go. While I was in Weisenbaek, I found out later that HIAS was the one that was trying to connect.

Q: What does that stand for?

A: HIAS is: Hebrew Immigration -- I don't know what the "A" stands for, I think the "S" stands for Society. I found out later when I came here that they were the ones that were trying to connect Jewish kids with relatives of some kind. And I

arrived here in April of '47, and they located my mother's brother in New York, and I suppose told him that there was this niece in Belgium, and he proceeded to fill out all the forms and do whatever was necessary to bring me over. At that time, quotas were strict, and only so many foreigners could come over from any one country, and I started out under the Belgian quota, which meant so many Belgian citizens could come over to the United States in a given year. And when I thought everything was done, my pictures had been taken, whatever, passport made, and everything, then I found out when I was just about ready to go, that I was now under the Polish quota, because I was considered a Polish citizen, since my parents were from Poland. And although I was born in Belgium, I was not a Belgian citizen for purposes of quota. And I found out later that the Polish quota is much smaller, and that apparently somebody was hoping to slow down the flood of immigrants coming here. So that delayed me a whole year, because of course, the Polish quota was filled that year. So I didn't get here 'til '47 -- April -- in New York. We lived on Port Washington Avenue in Manhattan.

Q: You lived with your uncle.

A: And his wife.

Q: When had they come to this country?

A: They had come in the 1920s, like 1922 or something. And I understand there was another brother here too, but I never met him, so I don't know him at all.

Q: How did your life proceed after that?

A: Well, my aunt and uncle adopted me. They became my legal guardians. And I attended elementary school here. I New York, you went to elementary school up till you finished the eighth grade, so I completed the eighth grade in New York and then I started high school in New York after that.

Q: And how was it that you came to Minnesota then?

A: I met my husband in New York, and we got married in New York. He was an engineer, and he was offered a job. At that time, this was in 1959, most of the large corporations that needed engineers would have search agencies find engineers and try to talk them into moving from one company to the other, and so there was a lot of traffic. And he got talked into coming out here, by Honeywell. They offered him a good deal, and he thought, well why not? We'll come out here and live here. And I've been here ever since.

Q: Just a few more questions. Do you maintain contact with the Jewish community?

A: In Minneapolis, yes. I am a member of the Holocaust Study Committee. And I go down to the Jewish Community Center once in a while for whatever programs

they have. They have plays, periodically, and I'm on their dance committee, and we put on either dance programs or dance classes, or have guest teachers, dance teachers.

Q: Maybe you could share with us a bit of what the Holocaust Study Committee does.

A: The Holocaust Study Committee plans and carries out, every year, a Holocaust memorial service that alternates. The service takes place once a year in Minneapolis, the following year in St. Paul, and then back again in Minneapolis. But in addition to that, the Holocaust Committee is in the process of recording what happened to Holocaust survivors that are now living in Minneapolis and the surrounding communities. Also liberators and people who were hidden and so on -- whoever lived through that period.

Q: As we're doing here today.

A: Yes.

Q: Which will become a part of a permanent library.

A: Yes. It's also going to be condensed and edited and so on into a booklet that can be distributed to schools and teachers for purposes of study.

Q: Can you tell me what it has meant to you to be a survivor of the Holocaust?

A: I don't know. I guess I'm glad because the way things turned out, I have a wonderful husband. I have three beautiful, wonderful, smart children. I'm not prejudiced at all. (Laughs) and I now have a grandchild four weeks old who was named after my mother. So I feel, altogether, I have made out okay, but otherwise I don't know.

Q: Can you describe to me, after your experience during the Holocaust, your general feeling about human nature and non-Jews and Germans?

A: Well, I am kind of neutral, you know. I don't have any particular good or bad feeling towards non-Jews. I do tend to have a special feeling for Catholics and nuns in general, because of the risk that they took. They were risking their lives, you know, for several years. I continue to this day to have a real hard time with Germans. When I hear the German language spoken it's really hard for me. I can't make friends with Germans. If they're German Jews, then it's okay, but not if they're German-Germans. It's just been very hard to this day. I can't. I can't watch any T.V., <u>The Diary of Anne Frank</u> or anything like that, or Holocaust movies, or reads books on that whole thing. I was going to interview people for the Holocaust Committee, and I changed my mind. I decided I couldn't do it. You go on with your every day, you go to work, you take care of your kids, your

husband and so on, but certain areas you don't deal with. And that's the way I try not to deal with it. I don't wanna be reminded, read any books on it, or see it on the T.V.

Q: Has your belief or practice in Judaism or a Supreme Being changed?

A: Well, no. Before we came to Minneapolis, we moved from New York to New Jersey, again due to the job situation, and there we joined a Conservative temple and we helped to renovate the building. They purchased an old building, and so we were active in that way. And they had services periodically when they could get somebody to conduct service on Friday night. So we were just starting to get into Judaism, because of course during the war I didn't do anything, and before that I didn't either. But then when we came to Minneapolis, we didn't join any organized segment of the Jewish population. In Fridley we were the only Jewish couple. As far as I know, we still are. There's a couple of Jewish mothers and Jewish fathers but not couples that I know of, in Fridley And our kids were the only Jewish kids in the school. Maybe that's a reaction to the Holocaust, that we didn't go where all the Jews were -- I don't know -- in St. Louis Park.

Q: Well maybe, if I may be permitted an observation, when you lived in Belgium, I think you told us in the first segment that your family was assimilated into the general population rather than living in a so-called Jewish neighborhood.

A: Right, yes. I think that in general, I don't know, but I would be surprised if there were Jewish neighborhoods in Belgium. I think, as a whole, the Jews were assimilated into the population, and I know that many Belgian families had Jewish children that they were hiding. I met some of them, you know, in Weisenbaek. I inquired, "Where did you stay the whole war?" "Well, I was hidden on a farm," or here and there. So I know for a fact.

Q: I think you said that you were a member, you participate in the Study Committee on the Holocaust. Do you also do some public speaking or do you talk to groups, or do interviews like this?

A: No, I have spoken to just one or two groups. I'm willing and able and ready, but I have not been asked.

Q: There might be some other comments that you might have that we could make at this time regarding those years, you know, in regard to the experience of living through that, and having some second-hand knowledge about what was going on to other Jews throughout Europe, and surviving the experience. Could you think of any?

A: Well, one incident stands out in my mind. When I was in La'ilde, one of the children that came to the same camp, I became friends with. I asked her what she did during the previous years, you know, how come she was still around. And she

said that her parents or one of her parents worked for the underground -- the French underground or the Belgian underground -- and she was my age at the time, you know, ten, eleven. And since she was a small child, she was running the messages back and forth between the various groups. They thought she wouldn't be suspected, being a child, and it would be easier for her than an adult to run from one group to another and run messages. And one comment she made that was strange, she said, " All I wished for was a pair of shoes at that time." Apparently she was doing all this without shoes. I know I didn't wear shoes either in La'ilde. I had the wooden shoes the whole winter, for a year.

Q: An interesting recollection from your time in Belgium.