

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

William Helmreich Oral History Collection

Interview with Reva Bernstein

August 1, 1989

RG-50.165*0006

PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audio taped interview with Reva Bernstein, conducted by William Helmreich on August 1, 1989 as research for his book *Against all odds: Holocaust survivors and the successful lives they made in America*. The interview was given to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on Oct. 30, 1992 and is part of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's collection of oral testimonies. Rights to the interview are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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

REVA BERNSTEIN

August 1, 1989

WH: ...how many children do you have?

RB: Two...my daughter is a chiropractor (age 31) in San Francisco...my son (32) ...lives in Florida...he works in physical education...

WH Tell me about this Conference...

RB: ...In California there seemed to have a Holocaust need to get together. The people that went through a lot, they wanted to get together, and it started on a small scale in another country, in Canada...somehow there was a need to get together on a national level...so we got together in Lancaster, Pa...Judith Kestenbaum, she is the one who started it...and I was a child when it started...I was born in 1928.

WH: Where were you born?

RB: In Poland, (inaudible city)...

WH: After the war you went where?

RB: To Italy...and when I was 16 I was with a stage group and we performed all over Italy and I was one of them...this group was eager to get together...because it seems there is a need, a national need, to get together...and everybody was so eager to come out and speak what happened to them and for some reason they put it on the side, on the background right after the war, and they-did anything they could, and forgot about this-somehow there is this ability in humans to forget anything that was bad, and move on. I know myself, I closed the door to the past, I closed it in such a way that I could never speak to my children about my experiences. And even my daughter at 15, came to me, she was going to a Jewish school at that time...and she comes to me, 'Mommy, can't you tell me anything about your mommy and daddy?' And I got so upset! I couldn't get together-and I started to tell her, and all of a sudden, I started to tear, I was pregnant, I just couldn't handle it, and I fought not to show my tears, even. And I don't know why I didn't, but I couldn't. She was so sorry for me, my daughter...and I just choked, and I don't know-and she got scared. And that finished with her. She is now 31, and she's going for therapy. And she tells me now, that is how she has anxiety. She has dreams, Holocaust, all kinds of things. But it's an anxiety that she has, she thinks of the Holocaust now. Probably she heard it from what is going on in television. But from me. She never heard, because I just couldn't talk. And now when I want to talk, I can't because she's far away, and we express that. I'm so glad that she's going for therapy because she can come out with all her (inaudible) and sometimes we speak of it on the phone, but how much can we- I would love to talk to my father and my mother. Now, I am better at that. (inaudible)...

WH: How did it (inaudible)?

RB: I think I have a need because in school now, as a teacher, very often teachers get together, and in the beginning I feel like I was like a Black Sheep in the crowd, I better not talk about it, because they would look at me like I would be coming from Mars, or like a stranger. And I would feel their reaction towards me. I said, 'Forget it.' (inaudible) but lately, I say anything, and it doesn't bother me.

WH: How does it affect them?

RB: They got to know me humanly first. You see, when I am an outsider, they don't know me. But now, I stay with them 5 years now in the school, and I'm older and I handle whatever I have to handle. I have courage. And then when they know that I am from Holocaust, sometimes, it seems, truthfully, that they admire me. That I had this courage, because I'm beyond-I mean, I'll tell you honestly, from the very first impulse, I see such horrible kids, coming into a Junior High School in Bedford Stuyvesant, trying to find out what the work is all about, and the kids picks up a chair and throws it, I said, 'Is that what I'm going to face?' And I looking at other teachers, and I say, 'How can they face that?' And truth was, it was scary. So I said, 'No, High School is not for me,' because I cannot handle the kids. Junior High School kids.'

WH: Toughest age.

RB: Then, when I went to High School, I tell you, I said to myself, 'If they can handle it, why can't I?' And there is always this fight in me, 'Now look, Americans can do it. (inaudible) You went through horror and this and that, and nothing helped, and I can face it.' I'm talking to myself, and 'face it and, just, so? That's it. You can-anything can be done. Figure out that this is Auschwitz, and this is let's say, ghetto, and this is the wild people. You face the worst, so what is the big deal?' And this is how I worked to myself, to fight the battles of teaching.

WH: Like giving yourself therapy.

RB: Yes, I said, 'Look, if I can do that, why can't I face-I always think it is a battlefield. But now I got over it. I mean, now I help them. I am easier with the kids. I can laugh with them. But it- at the beginning, it was just like a battlefield...it was Andrew Jackson High School...boys and girls is terrible. It is a drain. It's a battlefield. Teachers are frightened to walk even...

WH: Have you ever spoken to groups?

RB: (inaudible) yes...and at 15, 16, I went (after the war) back to school because that's all I know. 13, 12 years old my mother left me at school, my father believed in school. In learning, and learning, and learning that's the only thing you can have. You can lose money, but you can never lose knowledge. And this is the way my father believed in and he was an enlightened man. He wasn't religious. He was an enlightened-.

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WH: Was he a Zionist?

RB: Yes...and my mother was very traditional. And that conflict was in my house also, he went to the library to read, and my mother hoped that he's going to shul.

WH: ...you were three brothers and yourself?

RB: Yes...I am a twin...

WH: Who survived from your family?

RB: Nobody. I am the only one...I was the youngest...

WH: ...where were you during the war...

RB: ...I was in hiding...with some people...and then in the ghetto they were building a tunnel, it was a secret, and at night they dug it. Two months later...they organized 20 people they brought them through the tunnel...and then let us go through the tunnel...and 40 survived, and 80 were caught...I knew I had to run away from the city and I...ran into the woods...I was 15, 16 years old...and I was taken to the partisans...Jewish groups of organized partisono...Zorins. He's the Russian organization, and it was under the Russian supervision, the other one is Gersky who organized it, he is Polish.

WH: ...and you spent the rest of the war with them?

RB: Well, 7, 8 months-.

WH: Then they were liberated.

RB: Yeh.

WH: ...where did you go then?

RB: Well, as soon as I was liberated, I went to school. I didn't know any better-Russian school. I stayed with a few people that were like me...a girl, Rose, (inaudible) her mother took care of me and her. She was 3 years older. And her mother cared for me, and I was taken care of then. And the mother was shot at (and killed) by the Germans, when they were flying back...and after a year, everybody left, and I lost my brothers, so I went with them (a group going to Italy), and as I came to Italy, I said, 'what I'm going to do here? I might as well study.' And of course, it was like a renaissance. I came to Italy, and I was performing, and I was dancing, and this (inaudible) doesn't make sense...this it's all good times, but this is not my goal. I wanted to study. I wanted to do something worthwhile.

- WH: ...how is it, that you were able to pick up the pieces and rebuild your life here. From where did you draw the strength?
- RB: Well, this is where we come to it. I think it has a lot to do with the dreams of your parents that wanted you to become somebody beyond them. As usual, parents want to be more than what they have achieved. And that the dream, you read it when you are a child, and if the external forces are cut off, this dream is even stronger. And I feel that I (inaudible) with my mother's dream and hope, and my father's, that someday we will become what they want us to become, and if this is cut off, yes, I-this strength is even more important, that I-this is what I want. I even wanted my children to be-I should be the example for them also.
- WH: Do you find that consciously, when you make a decision or do something important, that you're thinking to yourself, how would my parents have wanted this to be done?
- RB: I thought when I was younger, now it's like the reverse. Now, I want my children to see that their strength- it will give them strength when they will think, when they'll come to our age, and see how we handle our life.
- WH: You felt that to the extent that you followed a life style, and had the values that your parents had, that in a sense they continue to live (inaudible).
- RB: That gave me strength, yes. I always even repeat it to my children, sometimes, I said, 'G-d, if only my parents would live, they would be so proud!' Or, yes, that kind, yes, this was always my strength. My strength.
- WH: Does it ever happen to you when you think back about the war that it is in a way, so realistic that-could it have happened, as we are sitting here, in Forest Hills, could the events that you described to me (inaudible).
- RB: Is it a question? You are wondering if it is really real. I tell you, it is very real, but I always see, when I see the Holocaust group that gets together, I am still overwhelmed. And not only that, I'm alone then. And the others-peoples horrors, so immense, and so-I couldn't believe. Tragedies are always coming and going. We have moments of good (inaudible) and moments of-and even today, I cannot (inaudible) what's going on in Israel. The struggle...(interrupted by the building maintenance who wants to fix the pipes and she casually stops her conversation and gives him permission to fix it.).
- WH: ...and how do you feel, especially today?
- RB: I must tell you...and I bring this up even at a Holocaust-I'm now open to it because I'm just fresh from it. I must tell you yesterday I was very down, because I went through this Holocaust, and for some reason, everything soaked in, and I was emotionally devastated. Yesterday. Today, I am better off. I had my rest...when the Jews in '73 had a war, I was so sick. It's like my children are on the war, fighting again. I identified completely. When I was

in Israel, I cried, because I felt that why (inaudible) my children, they seen horror in the street. You know, I see the positive side also, they could have been killed, my children, (inaudible) I feel always guilty. My place should be in Israel, not here.

WH: Did you think about going to Israel after the war?

RB: Yes...but...my grandparents are here in America...my father's parents are here. They came in 19-and the only one that didn't come is my father, because he remained with property. And the dream was that one day we'll come to America...so those are the forces that we grew up-

WH: Do you live with your bags packed?...that a Jew can never be too comfortable, or secure?

RB: I always feel that way...I don't feel secure here also. My mind is really, one day, we were talking, I want to stay for at least a year in Israel. Maybe I'll take, G-d forbid, my last years in Israel...the first thing that I did is send my daughter, when she finished high school, to Israel, and I hoped that she'll take roots there, but she didn't...the whole feeling is, yes, I'm on the road to go some place else. That is a good statement, except that I feel that at the end, I would like to be in Israel. I will feel very good there.'

WH: Have you visited Israel?

RB: ...yes...

WH: When your kids grew up in this country, did you send them to camp?

RB: That's a good point. I didn't have any contacts with the real- I didn't know what to do. I think I had a weakness. I didn't have, (inaudible) religious we weren't-I wasn't religious because that was the tendency in my home. I didn't know what to do when it comes to-I was clinging to the Jewish people. Some reason, religion is not part-

End of Tape #1, Side #1

Tape #1, Side #2

WH: You didn't join ANY groups?

RB: No, I didn't know about them...(her husband is American born...from Brooklyn...he was a commercial artist for Davis publication...book jackets...magazines...).

WB: 'When you met it was in-.'

RB: I came in '50 and we met in 1951. I left school in Italy so I went to the same school in art.

WH: Was it a culture shock to meet someone coming from so totally a different background?

RB: (Her husband: Hummm It was interesting (laughs). She was full of fire and vinegar. Different. (inaudible)).

WH: ...after everything you went through, some people would have been so devastated they wouldn't have been able to crawl.

RB: ...(inaudible)...I had to study to accomplish something and to unite myself with my identity. I did not have that because of the conflict between mother and father, so I wasn't about to get married or anything, but I'd like to find-what is it all about? Life, philosophers, great painters, after all-(RB's husband: She had a terrible hunger for learning.)

WH: You went back to school after the war?

RB: I went to Hunter College. I was in school in Italy and I continued. I said, 'What am I to do here?' I said to myself 'Go back to school.'

WH: ...why didn't you go to Israel?'

RB: Because I wanted to see my grandparents...I was in conflict, but I did want to see my grandparents.

WH: They sent you the affidavit?

RB: No, they helped me with money. And they gave me support, and I went to school over there in Italy and while I'm in Italy in school, I wanted to learn everything that I could (inaudible) it was a drive to understand to- philosophy. The philosophers drove me crazy.

WH: ...how could you keep your mind on your work without thinking about everything that had happened?

RB: That is very good. You closed, you, this was it, and you have to want life. (inaudible).

WH: Did you find that other people adopted the same attitude?

RB: If they got married, raised a family, they were too busy. You know what, that's a good question, but I see it in my daughter. She's so busy, she has no time for (? us?). But, you know, I'm just saying, I can't help what is there. But I must do what I have to do. And that this, the hunger to discover the new things-I must learn and I must find out.

WH: It must really help you because if you stop to think-.

RB: If you want to know, even now I have this problem. You know, I was very involved in the humanities because I wanted to read (inaudible) people have problems, now I realize, that I'm not the only one. But it's sort of like absorbing, pushing my energies into opening doors to the objective world, rather than subjective.

WH: What do you mean that even now you have this problem?

RB: Even now, when I'm not busy, I'm teaching, I'm busy, busy. When comes a weekend or a holiday, I get depressive. I can't even-my children aren't here.

WH: ...even Americans can get depressed...but you have terrible things to remember so you have more incentive to keep busy...

RB: Yah. This is why I bring this up, that somehow I have to be-I have energy, emotional, I work that way. I plunge in (inaudible) all the way teacher. I mean, I'm getting into the world of the children, and I can be good to them, and they love me, so I have a positive attitude. Somehow there is a positive side of me-(inaudible) if I have nothing to do, I'm looking to my friends. Very intimate friends. And I help them to get out of their depression.

WH: Did you ever talk to a social worker-therapy?

RB: Yes. Therapists. Yes. I did go. (inaudible). We had conflicts (inaudible) and I wanted to become a teacher and do something, and we had tough times between husband and wife and children, and so, I did go, we went both. He went first and then I joined for a year or two.

WH: But not related to the Holocaust?

RB: No. In fact only that he...said that my sleeping, I was escaping from my problems...it subsided by having a family, but then I had a need to go back to do something. I found in ' (inaudible) Therapy' by Franklyn, my solution to the problem. I needed to do something...somehow children wasn't enough for me. My children.

WH: ...when people adapt successfully to life it has to do much more with their ability to cope with hardship than with the things that actually happened to them...it isn't what happens to you in life that determines how you can manage it. It's how you can respond to it.

RB: Yes.

WH: ...you came by boat...into New York Harbor...did your grandparents greet you?

RB: Yes.'

WH: What was it like?

RB: Very moving...and then my grandmother, my grandfather, were 85 years old, and my grandmother sitting like this, I sort of like recognized them. It was very moving, old people and I was 20. And here I am the only one who survived. They were very touched. But they were old...I came to them, but my uncle took me instead-their son, I had a lot of uncles and aunts. I could not relate to them too much, except that the first 6 months he was very nice about taking us in. He was the poorest, but was a nice soul...in Pelham Parkway...

WH: What was it like living with him?'

RB: Not easy. Because I felt, an outsider, I was uncomfortable.

WH: Did he have kids?

RB: Yes, two little kids, and they were-and I couldn't find myself. I found it very hard, adjusting in America. Very hard. Very hard.

WH: ...what was the adjustment problem?

RB: Well I wanted to go into school, I felt that I had training, of two years of college almost in terms of Hunter College, I did know a little English, they thought that, 'What is school? What is this kind of this-she's a kid! She's a kid! She doesn't know what she's doing.' They thought that I should go to a factory and do...and I felt that I could do more with studying and if they will give me a chance a year, I'll go to college, and they were laughing at me. I knew that I have a preparation for studies. Well, anyway, another cousin of mine, from my mother's side said, 'Look,' they didn't have children, and he was an educated man, he got a scholarship for me for Jewish girls, some kind of organization. 'And sure enough, I went and I left my family behind and went to Hunter College...(inaudible) a place for girls, I had to pay \$90 (inaudible).

WH: ...what did you think of the streets of New York when you first came here?

- RB: Well I tell you what. I was very unhappy because I come from Italy, it's very lively, (inaudible) a beauty-Rome.
- WH: The difference between Pelham Parkway and Rome-.
- RB: Well, the trees and the mechanical and the ugliness about-and my feeling was ugly about the whole thing. The change to-
- WH: And feeling not wanted.
- RB: Yes. Not wanted. Very down. (Husband: She was more than that, she was crushed. She felt that the family owed her something. I don't know why. She thought that they were very well off. (inaudible) and they sort of turned their backs to her. I would say (inaudible) 'You can't expect that it's America,') But you know what I said, 'I give up,' he's right. (inaudible) 'I have no family here-what am I doing here. I wished somebody would take me to my people in Israel.' And that was my conflict. (inaudible) 'But since I'm here, what am I going to do?' So the first thing is in fact, I met him about a year later while I was in struggle and I used to cry, I used to go to this uncle, 'I don't mean anything to them.'-the one in Pelham Parkway was the nicest.
- WH: When he came to the house with the other uncles, what did they do?
- RB: They would play cards and say 'Why don't you come and visit us?' I visit, and they don't care. And I said, 'What am I doing here?' And I was depressed. 'Come and visit,' they say one thing and mean another. And I had a need, they know what I needed, a family. They had children of their own, and I felt still-(inaudible).
- WH: How wealthy were they?
- RB: Business. One had a jewelry business but he's intelligent a very bright man also. Except he is not honest. He says one thing, and he doesn't mean it. It's blasé. Nothing. I mean nothing.
- WH: Did you speak English?
- RB: Not too much, but yes, I spoke. They did not believe that I take school seriously. (inaudible) Somehow school was my answer to get somewhere.
- WH: ...you don't give up easy.
- RB: No...
- WH: You're the kind of person that when somebody gives you a setback, it makes you determined to fight harder.

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RB: Exactly. That's a very good point.

WH: Pretty much the story of your life.

RB: Yeh.

WH: Somebody telling you, you can't go to college, certainly is going to make you want to go more.

RB: Exactly! This is how I react to things. Even my husband says, 'Why are you so independent?' And, probably, that's the only way I know...and I guess this was, and that is, could be both the strength and weakness. But this is my strength, and that's how I survive in my way?

WH: ...sometimes the desire to fight back, when you come across something when you shouldn't have fought back, whether it's a person or an idea, it can lead you down a very rough road.

RB: Yeh, But the only thing is, I mellowed through life, and you realize the placement, and the importance of course. That is a good point, except that when you get older-my daughter is like me and now she is a fighter...and I see that I'm mellowed and she's not yet.

WH: Is she married?

RB: Yah, she was married, and she left her husband, he wasn't Jewish.

WH: Are you happy that they got divorced?

RB: I don't know.

WH: How did you feel about her marrying someone not Jewish?

RB: Very bad. But I got used to it...at first I was very devastated when she took it seriously and she knew that I was hurt, but somehow that took over. So I think she has that side that she fights. Me, personally, also. It's a rebellion.

WH: What was his background?

RB: He was a very nice kid, really, very intelligent, he sounded good, and everything was nice, except that he didn't make a living, and she had a need to become, do something, like me. She became a chiropractor after she became a dancer, and she didn't make any money, and she went into 4 or 6 years into chiropractor and she really took it very tough>

WH: What did he want to do?

- RB: He wanted to be a writer...he was passive...after 10 years of going together, and finally getting married, and of course I married them if that's what she wanted, and in two years it fell apart and I knew it would...
- WH: ...when you think of your child intermarrying, does it matter to you if the child marries someone Scandinavian, and so on...
- RB: (husband: I would imagine it would if they were German.
- WH: German would really drive you crazy, right?
- RB: Yes!
- WH: ...for those people who walk around and in some ways feel that their life is over, they came here anyway, I mean they go through the motions, they have children,-everything lives on through the children. A person like yourself, you really did two things. You want to live out through the children, you're very proud when you're children do well, but you also have your own career.
- RB: I had a need to do something also, because happens, they going, and where am ? What am I doing? I don't feel like falling out or falling in, into.
- WH; So this uncle was no help.
- RB No, no good for me>
- WH; Do you have any contact with him?
- RB: No, only with the uncle that was nice to me... I went for a trip with him now to Spain, and I call him,-
- WH: Are you friendly with his children?
- RB: Yes. But the son is far away.
- WH: Are you friendly with the children from the other uncles?
- RB: No. They don't even want us. I mean, they didn't try for me to be a part of them. And, I- now, I don't want anything and they don't want anything. Nobody wants.
- WH: They are embarrassed anyway,
- RB: Yeh, it's something that we didn't grow up together. We had no link.

WH: How about weddings?’

RB: Yes...and we had a wedding 3, 4 years ago. They were all there. And, ‘we are very proud,’ and they are respecting me, they said, ‘You see, she will always be young, because she’s always working, (inaudible).’ You see, and that puts them in a lesser-. Yes, I am proud of myself. I look down, I don’t mean, down, but I mean, I don’t put-they were nothing to me then when I needed it, so who cares?

WH: But when you have a simcha you have to invite them.

RB: Yeh, once in a while. And I do want to hear from them. I call up once my millionaires aunt and say hello.

WH: ...when you were going to Hunter, did you maintain or establish contact with other survivors your own age?

RB: I kept contact with 3, 4 all the time. They were married with children but I still kept, and I have 2, 3 couples that I never give up, even though I’m always on the road making friends and I happen to be friendly and giving and I am always making parties, once or twice a year and as I mentioned, I was in an ensemble with actors and those few friends we maintained...

WH: Did you want to get married when you came here?

RB: No. I didn’t. Of course I was interested in meeting the right person, but I wasn’t looking to get married. And my family was against it. ‘Don’t have many boyfriends, have one!’ (Husband: They wanted her to get married quickly.) But I wanted to do something with myself.

WH: Did you talk about the Holocaust?

RB: No, I couldn’t...

WH: ...when did you get married?

RB: 1954.

WH: ...if you wake up and have nightmares wouldn’t you talk to him about it?

RB: Yeh, I do.’

WH: So then you knew about what happened.

RB: (Husband: Yes.)

WH: She did talk to you about it, not just to your daughter.

RB: Yes...

WH: ...when I talk to older survivors, people in their late 70's, 80's, they tell me that 'we don't think American Jews,' – 'can ever understand what we went through.' Would you say that that's true of other people with the exception of your husband?

RB: They don't want to.

WH: Why don't they want to now?

RB: Okay, there is a general feeling, and I am among teachers, Americans, I never bring this up or didn't. I have a friend now, and she is a very interesting woman, and she had her problems with her own children, and she is very bright, and very interested in people.

WH: Jewish?

RB: Yes. At one time – she wants to be friendly, and when I open up, 'Yes, I was in the Holocaust.' And ask me questions, I freeze, because I know deeply she doesn't want to hear. She's not THAT interested because there are other tragedies with everyday, today occurring with that family, this family, other different problems. What is Holocaust? So – they are not interested in people (inaudible) maybe this is her because she's seen me so long. American – they feel that gives them a sense of superiority. That there is a need, that you are from Holocaust, there is some inferiority feeling, that there is nothing.

WH: Because you are an immigrant?

RB: Yes, you are a second class citizen, and I am a hero, American. (inaudible).

End of Tape #1, Side #2

Tape #2, Side A

WH: ...do you go to synagogue?

RB: No.'

WH: Not even on Yom Kippur?

RB: No...not that they are wrong...I cannot, I feel that I am too avant-garde. Too modern for that life. (inaudible) I just can't adjust to that world, G-d is controlling me, and I have to follow a separate book (inaudible), He'll punish me, you know-.

WH: And what about Reform Jews?

RB: Yah, Reform I am more in. I feel that I studied, - I mean, I'm interested in the Jewish philosophers. - Buber, very much so. I was very much in. In fact, I want to now, go through the Bible through history rather than - historic events to understand the Bible and - rather than through rabbi's attitudes of how he interprets the Bible.

WH: What happened after Hunter? You were married, and your child was born in?

RB: In '56 and '58.

WH: That was your son who's 32. How did you feel about having children?

RB: ' Part of my marriage is having children, because I want to perpetuate and this was normal for me to have a family, but I had to be ready, so I waited. I was going with him for 3 years. I didn't get married because I didn't know where I am yet, and I didn't form yet, he couldn't make a living yet, and so, what's the rush? So, I didn't look at it that yet, as a - I just had to wait until I was ready...

WH: Some people said that they were afraid to bring children into a world that could do such terrible things.

RB: I didn't have that. I wasn't that negative. I was a positive - I'm still positive.

WH: ...do you think the Holocaust could happen here?

RB: It can, but hopefully, that we still have a democracy or a constitution.

WH: When you see a friend of Israel, a guy like Dole, get up there and say, - doesn't that scare you?

RB: Of course. Absolutely. Yes...so we don't always friends.

WH: 'What did you think of Kissinger, being Secretary of State?'

RB: Ahhh! Sometimes I was afraid, because actually, really he had to take the negative side of Israel because he had to be the American.

WH: ...do you really plan to go to Israel?

RB: I do, very much so. Bit I'm not defining the time, because I have to retire in a year or so. I am looking forward to – I don't know about my daughter, but my son, hopefully he should take roots, they are single now. Both of them are single. And unfortunately, (inaudible) for some reason, I cannot, I didn't train my kids to – I always wanted them to stand on their own feet, their independence, be independent, but the truth is, I have no input when it comes to influencing (inaudible) girl. They will just choose what they want and I can't change it. 'Ah, my mom wants me to be a Jewish girl. Big deal. So – (inaudible) we do it the opposite' So I stay out of it. (inaudible) It's amazing how children do the opposite of what you want. And yet, they love me. But, it's what they find, and what they want...

WH: What made you get interested in discussing the Holocaust in 1984? I mean, you said you never talked about it until then. What was it?

RB: It's not an easy job. I needed to talk, but I couldn't.

WH: Until 1984 you didn't really speak out.

RB: Yeh, but I'll tell you, I was very involved with my profession. And my children were home.

WH: Profession being?

RB: Well, being involved in a world where nobody is a Holocaust people and that they'd rather not know me, or want to -.

WH: You mean teachers?'

RB: Yes. Among teachers. I teach Art...

WH: Do you ever tell your students that you are a survivor?'

RB: No. But, finally at the end of the semester, I'm comfortable enough with some kids, and...at one point, one of them, was very bright, and he said he saw a movie. 'Did you see the movie about the Holocaust? Did you see the bodies?' I said, 'I know, I was there.' 'You were there?!' (inaudible) they were very curious. And then he comes out a day later, or two days later, he says, 'You know why? Because you killed Christ.' He probably talked to somebody

else. That's why I don't want to discuss it. What am I going to do? Then I have to go through –I don't teach history, I teach art.

WH: Do they teach it at Andrew Jackson?

RB: Yes, they do, the American teachers make it a point to teach Holocaust.

WH: ...do you get the impression that Blacks are more anti-Semitic than Whites?

RB: Blacks are ignorant, so when somebody tells you – yes, they are very, and you can't talk to them even to reason with them. (inaudible).

WH: ...what made you speak out? Was it the Washington thing?

RB: No...I feel that I have to do more than that, I have a need to get out, and yes, I do believe that if we don't speak now, after us, it's nothing. (inaudible) We have to come to do something in a common way to organize, to write, to support this, and in my own way to give my best to see to it that history should know.

WH: Do you think that this type of education will prevent the Holocaust from happening?

RB: It could (inaudible)...not to speak to people, but in some way, history has to be – it has to be done. And it's my own healing, also. I like to be involved in more personal, not teaching the world. I want to do something for myself.

WH: What about your son...does he ask you about it?

RB: No. My son is depressed; it is hard for him to take it. I don't know why. He's not open. He took once, I remember – he said, 'Mom,' on the phone when he was taking a course in history, he says, 'Mom, we are studying now 1942 and you are one of them! Don't think I forgot! I know, I know.' You know he never pursued. (inaudible).

WH: Is he studious in school?

RB: No. School is not his thing, except he is very able in math and he is an out-going, and he – is different, you know, she's different, she's much more complex my daughter. She's into many things.

End of Tape #2, Side A
Conclusion of Interview