

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

William Helmreich Oral History Collection

**Interview with Rosalyn Haber
May 19, 1989
RG-50.165*0040**

PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audio taped interview with Rosalyn Haber, conducted by William Helmreich on May 19, 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.

ROSALYN HABER

May 19, 1989

RH: I came to England after the war where I lived for two years. I lost my parents in Auschwitz. When I came to America on the S.S. Mauritania, my uncles greeted me. They bought me a banana split. I couldn't believe the whole thing was for me. I wanted to share it with my uncles. I still remember to this day the way the ice cream tasted.

WH: Where did you go?

RH: I went to Elway City at the age of 17. My brothers were there in business. I married an American Jew. I married him for all the wrong reasons and I knew that.

WH: So why did you do it?

RH: Because I wanted a family. I had lost my parents. Then I wanted to get out of it after two years but my brothers wouldn't let me. They said: 'A Gross doesn't get divorced.' So I stayed for sixteen years. The fact of the matter was that he used to humiliate me. He called me "Greenie." He and his friends were American.

WH: So why did he want to marry you in the first place?

RH: I was young and beautiful and looked exotic (Even today she looks 15 years younger than she is.) But it was a mistake. And I feel that all the survivors would have benefited if they had had psychological counseling when they came. When I married, after all, I realized that you can't bring back your lost family, the past.

WH: What happened after you divorced him?

RH: I had two children and then I met and fell in love with a Polish survivor. He was a professor, an intellectual, and I thought I had finally found happiness. We moved to Galveston, Texas, where my husband was a professor at the University of Texas. Then he hired a young woman from Germany, a graduate student, to be his assistant. She needed a job. And then, after a while I saw that he was always coming home late. And pretty soon it became clear to me that he was having an affair with her. One time I got so mad that I wanted to go over in the middle of the night and paint swastikas on the door of the place where they were. She wrecked 5 marriages before she left.

WH: What happened eventually?

RH: I divorced him too. What could I do?

WH: What's your situation today?

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RH: I'm looking forward to meeting someone maybe, but I haven't yet. But isn't it amazing that first I lost my family to the Nazis in Auschwitz and then I lost my husband to the Germans in America? I mean have you ever heard a story like that?

WH: No. But what's even more amazing to me is that after all you went through, you're looking forward to meeting someone new.

RH: If I and my brothers would have had education we could have communicated better with each other. When I talk to my brothers about it, they're too busy, they say, they don't want to hear about it. Why is my brother so involved with these Holocaust activities? Because it's an escape. They don't want to communicate because they don't know how to communicate. He gives these talks by rote

WH: What about your children?

RH: My children have chosen a path radically different from mine. My son married someone who's not Jewish. They live in South Africa. They're coming next month. I'm going to see them and the baby. But my brother doesn't want to hear about it because she's not Jewish. That's the way they are. And my brother is the kindest, most gentle human being in the world. But ever since he lost his wife. She was raped and murdered, he's not the same. And I was very close with her. I think he can't feel anymore.

WH: So what did you learn from all these experiences?

RH: I feel pretty alone. But I learned from the Holocaust that you have to be able to be on your own. I trust people today. Acts of kindness make me trust people. You have to believe in the future.

WH: How do you feel about religion?

RH: There was a long time when I didn't believe in God. Now I do. But I don't think there's anything after you die. But there has to be a God. If there's no God, there's no point to living, there's no purpose to anything.

Conclusion of Interview