

# **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**

## **William Helmreich Oral History Collection**

**Interview with Sandy Mayer**  
**January 28, 1988**  
**RG-50.165\*0072**

## PREFACE

The following oral history testimony is the result of an audio taped interview with Sandy Mayer, conducted by William Helmreich on January 28, 1988 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.

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## **SANDY MAYER**

### **January 28, 1988**

Q: Why don't you start by telling me a little bit about your parents, especially in terms of what type of people they were. Were they strict, were they lenient, were they nice, were they preoccupied with things-?

A: Well, you have to understand that I was born in 1937, and I really parted from my parents, somewhere close to '42, close to '43. So, that I quite frankly, don't remember my parents as a child.

Q: Not at all?

A: Only in a very sketchy way. For instance, I have a scar on my wrist which happened, I remember distinctly when my father was cutting some string, and I came by and I somehow got my wrist under there and the knife went into my wrist. And, you see, that I remember vividly because there was such an uproar. I mean, my mother got hysterical. There was all that blood, and- so that's the sort of incident I remember. I just-

Q: You don't remember what kind of person he was?

A: I don't remember at all. I only know what people have told me afterwards.

Q: What have they told you? First of all, what was his name?

A: His name was Avraham...Kesten...and I remember the last time I saw him, which is when he walked with me and took me, it was late in the evening, and it was dark, and he was taking me over to the people who were going to keep me during the war. To the ?Krupas? That I remember...I don't think he was strict, because I don't remember that he ever laid a hand on me, you know, I remember him as a kind man. So I don't think he was strict. But you see, he wasn't around very much. He was the oldest son, the son who took care of the business. The family business. They were in building materials.

Q: He was from Lancut?

A: No, he was from ?Pyreworsk?- that's where my mother moved after she was married. I was born in ?Lanzig? because she went home to her mother's home to give birth...he was twice in the war, he was in the Polish army.

Q: What do you mean, 'twice in the war?'

A: Well he was a soldier...I can't remember exactly...

Q: Was he a religious man?

A: He was not ultra religious. My mother was actually more religious than he was. But he was modern religious. I mean, he didn't wear the orthodox garb. You know, like the strummel...he dressed in modern clothes.

Q: What happened to him during the war?

A: During the war he was captured. My parents found places for themselves. After they found a family who took me in, they found...he knew a lot of people...he and my mother were able to find other Polish families who were willing to hide them. My father, my mother told me that the agreement was that my father was going to leave a certain sum of money every specified period of time for the people who were keeping me in a certain place. And, he was captured. Apparently, one of those times, when after he had deposited the money, he was captured by the Germans. And he was brought to the jail. He didn't have any papers. He was brought to the jail, the local jail in ?Shavrusk? and at that point he was identified by some Pollacks who knew him, that he was a Jew and, we were told after the war that the Germans tortured him, because the Pollacks had told the Germans that, uhm, he had a family. That he had a wife and daughter. So they wanted to find out where the wife and daughter were, and obviously, he didn't tell them, and they killed him. And they killed him right there. In that jail. And that's what happened to him during the war. So, basically, I don't remember him. I don't remember my mother, either before the war.

Q: But you remember her after the war?

A: Yes.

Q: How was she-?

A: You see, I don't think my parents were strict with me. First of all, they didn't really do the daily- they had a nanny for me. And I remember her, you see. Her name was Angela. I remember her very well...I remember her laugh. I remember her more intimately than I remember my parents. Because she's the only one who really handled me...

Q: Were they well off at that time?

A: Everybody tells me that they were well- I mean people who I met after the war, all seem to be very much taken with the fact that I was a (inaudible- Avrahamchik's?) daughter and from the tone and the manner in which they spoke, I had the impression that the family had been well off, and also that he was well thought of, my father.

Q: Do you have any relations on that side who you still have contact with?

- A: Yes, there's actually just one relative. It's a cousin who lives in New Jersey...
- Q: What's his name?
- A: His name is (inaudible)...and he's the lone surviving cousin. There was another one, but he's dead now...my father's brother survived, but he lives in Israel. I haven't seen him from 1947 until 1987, when I was in Israel...recently.
- Q: Must have been quite a reunion.
- A: Yes...he lives in B'nei Brak. He became Orthodox...
- Q: From what you've heard about Avram, would you characterize him as having been a fighter, a person who would fight to survive?
- A: Oh, yes. But the problem was, he would have fought to survive...he was a soldier, he had been in the army, so he knew how to conduct himself. And everybody said that he was very strong...after 1939, and before 1943 when we had to separate and go into hiding...I remember for instance, that he would get up in the middle of the night and have to go and hide, run away, because the Germans came looking for him.
- Q: And not for your mother?
- A: And not for my mother. And I don't really know why...
- Q: Would you say that your mother was a fighter?
- A: My mother was a fighter...she said that my father basically stayed because he felt that he had to take care of his wife and his child...I know that my mother is a fighter because as a widow after the war, with a child, how she managed to survive. She is, she is what is truly called a survivor. You know, I think that when you talk about survivors, I mean, I was a child, I'm a survivor, but I think I survived because other people managed to take care of me.
- Q: Your fate was not really in your hands, was it. You were 5 years old, and if they chose to get rid of you, they could have. Tell me just a little bit about that experience. Your mother left, and you were given over to this family, the ?Krupas? Now, were they friends of your parents?
- A: No, no.
- Q: How did you determine- was it just a deal, that for money they would shelter you?

A: My mother told me that they came forward when this order came through...that the Jews should- leave...they came forward to my father, and they said that they would be willing to take me. They didn't think in terms of a long period of time...my mother said that a business deal was struck...my father naturally felt immediately that if they take me, then he and my mother had a chance, and that he would be willing to pay for that. What my father did...he buried a good deal of money, and my mother knew where it was, and in fact, my mother was able to recover a lot of it after the war. What he did was, he buried gold pieces...

Q: How did they get the money to the ?Krupas?

A: They didn't...there was an agreement made that each month my father would leave a certain amount of money in a certain place. He actually buried it...

Q: What happened (to you) when he was captured?

A: ...they realized that there wasn't going to be any more money...they told me that both my parents were dead...I was 7 years old...as bizarre as it may seem, the Germans were becoming very vicious at that time...?Krupas? decided to dispose of me. Basically...they were going to-

Q: They were afraid you were going to be killed?

A: ...they felt that my parents were gone, and they were afraid for their own safety and for their own child, they had a daughter and I guess they were desperate...they had taken me to a village where they knew some people who had a farm, and they told them- I was blond...and had blue eyes...I was a member of his family, that my mother had died and...they wanted this family to keep me...

Q: That was how they were going to dispose of you?

A: No...they couldn't keep me in their house in the open because people in the town knew me...my mother said, they had told my parents that they knew this family out in the countryside whom they could take me to...but apparently I had nightmares about what had been happening and one night I started screaming, 'I'm not a Jew! I'm not a Jew!' I had nightmares, and the people woke up and heard me, and so they immediately put two and two together, and what my mother said was, 'that it was very nice of them, they didn't immediately take me to the Germans'. They returned me back to the Krupas and...said they didn't want anything to do with harboring a Jewish child and they should take me back. At that point, they had to take me back...they kept me up in the attic...and a shelter for me under the stairs to the attic.

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Q: How did this all strike you? How aware were you?

A: By that time I was...in such a constant state of fear that I think I was very passive. I didn't fight. They told me to keep quiet, and I kept quiet and I remember cringing in fear under those stairs...

Q: They couldn't pass you off?

A: No, they couldn't pass me...they had to keep me out of sight.

Q: Did you have to stay in the attic the whole time?

A: I was in the attic all the time. I never left.

Q: What did you do all day? It must have been very boring.

A: I used to catch the mice...and there was a cat and I used to, you know, play around with the cat. It's hard to imagine now, that I was able to spend almost two years that way. It's just- I don't know. I don't know how I did it. I really don't...

Q: Did it ever occur to you to ask, 'Why do they want to kill me because I'm Jewish?' I mean, surely you didn't know what that meant.

A: I don't remember asking them much of anything. I remember that every once in a while they'd bring me down to the apartment, and they had a yellow canary...I remember sort of, I have these images. But I don't remember my day to day routine.

Q: Do you remember the Germans ever coming, and you cowering in the stair shelter?

A: Oh, yes, that I remember very well.

Q: You were very, very frightened?

A: Yah, I remember that very well. I remember very well one night when my father's brother came to see me, and he had a long beard and a very bushy beard. I was petrified because I thought he was some horrible man who was coming to- you see, in a way, they had to keep me being afraid. They were always telling me that if I don't behave myself, or if I make noise, or if this and this, then they will have this terrible man come and take me away. And when he came, I thought he was the terrible man who came. So, I remember that. Because that made an indelible impression on me...(inaudible)...I started screaming, he remembers that. He remembers that. When he came to see me-

Q: He didn't have a religious beard?

A: No, no...he was unshaved.

Q: Were the Krupas nice people?

A: I think they were nice people...they just had to make me mind-.

Q: How about the daughter?

A: She was not mean to me.

Q: Was she older than you?

A: She's older than I am...probably 5 or 6 years older.

Q: How did your father know you were alive when he deposited the money. Merely the fact that they picked it up doesn't mean that-.

A: My mother said he didn't know. He just assumed...my mother said it was a small town where people knew about other people, and she always felt that if anything happened to me, somehow they would have gotten wind of it...but I don't think I ever asked, you know, why is this, why is this happening to me.

Q: Did you think that your parents were going to come back? You told me that you were at the point, where you were saying that they were going to dispose of you because they heard your parents were captured...that was in '44, right?

A: That was in '44, right.

Q: What happened with the disposing - I mean, they didn't obviously.

A: Well, what happened was, and you see, that's it. There are certain things that I remember vividly. I remember that it was cold. It was a very cold night and they got me dressed warmly, and there was an air raid siren went off, and when there was an air raid, nobody was suppose to be outside or you'd get shot...they didn't take me out that night...what they said was, that they felt it was a 'sign from G-d' to them. And they were religious people.

Q: Lucky you.

A: Right. And they just didn't have the courage to do it. I'm sure it wasn't easy for them to do it to begin with.



Q: They were religious people, they thought it was a sign from G-d, did you think that there was any kind of divine reason that you attribute anything supernatural to the fact that you survived altogether?

A: Not at that time.

Q: How about now?

A: Well, you see now because of the condition I'm in now, in terms of my health, one of the things that I feel is that G-d didn't go to all the trouble of saving me then, to make me die an early death now, so, I sort of have the faith that I'm going to survive this too. Because, you know, to some degree it's not as difficult, although- so, I don't know that I ascribed it to G-d, although I believe that there is a force or something which is G-d. But I don't believe that you know, G-d specifically selected me to survive.

Q: On the other hand, there is the fact that you wouldn't have survived, did you survive?

A: But on the other hand-

Q: (inaudible) It's a mixed feeling isn't it?

A: It's a mixed feeling, yes, but it's, you see, I don't have the belief that G-d looks after each one of us individually. I sort of feel that the sense of G-d is there for us, to use in a positive way, in other words, it's comforting to think that we can appeal to a higher force in the universe, for our well-being.

Q: And maybe it's true. Maybe he'll answer you.

A: Right. And maybe it's true. That's right. And maybe he'll answer, that's exactly it. So that in itself is a help.

Q: You mean just the possibility.

A: Just the possibility, right.

Q: That there maybe someone out there. In other words, you're not embracing this thought, but you're discounting it.

A: I'm not discounting it.

Q: You're, in a way, an agnostic on this issue.

A: Well, I might you know, but in the true sense, I don't think I'm an agnostic because I also really believe in the Jewish faith. You know, I don't feel there is one universal. I feel that everybody has to have their own way of reaching G-d. But yet, it has to be somewhat structured. And the structure is the religion. So if you embrace the Jewish religion, well then you do it through the structure of the Jewish religion...

Q: When you embrace it through the Jewish religion, is it only like a happenstance? Coincidence?

A: It's by coincidence of birth.

Q: Once that coincidence has occurred, do you find yourself in stronger agreement with that than any other religion?

A: Simply by the fact that it is familiar to me, because that's what I was raised into-.

Q: You don't think G-d played any favorites?

A: No, I don't.

Q: People within the structure of Catholicism, Protestantism, pray to G-d, he is as likely to answer them as he is to answer you?

A: Yes.

Q: And if you pray to Jesus?

A: No. it doesn't mean anything because you see, basically I don't view Jesus the way the Catholics, or the Protestants view Jesus...

Q: ...were your parents, to your knowledge, involved in ?Shvorsk? in communal life, in religious life.

A: Oh yes. Definitely.

Q: Politics?

A: No, not politics, because being Jewish they were already excluded...

Q: And how were they involved communally, or religiously?

A: Religiously, they were involved because they were members of the religious community. I mean, they were Orthodox. They were observant Jews...and the Jewish people in the

small towns of Poland , if they were involved in their synagogue, that was there communal life...the communal life centered around the shul...

Q: They weren't like the president of the synagogue or vice-president.

A: Not that I know of.

Q: Communally involved, you mean their life centered around the synagogue.

A: Right...I don't know if there was such a thing as a president of the synagogue...

Q: How did the war end in terms of your- the war ended and your mother came back-.

A: The war ended, and I knew that something had happened. Because, one day there was an air raid alarm...and they took me to the air raid shelter. It was the first time- because prior to that every time there was an air raid siren that went off, they would go to the shelter and leave me in the house. And I would stand in the attic and watch the bombs fall.

Q: You were told that your parents were dead, in '44. So that means after that, you had no hope that your parents that the Krupas would continue to shelter you.

A: But you have to understand that my feelings, I remember that distinctly, that I really, my senses, rather, were very muted. Almost non-existent at that time.

Q: Do you think that was a way of protecting yourself?

A: It's possible...I was almost indifferent to anything that...went on around me...I don't remember crying very much, I really don't.

Q: ...you were numb.

A: I was numb, that was it.

Q: So, what happened after the war?

A: Well, the thing- so that I remember, because that was such an amazing thing that happened in my life. You know, at that point, that I was able to leave their house, and go to this air raid shelter with them. So I remember that. And the next thing I remember is that this woman appeared and they told me that she was my mother. And I didn't want to have anything to do with her because number 1 they had told me that my mother had been killed, and number two this woman who appeared didn't look anything like my

mother. And so, I- at that- and then I remember getting hysterical and I did NOT want to go with her.

Q: It was your mother?

A: Yes. It was my mother.

Q: Did she not look like your mother. I mean, it was only three years since you'd seen her. You had seen her through the age of five-.

A: It was two years. Two and a half years...this was '45. Already three years.

Q: So, how could you have possibly forgotten her?

A: She was very emaciated. She didn't look like my mother...

Q: She must have been distressed to find that you rejected her when she traveled all that way to come get you.

A: My mother said she was very distressed, but she had enough presence of mind to say to them that she was going to leave me there and come and visit me regularly until I accepted the fact that she was my mother.

Q: Did you ever feel at any point, around the age of 6 or 7 that the Germans were looking for you because you were Jewish?

A: ...the Krupers taught me some prayers and to cross myself...and when I went to those people who had the farm I went to church with them all the time...I kneeled and I said all the prayers...when I was with the Krupers they had me doing that all the time because just in case. So they had ingrained in me the sense that I must never say to anybody that I'm Jewish because I'll be killed instantly. So I think I began to think of myself as not being Jewish- because as a matter of fact, when I did finally go with my mother, I insisted that I have to say the prayers every night and it was sort of like-.

Q: Security.

A: Right.

Q: When you went with your mother, where did you go?

A: ...we were liberated by the Russians. Well, we went back to our house where we had one little room.

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Q: In ?Shvorsk? ?

A: in ?Shvorsk?

Q: No one had ever taken over the room?

A: ...houses were damaged...everyone got a little room.

Q: You were there for how long?

A: Not very long...it was summer or fall...and sometime during that winter we left. I think it was in 1946.

Q: Where did you leave for?

A: ...?Chestachala?...

Q: So you went to ?Chestachala? and you stayed there?

A: Yes, we lived there under the protection of a Russian lieutenant colonel. My mother befriended in ?Shvorsk? and that's how we went to ?Chestachal?...it was dangerous for my mother and me to remain in 'Shvorsk'...the people who had told the Germans who my father was, and basically helped to bring about his murder, and had decided to do away my mother and me, and the reason they decided to do this, was because my mother had gone to (needs translation) and said that these two men were responsible for her husband's death and so she wanted them punished...

Q: Your mother knew that?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: She got friendly with this Russian officer.

A: You see. That's why I say my mother is a survivor because the Russian soldiers were real womanizers. And my mother, being a widow, was fair game I guess. So she managed to befriend this Russian Colonel with whom she had an affair, basically, and he was our protector...

Q: I assume though, that she was quite attractive...she came back and you said she was emaciated...I guess she nursed herself back to health.

A: She did, and my mother was a very feisty woman at that time. And I think that was appealing to men. Because I remember a number of men who were quite interested in

her. She was a strong woman, and...I don't know why, you know, because we don't think of our parents that way. But she must have been attractive to men because they were there...she was a very energetic woman...

Q: I guess she must have imparted some of that strength (inaudible) applies to you...(inaudible)...you can draw strength and sustenance from her example.

A: Oh, and she certainly set an example for me. She herself was sick for many years, and she didn't really let it destroy her life completely. I mean, she carried on in a normal way as best she could.

Q: ...went to ?Chestachalov? with this Russian group. What happened then?

A: ...I remember that as being a happy time...we had enough good food and that made an impression on me...

End of Tape #1, Side A

**Tape #1, Side B**

Q: How long were you there?

A: I don't remember how long...

Q: What did you do after ?Chestachov? ?

A: ...the Colonel had to go back. I think that was 1946...and my mother married Fred...She met him in ?Shvorsk? after the liberation...there was a time that my mother left me with a friend, and then she came back, and she told me that she had married this man, Mr. Singer.

Q: So suddenly you had-.

A: So suddenly I had a father. I wasn't happy about it, because I was very attached to this Russian Colonel. I liked him.

Q: ...do you remember his name?

A: Ya, because well, I'll tell you why. When we were leaving Poland, you see, we left Poland through the underground...and one of the things we had to do was to get rid of everything that had any pictures in it, or any Russian writing, or any connection to Russia...I remember distinctly how I cried when I had to get rid of these pictures that we had of this man. But we did.

Q: How did you leave Poland?

A: ...we went to live in ?Shames? which is Fred's hometown. And that's where I went to school for the first time. I went to Polish school which was horrible. And then we went to live in Cracow...we left Poland in 1947.

Q: How long did you stay in Polish schools?

A: Not long.

Q: Two months?

A: Not long...half a year at the most.

Q: ...from Cracow you went to-.

A: From Cracow we left Poland...

Q: Why didn't you stay like hundreds of thousands of Jews stayed in Poland after the war.

A: My mother had always wanted to leave Poland. The agreement with my father was, that when he was able to train his brother well enough to take over the family business, so they were going to go to Palestine. My mother was a Zionist. And this was something that was agreed upon before they were married...

Q: ...she was an aggressive person, an adventurous person.

A: She was an adventurous person...she wasn't a fearful person. She was very courageous that what it is...

Q: Where was your mother during the war while you were in hiding?

A: She was also in hiding. She lived with a Polish family.

Q: She never wound up in a concentration camp...?

A: No.

Q: ...so you wanted to leave Cracow...you got out through the underground, and where did you wind up?

A: First we ended up in Vienna. Then we ended up in Germany, in a town called Lanzut...

Q: Why Lanzut? What was there?

A: ...there was a certain route that this took through the border, and I guess Lanzut was en-route...that was a camp of tents.

Q: A D.P. camp?

A: Well, it...was a temporary place, a very temporary...so that was our first resting place. Tent City.

Q: who guided you out?

A: Smugglers. You had to pay them.

Q: (inaudible)...so from Lanzut, Germany, you went to where?



A: ...an army camp. We lived in these army barracks. These HUGE rooms, you know, where every family had a little corner. I don't remember where that was, but that was also temporary. And there, I had my first encounter with American soldiers and chewing gum, you see (laughing). And from there we ended up in Vasseralsingen and that was the first time when all our travels started that we ended up in an apartment. That WAS a D.P. camp... I don't know why my parents then went to another D.P camp which was ?Felderink?.

Q: How long were you in both D.P. camps?

A: We got to Germany in 1947. and we left in 1951.

Q: You were in the D.P. camps for four years?

A: Ya.

Q: From the age of 10 to 14?

A: I wasn't quite 10 when we got to Germany, and I wasn't quite 14 when we-.

Q: What did you do all those 4 years...what were those years...like? Did you go to school there?

A: Yes...by that time I did know how to read...and write Polish...my mother had tutors for me...

Q: How far did you get in school, altogether, today, I mean when you came to America, did you go to school again?

A: Ya. Sure. I started high school here, I went to college and I went through 16 credits of graduate school, then I got married.

Q: 16 credits towards a M.A. in what?

A: In Business Education...which I never completed. I went to Hunter College. City College during the summers...

Q: You were in the camp for four years. Why were you in the camp so long? Your mother was a Zionist. Did you think about going to Israel?

A: Oh, yes. We even had two crateful of things that went to Israel because we were going to Israel.

Q: Why didn't you?

A: Well my mother in Germany, started getting quite ill. She ended up in the hospital several times. And it was her heart. Nobody really knew why or what. But that was when her heart condition became really evident. And the doctor very much discouraged her from going to Israel. He said that, 'You're not a well woman. Life is very difficult there and that's the wrong place for you to go to.' And by that time Fred's brother had come here to New York and he was able to get an affidavit, and Fred really didn't want to go to Israel. Fred wanted to come here. He was really going along with it because my mother was so insistent. That that was where she wanted to go. But he wasn't that interested. So then when she got sick...then Fred said, 'Well, I want to go to the United States. My brother is there,' and so the brother sent him-.

Q: How did you feel about that?

A: Oh, I was very unhappy. I had been learning Hebrew, and I was learning Hebrew songs, and I was imbued with the spirit of going to Eretz Israel and it was a horrendous shock to find my parents were going to change direction on me. My life had been a whole series of upheavals. I had gotten T.B. after the war, and so, that was the other reason why my parents weren't- I spent a whole year in a T.B. sanitarium...in Germany...by that time Esther had joined us...shortly after we got there, no sooner did I start going to school, and life seemed somewhat normal...

Q: ...cured you?

A: Yes. Oh, yes. They did cure me.

Q: What was it like in the D.P. camp there? Friends there?

A: It was very nice.

Q: You had an apartment there?

A: Yes...the Americans had apparently designated a certain part of town as a D.P. camp. So, actually we had apartment, there was a Jewish administration. What I remember was, everything was done in a very inefficient way. That's why going to Israel was such a wonderful experience. Because my recollection of what life was like with the Jews, was of constant upheavals, and things not working, and fights, and arguments, and I came to Israel, and I couldn't believe it. There was a country that seems to be very efficient, the transportation system is efficient, the public toilets are clean, there is toilet paper. They all flushing. The hotels seemed to be run efficiently and people are pleasant and courteous. And, I- it was such a wonderful experience.

Q: You hadn't expected that.

A: Well, I didn't know what to expect. My memory was so altogether in the reverse of what I found.

Q: In a Jewish environment.

A: In a Jewish environment, right. I mean there was just constant fights, and constant unpleasantness, people were not pleasant to each other after the war. That was very upsetting. I found that I was very timid. I was always sort of uncertain how people would react. People were very unpredictable. That's really what I recollect mostly of my years in Europe, that you could not depend on people, you know. People were, just- I suppose it had something to do with their horrible experience during the war.

Q: But you didn't suppose that then.

A: No.

Q: Then you were just annoyed.

A: Right.

Q: Did Uncle Herman try and help you get an affidavit also?

A: No. That was a very sore point with my mother. Uncle Herman tells me now, and he has told me that he was really afraid. Here was a woman who wrote to him that she was sick, she had a child, her husband didn't have a trade- and he just, I guess he was also struggling and he didn't want to bring out this family that he was afraid he might have to support.

Q: ...what happened if somebody came here, and- supposing you had come here and he couldn't have supported you. What would they have done...thrown him in jail?

A: Apparently, when you sign an affidavit- of course not! Because when we came, the HIAS supported us, anyway.

Q: There were numerous cases on HIAS winding up supporting people who had come here because other people said they could take care of them, then they couldn't.

A: Right...Fred's brother who came here on an affidavit and wound up being supported by the HIAS got some stranger to send an affidavit.

Q: For you?

A: Ya. For us.

Q: ...if your mother hadn't gotten ill-.

A: If she hadn't gotten ill, she would have definitely gone to Israel, because she was the dominate force in our lives.

Q: You remember her being the dominant force.

A: Even being ill.

Q: ...you have this affidavit, you were still happy to go to America rather than stay in a D.P. camp, right?

A: Well you see, no. When we were leaving, it was an adventure.

Q: You finished elementary school? A: I finished elementary school- I don't know. I must have finished something because during the last year and a half, or last year, that we were in Germany, I was going to school in Munich. You see, all throughout the years that we were all these travels, whenever possible, there was always a tutor there. My mother always got me a tutor.

Q: She had a passion for education-.

A: I don't know, but you see, I didn't have any regular schooling. There was constant interruptions, so that I-.

Q: In the D.P. camp, what language were you speaking?

A: Well, I learned German, but we spoke Polish. But I was learning Hebrew.

Q: How did you get to America? You got the affidavit and you left ?Felderfing? ?

A: We left ?Felderfing? via Hamburg, on the S.S. General Taylor, it was an army ship...and it was a terrific adventure, I mean, you know being at sea we came it was in February, I think it took us three weeks to get here, it was very stormy seas.

Q: Tell me about the ride- what do you remember about it?

A: I remember sleeping- my mother was on the bottom, Esther was on the second bunk, and I was up on the third bunk because I wasn't sick. Everybody was very seasick.

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Q: How many people were in this general bunk area?

A: Oh, it was- there must have been thousands on the boat. Really. It was just a tremendously large amount of people. I don't know how many people can-

Q: You didn't have your own room did you?

A: Oh, no, (illegible) it was a huge room. It was three-

Q: How many were in that one room- the women.

A: Hundreds, really, hundreds. There were several of those rooms, there were hundreds of us. That's why it was such an adventure because it was a very large ship. With all those people, and there were people my own age, and there was the first time that I met a boy that I had a crush on that remained the love of my life for many years after I came here.

Q: What happened to him?

A: Well he ended up in Vineland and he ended up at Drexel Institute in Philadelphia.

Q: His family was in-

A: That's right...

Q: What was his name?

A: Barry- Baruch Markman...I don't know what happened to him.

Q: ...did you have any permanent injuries as a result of the war?

A: No. Just the T.B. I contracted T.B., but that was probably after the war...

Q: When did you come to this country?

A: March, 1951. BLEAK, DREARY March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1951. WHAT a drear-! It was a typical dreary March day.

Q: What was it like?

A: We arrived-

Q: ...You were for three weeks (inaudible)...on this boat?

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- A: Oh yes. I remember swings, I had a lot of fun on the swings, lots of marching around, there were other kids, you know-.
- Q: Marching around-?
- A: I mean, just walking around. There was ups and downs, all these different decks. It was a lot of fun. And you see, most of the older people were sick, so we the younger ones really had the run of the boat.
- Q: Was it a nice boat?
- A: No. It was sort of gray. Basically, that's what I remember. It was gray. I remember that the table was fastened to the floors, the chairs- these chairs. Stools. That's it. It had no stools that were fastened on to the boat and the food was atrocious! (laughing).
- Q: What did they serve you, and how did they serve you.
- A: Lots of grapefruit. Well, you would just go over and they'd just ladle it out. You'd get a tray and this and that, and then if the ship started heaving, it all- psssst- (laughing) I tell you!
- Q: (inaudible) you were in a dining room when they served you?
- A: Yes. We ate in a dining room.
- Q: Sat down at long tables?
- A: We sat down at these long tables that were fastened with these stools, and everybody had their tray, and you got your spoon and your fork on the tray. The food was awful. I just don't remember it. The only thing I remember is the grapefruit, because I never had grapefruit before.
- Q: No meat? They didn't serve any meat?
- A: They served meat, but I just- the food was non- descript. I remember, for instance, I always liked eggs very much. And I remember that the eggs they would give was just tasteless. Were absolutely awful. They weren't real eggs. They was this reconstituted egg powder. I remember somebody explained to me that these were not real eggs, because I could not understand how eggs could be- there was one thing I loved. Always loved. And I remember after the war when my mother would give me eggs , they were just as delicious in Poland and in Germany. And here we had these awful eggs. And I found out it was powder, it wasn't real.

Q: Did they boil it or what did they do, fry it?

A: No. I think they mixed it with water. You know, you have egg powder, and you mix it with hot water and it gets the consistency of scrambled eggs. But it was awful. That's what I remember. And white bread. You see, I had never eaten white bread. I mean, that kind of white bread.

Q: Did you like it?

A: No. It was awful too. I mean it was very mushy, white bread. I guess it was this American white bread. I don't know how they got it.

Q: What was the crew like?

A: Well, I don't remember the crew.

Q: No cooks, chefs, nobody chasing you around telling you to get away from-.

A: No, that was the funny thing. I don't remember anybody being in any way punitive or saying, you know, shooing us away. We really had the run of the boat. I just don't remember that anybody was there keeping watch, or- I just don't.

Q: Your parents didn't bother because they were sick?

A: They were sick, they didn't bother with us. It was really wonderful.

Q: It was for three weeks?

A: Right.

Q: Really wonderful, you say?

A: Yah. I mean, you know, I remember it as a very happy experience.

Q: (inaudible).

A: Right. I was gleeful most of the time. And it was the first time in my life that I became interested in boys. And you know, there were boys there. I liked playing around with them. And- I mean, there was nothing that went on that was not proper, but I remember there were boys and I decided that I liked boys! (laughing) I was 13.

Q: (inaudible) why not?

- A: So I remember it as a happy trip. I remember that. But the arrival in the United States, was not a happy time. It was a very- it was really a very bleak day. And-
- Q: You didn't see the Statue of Liberty or anything like that?
- A: No, I didn't. I-
- Q: Were you looking for it? Was anybody talking about it?
- A: Yah, I remember that everybody ran up to see the Statue of Liberty but to me it had no significance. I was unhappy that I came to the United States instead of going to Eretz Israel, you know. I remember that. And I was also unhappy that the trip had come to an end and I had made friends-
- Q: To go back, weren't you free in the D.P. camp? Did you have the run of the place there?
- A: Oh, yes.
- Q: So why would you be gleeful on the boat, when you'd been free for four years already?
- A: When you say 'free' as I say, during a lot of that time I was ill. You know, when I came down with T.B. I remember having to deal with doctors. I mean my mother took me to doctor's a lot. And then I had to, when I went to the sanitarium I had to be in bed, and I was very confined. You know, that's how they treated T.B. at that time. No medicine. Just bed rest.
- Q: The last two years you were free, right? I mean, in the D.P. camp.
- A: No. By the time I came out, my parents were already in ?Felderfing? I would say, about a year and a half. What happened was, while I was in the sanitarium, I had gained a great deal of weight. That was another thing about the cure. You had to eat fattening food, and I became very heavy. So when I went back home, I mean, when I rejoined my family, I was quite heavy-set. I was a heavy-set adolescent. I was 12 years old, and I was heavy, and I was very unhappy with myself. You know, a lot of changes had occurred in my body. It was just a very unhappy time. I remember, my mother had to get clothes made for me. Oh- and you see, Esther was an adorable slender little girl. And there I was, you know, I was 12 years old, and I'm as tall as I'm now, and I was almost as fat as I was tall. I was, really- and it took a long time for the weight to go. And I felt very awkward during all that time. And I felt unattractive and unappealing, and I guess on that ship, I had- it was sort of if I had regained mine- as if I had found myself again. You know, I was back to normal size, and maybe that's what it was. Because I remember being heavier than most of my friends and I mean, after I came out of the T.B. sanitarium. So that was not a very happy time. Before I went in, before I went into the



sanitarium, you know, the beginning, I think I was just about coming out of my shell, and then I got sick (laughs). It was another set-back.

Q: So now you came to the boat. It was a gray, dreary miserable day.

A: Yah, we arrived someplace on one of the docks and I remember that we came off the boat, and we were taken to a hotel on Madison Avenue and 27<sup>th</sup> Street. And it was called the Madison Avenue Hotel. It no longer exists.

Q: Who took you there?

A: Well, it was arranged by the HIAS.

Q: Who greeted you at the pier?

A: I don't remember. There were a lot of official looking people you know, who- there were no relatives.

Q: Why didn't your uncle come to greet you?

A: I guess he didn't know that we were arriving. But I remembered-.

Q: Any trouble getting through customs?

A: No.

Q: So, you said, 'I remembered.'?

A: I remember that while we were at the hotel, Herman came to see us. My mother called him...he came with the car, he took us for a ride, I got extremely car-sick and he took us to a Horn and Hardart.

Q: ...I'd like to know what the hotel was like.

A: The hotel was fairly nice.

Q: You had private rooms?

A: We had the four of us, we were all in one room.

Q: And there were other immigrants?

A: And there were other immigrants who were there. And-.

Q: ...were any of these people on the boat not Jewish, on the S.S. Taylor?

A: No, no. I think...not to my knowledge.

Q: You went to the hotel, that was your first night in America, right?

A: Right?

Q: Tell me, how did you get to the hotel? By car or something? By taxi?

A: I think it was a bus.

Q: Do you remember what it looked like to you when you came into New York? What did you think of New York?

A: It wasn't pretty. It wasn't pretty at all. It was not pretty. I remember thinking that it was- you see, I had been used to Munich and Munich was a very pretty town. Though it was bombed out, the bombed out buildings had their own attraction. But the areas that hadn't been bombed-...I went to school in Munich so everyday I would get on the train and go to Munich.

Q: So, New York was not too impressive.

A: No. I thought New York was really ugly (laughing). I didn't like it at all.

Q: What was ugly?

A: The street. There was nothing green. You know, there were no trees. I had been accustomed to a lot of greenery. The people seemed very dowdy. You know, the Germans were very well dressed. Even though it was after the war, people- that's what it is. I thought the people were very dowdy. They were dressed in very unattractive clothing. The buildings weren't attractive. The architecture- I'm always intrigued by architecture and in that area, on the way to that hotel, and in that area, particularly, I didn't see anything pretty. But, what cheered me up, was to see some of the people from the boat in that hotel. And, particularly, this Baruch who I liked very much.

Q: He was there?

A: Right (laughing). So that made everything alright because after that, we used to walk all over. I remember we used to take these long walks, and I remember thinking that when we got to First Avenue and First Street, that would be the end of New York, because the streets seemed to go 27, 26, and so on and so forth. And then-

Q: You were able to walk by yourself?

A: Yes. Well not by myself. I walked with this boy Baruch.

Q: But your parents let you go around New York by yourself.

A: Yah. We didn't have a sense of fear, you see. That was in a way that was very nice. I had felt- I felt very safe in New York. And though my first impression of it was that it was you know, a very ugly place, for instance, once I saw 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, I thought that was a marvelous street. You know, in those days, 42<sup>nd</sup> Street was the real center of New York as far as I was concerned. All those movie theatres, and what I remember particularly, is the Camel sign. Do you remember that? The camel with the smoke?

Q: (inaudible).

A: Ah-h-h-h! That was a real marvel to me. The smoke coming out of that face advertising, you know, Camel cigarettes.

Q: You would walk there to see it?

A: Yes.

Q: What else struck you in those early days?

A: Not having to go to school. That was very nice (laughing). And I guess just being- you know, I felt a certain freedom. It was sort of an extension of the freedom I had felt on the boat, that I had no responsibilities. I had no duties, you see, when we were- prior to our going to the United States (in D.P. camp). I really had a heavy load. I was going to school, I was being tutored, my mother wasn't well, we had to do a lot around the house. My mother, you see my mother was very strict. She wouldn't let me read certain books. I mean, I had- you know, I wanted to read novels, and romantic novels particularly, and she wouldn't- and I had to do it in secret because she sort of watched every move I made. And she wanted to know who my friends were, and whether they were the right friends for me to associate with, and you know, I had to do my homework, and I had- life just seemed to be full of responsibilities, and-.

Q: Who were the right friends?

A: Whoever my mother considered to be a right friend, who's parents were the right people. And I don't know what criteria my mother used to determine that, you know, that this girl's parents were the right people. I really don't know what criteria she used.

Q: Did it matter, for example, what country they came from?

A: Well I think to her mattered how they spoke Polish. You see, if they spoke Polish in an educated fashion, then they were alright.

Q: She, herself, had been educated in Poland?

A: Yes.

Q: Gymnasium?

A: Yes, that's right. That's right. That was the thing. I mean, people whom she didn't consider to be in her class, were not proper friends for me. She was very (inaudible-? sensarus?) about that. There were just some children she didn't want me to associate with.

Q: That continued in America?

A: Oh, yes! Except, you see in America, she really had no way of judging people, so it really couldn't continue. She wanted it to continue in America. But in America, I became much more rebellious. You have to understand that in America, I sort of became a helpmate to my parents because I learned the language, and they needed to make use of it. Although they learned the language they weren't as proficient in writing as quickly as I was because I went into school.

Q: Were they appreciative of your position?

A: Yes.

Q: Or did they resent having to depend on you.

A: No. No. They were very appreciative.

Q: Why did you become rebellious?

A: I suppose I started feeling my oats. I felt that if I was so terrific in one way, why couldn't I be terrific in picking my friends (laughing). It backfired a little. But, basically, they had no way of judging whether an American girl or boy was appropriate for me or not. Except when they were not Jewish. If they were not Jewish, they were not appropriate. And that was that.

Q: You went to Horn and Hardart?

A: Yeh!

Q: What was that like? That was like your first day here?

A: No, it was not a first day here. It was shortly after we got here.

Q: (inaudible) you seem to remember?

A: Well I remember it because again, it was something very new and novel in my life, that you could insert coins and get food. First of all, when we were in Europe- when we were in Poland, I remember eating in restaurants. But when we were in Germany, I never remember- very rarely do I remember going into restaurants in Germany. And, so that in itself was very interesting. And the fact that there were not waiters, you know that they had this whole counter full of food, or that you could insert coins, and, and- this plate- you would open up the little window and you could pull out the food. That was- something that I had never seen before. So that was remarkable. The Horn and Hardart was remarkable. And then you see, Uncle Herman took us to the Bronx on the Henry Hudson Parkway. And I remember distinctly that the sun was setting, you know it was sort of dusk, and it was, it was beautiful. The Hudson was beautiful, and the park, and Riverside Park on the other side, that was beautiful. And, I had an eye for these things, you know. I always had an eye for these things, even when I was a kid. So, that was very pretty and where he lived, Moshulu Parkway, lots of trees and that was very pretty. So I remember that.

Q: So I guess even if the sore point about him not helping out was sort of-.

A: Well I didn't know that. That time I didn't know that.

Q: Once you came, and he extended himself he wanted-.

A: Yes, he did. He did.

Q: He probably felt a little bad himself.

A: I guess. He said to me...I became close with Uncle Herman. He said that once we were here-.

End of Tape #1, Side B

Tape #2, Side A

- Q: When you were in the hotel, there were other people in the hotel, your friend was there, Baruch Markman.
- A: That's right.
- Q: When you walked around Manhattan every day, how far could you walk? I mean, weren't you afraid, like you'd get lost- you didn't know the language? Where did you go?
- A: Well the interesting thing was, he was two years older than I was. He was 16 to my 14. And he was a very adventurous, you know very cocky sort of fellow. And, I felt very comfortable following him around. So, we walked- I also remember that we took buses. I think it was a dime or a nickel at that time.
- Q: What was your impression, for example you had never seen black people before had you? Except for soldiers.
- A: Well, I had seen black soldiers in Germany and actually, my big wonder at black people was when I saw the soldiers in Germany- and actually I was well disposed towards the blacks, because these soldiers were very kind. They would give us candy and chewing gum and they were- we were not fearful of them...
- Q: You saw them as benefactors?
- A: Right. A positive reaction to them. So when I came to the United States, the interesting thing is, that our wanderings around lower Manhattan, which extended I would say, up to 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, perhaps a little bit higher than 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. We didn't see many black people. Or at least, I don't recall seeing many black people.
- Q: Did you ever go down to the lower East Side where Jews lived?
- A: Not at that time. Not at the time we were-.
- Q: Did you go to the Empire State Building?
- A: We didn't go up the Empire State Building. We only went in front of it and we looked up in great amazement at these tall buildings. I had never- neither one of us had ever seen such height. So, but we didn't have the money. You know, we didn't really have any money, so we pretty much did what we could on foot. We didn't go any further.

- Q: You were suppose to go to school, right?
- A: Well, eventually. Except that we arrived here in March and that's why I say, these were- I think it was March and April they were two wonderful months. Wonderful. They were carefree. My parents, I don't remember what Esther was doing, but at least I wasn't responsible for her.
- Q: She's younger than you?
- A: She's younger...about two years...
- Q: You didn't take her along with you on these trips?
- A: No, no.
- Q: Why not?
- A: I guess because I wasn't forced to. Because I remember that later on when we had the apartment and so on, I was required to sort of administer to Esther. But during those months, during those two months-
- Q: What was that like, having a step-sister that you never had before, suddenly walk into your life?
- A: Well that happened in Germany, and I loved it. One of the things- you see, when my mother married Fred, Esther wasn't with him. That's a story. Fred survived on Aryan papers. So he was in the open in Poland. And He really couldn't take care of Esther because he was a widower, his wife had perished in the Ghetto- so he passed her off as his child, and he left her in the Cloister across the street from where I was hidden...
- Q: You never knew that- ?
- A: No.
- Q: Because she never...you didn't meet until after the war?
- A: Right. That's right.
- Q: Your mother knew Fred from before the war?
- A: She didn't know him from before the war. The interesting thing was, that after the war, Fred came to ?Shvorsk? to visit Esther. He had been coming all the time. And after the war, he heard via the grapevine that there was a Jewish woman with a child in town. So

he knocked on the door. He came to visit. And that's how Fred came into our lives. And he told my mother how he survived the war, and that his daughter was in the Cloister, and Esther came to visit us, and ran away from us because for some reason she discovered that we were Jewish so she ran to the Cloister and informed the nuns that she didn't want to come back to us ever again, because we were Jews...so they somehow put two and two together. They knew who Kestenaver? Was. You know my mother, they knew who she was, they knew she was Jewish. And they felt that, if my father had placed his daughter with us, then he must be Jewish also. So then they gave him an ultimatum. Either you let us convert her, or you have to take her out.

Q: He had already placed her with you?

A: No. He didn't place her with us. He just had her visit us for Christmas vacation because it was after the war...

Q: ...so March and April passed. What were your parents doing? Were they just hanging around the hotel?

A: No. I think they were looking for an apartment. They were going to the HIAS. And they were I think, trying to get their bearings.

Q: Was HIAS helpful to them?

A: Yes. Very helpful. First of all, they paid for the hotel while we were staying there.

Q: It was a decent hotel?

A: Yes. It was a decent hotel. It was fine...27<sup>th</sup> Street and Madison Avenue...but New York didn't appear fearful. You know, I was not afraid of New York. It did not appear to be a fearful place. After that first initial day that we arrived in New York, where it was bleak and dreary, and- I just felt very unsettled. I remember after that, I felt very comfortable in New York. I really came to like New York. I came to enjoy it's largeness and diversification. You know, there were so many- it had so many different looks. You know Manhattan was different. We went to visit relatives in Brooklyn. That was different. We went to visit Uncle Herman in the Bronx. And that was different. And we went to visit...on the Upper West Side...Fred's brother on 105<sup>th</sup> Street...and it all had a different look about it. And I fell in love with Manhattan, and I remember telling my parents that I only wanted to live in Manhattan. I didn't want to live in the Bronx, and I didn't want to live in Brooklyn. I only wanted to live in Manhattan.

Q: Your wish wasn't really Park Avenue?



A: But I didn't really get to see Park Avenue until I started going to Hunter College. I didn't see-.

Q: So, you did see, though, a nice part of Manhattan, around in the 30's and everything but it was more industrial, more work place.

A: Yah, you know that area is not beautiful around Madison Avenue, Park Avenue. Although, you know which is a nice area, the area around Washington Irving High School. That was in that area. And I remember being very much taken with that...what is that area down there?

Q: Gramercy Park. Do you remember the first time that anybody came up to you and said anything to you about being a survivor or having come from the D.P. camps, do you remember anything like that?

A: Well everybody was extremely interested.

Q: In what way (inaudible).

A: Well naturally the people that we came over on the boat with were all survivors. And it wasn't discussed very much. I don't remember hearing- the adults talked about it a lot.

Q: These people who you said before were very interested in what happened, who were they?

A: Well actually that happened later, when I started going to school. The people I met during the time we were in the hotel, I mean, for instance, we were visiting...the relatives didn't ask me ...it was, once I started school, my classmates were very interested.

Q: By then you were already living in an apartment when you started school, right?

A: Yes.

Q: March and April passed. What happened in May and June?

A: Well, at the end of April we had an apartment. This was 1951...On 175 Claremont Avenue. That was it. I was in my glory. Because we were living in Manhattan, and I just-.

Q: What was the neighborhood like in those days?

A: ...Broadway was the dividing line. West of Broadway where we lived it was all white. And east of Broadway, it was all black. (laughs) I mean, really. Tenement black.

Q: Puerto Ricans?

A: Well no. Not in my area...up where I was it was strictly black. Strictly black.

Q: It was Harlem?

A: Yes, it was Harlem. I was not afraid of the blacks. I did not fear them at all.

Q: At night you could cross the street?

A: I could cross the street. I did not feel fearful of them at all. That came really, much, much later. My mother and I used to walk down 125<sup>th</sup> Street, all the way over to Lenox Avenue where- when we had to pay a Con Edison bill...the telephone bill later on...they had lots of big stores there. We used to go and shop- I was not fearful of the blacks. In fact, when I started school, at George Washington High School, which was in May, you can imagine, May, it was the end of- practically the end of the term. The teacher assigned a black girl to be my guide. To take me around to the different classes...

Q: What was your English like then?

A: My English was terrible! That's why I had a great deal of difficulty communicating, yet I remember that many of these kids were very patient and very interested in me. There just didn't seem to be that many foreign students at George Washington High School at that time. But they did have a class called, 'English for Foreigners.' And that's where they put me. They did not put me in an English class. But they gave me Science, Math, for a foreign language I took Hebrew...I was a freshman for two months.

Q: Did you have to repeat the Freshman year in September?

A: My report card at the end of the freshman year had 65, 65, 65, -they gave me credit- because the last year I went to school in Germany...it was also a school for Displaced People, where they- the report card was written in Hebrew and in English, so that if I went to Israel the marks were in Hebrew, and if I went to the United States, the marks were in English. And when my report card was presented to...George Washington H.S. administration, they were very impressed. I had Latin...Algebra...

Q: Did you have, like a passion, for education? Did you feel it was very important to go to school?

A: No. I didn't have a passion, but it had been installed in me that it was very important to learn.

Q: Your parents?

A: Well, my mother constantly had these tutors for me...

Q: Did the other people in the D.P. camps?

A: No. I don't think so.

Q: In other words, all the people there had a passion for education?

A: Yes. The children were, they were constantly, no matter how make-shift it was, there was some form of education going on.

Q: When you went to George Washington High School- did you feel that your aspirations or attitudes towards school were any different than that of your classmates?

A: I wasn't perceptive enough at the time to view the other kids. You have to understand, that I was too involved with myself. Things were too strange for me. I was in a strange country. I was using a strange language. The faces were different-.

Q: Then you came back in the fall. What did you do in the summer? You just hung around?

A: No. Actually, partly I hung around. But- we were sent to a camp from Jewish Federation Camp, it was called Camp Edaliah.

Q: You and Esther?

A: Yes.

Q: ...where was it?

A: In Bear Mountains...

Q: What was the camp like? Was it a camp for children of other Holocaust families?

A: No, no. no.

Q: They just asked Federation to help?

A: I don't know how my mother found out about it, but she did. And for 3 weeks I went to a summer camp.

Q: And did people there ask you about what happened to you during World War Two?

A: Yes. Oh, they were so taken with me. I tell you, they-.

Q: Who was taken with you?

A: The counselors mainly, because-.

Q: Do you remember what they said to you, what you told them?

A: Well, they were always sort of displaying me. I was sort of a wonder child. You see, here I was in the country only since March, and I was already able to read English, so that on Friday night when we had- we sort of had an oneg Shabbat, and we would all gather you know, around the flagpole and they would have you read a piece from the Bible. I don't remember what. And I remember it being very difficult, because Bible reading is not like reading from fiction or non-fiction. It was very- I remember this one counselor practicing with me. And they would announce the fact that, this Cina, they called me...

Q: Ciona, right?

A: No...I came here as Ciona. But...the administrators in the school agreed that that was an impossible name. So they took the 'o' out of my name, and they called me 'Cina' and that was my name...

Q: So, the counselors prepared you, and you were suppose to read it in Hebrew.

A: Well...the Hebrew was very easy. Then I had to read the translation in English. And the translation was very difficult (laughing). I mean, the biblical translation.

Q: Did anyone make fun of you?

A: No, nobody made fun of me. That was it. It was a very nice environment. And, they taught me to swim. That was the most wonderful thing. They taught me to swim. And, really, to swim well.

Q: You never swam before?

A: No, no. So I learned to swim, and generally, it was wonderful for me because I realized that I really enjoyed sports. And summer camps are very sports oriented. All those ball games, and the hiking and the sleeping outdoors, and the over-nights, sleep-outs, it was just- it was wonderful. It was just- it was a child's dream come true, really. Although I was an adolescent at this point, it's something that I guess, perhaps I would have enjoyed doing as a child, but never had the opportunity.

- Q: Did you find that when they asked you questions, did they ask any questions that were kind of silly- because they didn't know, out of ignorance...or in school later on in the year?
- A: What happened in camp was, they weren't silly, but they couldn't imagine what had happened. I think that it was very difficult for them to understand. That I was confined to one place, for a period of about two years. You see. I don't think that they believed. It was painful for me. I remember that distinctly that when I came here, and all these people were asking me what had happened to me during the war, it was painful for me to tell them the story, because when I was telling them that, I realized that it was incomprehensible to them. And you know, in those early years, after the war, I really had this very strong sense that they did not believe me. And it's not that they thought that I was lying, but they simply- it was too horrible. It was- it was-.
- Q: You weren't in Auschwitz, so what were you describing to them that was so horrible? That you were hidden?
- A: That I couldn't go out. That I was- that you know, I was...in danger because I was Jewish, and I couldn't go out and there were people who wanted to kill me.
- Q: Do you remember anyone reacting to you in a funny way, when you were telling them?
- A: What I remember was, that they didn't want to talk about it. Once I said- I had this sense that it was very unpleasant, and they didn't want to deal with it.
- Q: Couldn't deal with it.
- A: Well, I didn't know at that time they couldn't deal with it. I see it now...at that time I could see that the interest would sort of wane. I really had a sense that they really didn't believe me, and I became very defensive about it. And after I...had a few of these experiences, when people asked me about the war, I just said, 'Well, it was very unpleasant.' And I left it at that.
- Q: These experiences you had in school as well as in camp.
- A: Oh, yes. But more in camp than in school.
- Q: Why is that?
- A: I think in camp there was more leisure...and school the environment was more structured. There were more common things to talk about. There were the classes, the teachers, you don't have that much time.

- Q: Did it ever happen that you had given a paper to do in school, an assignment in English where you're supposed to talk about learning experiences in Europe?
- A: No. Never. Never. The teachers never asked me in a classroom to express what had happened during the war.
- Q: Did you find that any particular group of kids seemed more interested in what had happened to you during the war than another? Jewish kids, Black kids, Irish kids?
- A: Not the Black kids, and definitely not the Irish kids. And not too many of the Jewish kids (laughs).- I would say there was a casual interest. There was not a very deep interest.
- Q: Did you learn anything about in school- did they teach it?
- AL No. History class never came that far.
- Q: What factors do you think were most helpful or not helpful to your adaptation to life in America?
- A: The fact is, that what helped with my adaptation, it was very specific. And that is, the goal on the part of everybody that I came together with, seemed to be to assimilate into the culture and society of America.
- Q: The goal of whom (inaudible)...?
- A: Teachers, of friends, the relatives. What was the term? Americanize, I think. I'm pretty sure that that was it. That everybody said the tone, or the climate was- you have to Americanize. You have to become like an American girl. That was it. Become like an American girl, dress like an American girl, speak like an American girl. But don't do the things that American girls do. Like my parents, for instance. They didn't want me to date. You know, they didn't want me to go out with boys. They didn't want me to stay out late. They- (laughing).
- Q: Just be American.
- A: But be American! (laughing)...the teachers completely discouraged any foreign characteristics. The retention of foreign characteristics.
- Q: You spoke with an accent, certainly in the early years.
- A: Terr- yes.
- Q: Were you embarrassed about it?

A: No. As a matter of fact, that was another sort of distinctive part about me. You know, teenagers always want to be special, or at least I think that teenagers...I think that kids in some way, seek their own identity. And that was one thing that I always had. I always had an identity because I did have an accent, people would immediately- people's ears would prick up. If I was at a party, for instance, boys would immediately- oh! And I was always a very nice approach. 'Oh, you have a very nice- you have a cute accent,' or something. 'Where are you from?' It was sort of easy to start a conversation with me.

Q: Where did you say you were from?

A: Well, I would say I'm from Germany. I came from Germany. I was born in Poland, you know, and then they would start asking questions, but nobody really ever questioned me that about World War Two, and I think that the kids here at that time really didn't know very much about World War Two. I became convinced that that was a fact.

Q: So, those things were helpful, that people were trying to help you adapt. Did you have any special problems when you first came to the United States?

A: Well, I had a language problem...in school. I was very timid because I always felt that I was different. On the one hand it hand...I would say in a social setting, my accent being foreign was helpful. But other than that, I was very timid because in school, I had a great deal of difficulty in school. For instances, they put me in a biology class and I didn't understand anything about biology. The only way I made it through biology and passed the regents, is that I really committed pages and pages of it to memory. That was the only way I was able to get through biology.

Q: Were you timid by nature?

A: Yes. I certainly was.

Q: Were you a shy person?

A: I was very shy. Well, I think it had a lot to do, with first of all being alone for a number of years, and even after the war being with my mother, not really being among other children, not having a great deal of opportunity to talk. I was very quiet. I really didn't speak very much.

Q: Was Esther also, that shy?

A: No. Esther was never shy...

Q: So, they gave you monetary assistance, when you came- HIAS.

A: HIAS gave us monetary assistance. But of course we also came in with money because my mother was able to recover a good bit of the money that my father had buried as I told you, and we came into the United States with gold pieces sewed into all our clothing.

Q: (inaudible) did they see them when you went through customs?

A: No.

Q: You didn't tell them?

A: No! (laughing) I mean, my mother was very clever about that. She would put it in the hands of coats where it wasn't very noticeable. Hands-of-arms, sleeves...because we came as Displaced Persons, I don't think that our thing was scrutinized that greatly...

Q: Why did you keep them sewed in there. Did you think that your mother was afraid that they'd take them away?

A: Yes. I don't think that my mother felt secure in bringing it in openly, and it really helped us too. HIAS was very helpful, but the point is that they certainly- they pay for the hotel and I think they helped us financially until Fred got some sort of job. And they helped him get a job. They weren't exactly munificent in there-.

Q: Did you see any social workers when you arrived?

A: No, I didn't. I had nothing to do with any social workers. Strictly my parents. In fact, I didn't even know until some years later, when I asked my mother what happened when we came here, and she explained that HIAS was a help. She always felt that we should make charitable contributions to the HIAS and she explained why...

Q: (inaudible) that was important to their help, right?

A: Oh, yes, definitely. Look, they took us off the boat. They settled us in a hotel. They gave us a stipend for food. And shelter. I think it's a wonderful organization. I mean, imagine if we had arrived here by ourselves, without language, coming in to New York City without relatives.

Q: ...were you- they offered any psychological counseling at the time?

A: No, no.

Q: Your parents might have been offered and they turned it down?



- A: I don't think so.
- Q: How did you find the apartment...by coincidence (inaudible) HIAS?
- A: No. No. As a matter of fact, in that respect, Joe Helmreich was very helpful. Joe lived in an apartment, and his landlord owned that building that we moved into on Claremont Avenue. And Joe is the one who signed for us.
- Q: Why did he have to sign for you?
- A: Because we didn't have- my parents weren't working at the time, and there was no visible means of income and so he wanted to be sure, the landlord wanted to be sure that he would get his rent.
- Q: You felt pretty wanted when you came here didn't you?
- A: Yeh, yes. I did not feel rejected. It was very nice. You know, meeting all these new members of the family. Everybody was very kind and very welcoming. I can't really remember- I would say that at first, other than the difficulty of the language, and the customs, and the summer heat, which I was totally unaccustomed to, I mean, the New York summer heat, was unbearable (laughs). But, Riverside Drive Park, was a wonderland. We spent a lot of time in Riverside Park Drive. We used to have picnics there, and-
- Q: (inaudible) picnics there? When, Sunday- Saturday?
- A: Oh, sometimes when it was very hot, my parents, you know we would pack a meal and go to Riverside Park Drive and eat it there.
- Q: Did you go with friends?
- A: Yes, not my friends. My parent's friends.
- Q: Who were your parent's friends? Were they people from the neighborhood?
- A: There was some people they knew who had come over, also from Germany. Not on the same boat. But people they had known in Germany who came within a month or so. And we would all meet, and they all lived on the west Side, I guess, and so we would meet at a designated spot, and it was-
- Q: How many couples would there be?
- A: Three, four, five.

Q: Where was the spot?

A: It was- you know where Grant's Tomb is? Well if you cross the street in Riverside Drive, down from Grant's Tomb, there is a grassy sort of- I remember, it was a little bit on an incline, and they would spread out there, and you know, get the nice breeze from the Hudson, if there was a breeze, because there was no air conditioning. And, Europeans you know like the outdoors, and picnicking and eating outdoors was very much their lifestyle, and so we did that the first few years we were in the United States.

Q: And they made sandwiches and things?

A: Yeh. Sandwiches, fruit...my mother was a very good baker. And there was cross sharing, and it was really nice. And you see, it was before the time when everybody became intensely involved in making a living, what was called here, 'making a living.'

Q: (inaudible).

A: When life ceased to be gracious. At that time, life was still gracious. People didn't have very much. But there was a great deal of cross visiting, (all immigrants (unable to translate) it recreates community (unable to translate) and there was- we couldn't go out to restaurants. There was no money to go to restaurants. Going to movies- I don't remember when was the first time I went to the movies here. That was a great big treat. But going to the park, playing cards, or we would play dominos, we would play checkers. Somebody would bring a set of dominos, somebody would bring a checker game, somebody would bring cards. And there was all this activity going on.

Q: What kind of cards did they play there?

A: Rummy. Some kind of Rummy-.

Q: They would sit on folding chairs?

A: No. On blankets. Everybody brought blankets...

Q: (inaudible)...dominos and blankets.

A: ...dominos was a big, you know, that was a big game.

Q: How often did you do this? Every week? For a while?

A: Oh, yes. Weather permitting.

Q: Every Saturday, Sunday?

A: No, it wasn't necessarily even Saturday or Sunday. It would even be during the week-.

Q: Your parents weren't working then?

A: No.

Q: They were looking for a job?

A: They were looking for a job, right.

Q: Did they look less hard, I mean, did they enjoy this life. Did they feel that-.

A: No. They looked hard. I mean, not my mother, I mean, my mother- they were learning English. I mean, they immediately somehow got into some...evening courses where they went to learn. And my mother immediately went and she learned to be a bookkeeper. First she got a job in a factory. She got a job first...her health was not up to that kind of rigor, going in early, and sitting in- there was no air conditioning then. It was heated, and she had learned- you see in Germany while we were in the D.P. camp she had learned to sew. Fred had learned to do carpentry with the idea that when they went to Israel, they would have to have some manual skills to earn a living- she got a job in a factory. And that was it, you see, the factory, even though she worked- I think they started early in the morning, they came out early, so in the evening, we would all go down to Riverside Drive. There was no television.

Q: But you didn't have a picnic then?

A: Yes...that was evening activity. Because summertime- it was still light for many hours-.

Q: In this place where you had this, were there other families too, who were doing the same thing in the grassy area?

A: I don't remember...there was one family with a child. But mostly there was just the adults, and Esther and I.

Q: What do you mean the adults? You mean the other families too?

A: Yah, the other couples.

Q: They lived in various parts of (inaudible) Manhattan, Riverside Drive?

A: Yah, that's right.

Q: But there weren't other groups of immigrant couples scattered throughout, who also would engage in this activity?

A: No...this was just this one particular spot where we would gather.

Q: This group of people.

A: Yeah.

Q: What did you do? Play dominos?

A: I played dominos, I played checkers. I didn't play cards at that time.

Q: Each of these families had kids and they played with each other?

A: They didn't- no. Not each of the families had kids.

Q: It was just you and Esther. And you just joined the adults.

A: Pretty much.

Q: But you looked forward to it? You enjoyed it?

A: Yes, I guess we enjoyed the outside.

Q: In fact your mother made dinner there?

A: We brought food along. I don't remember what it was.

Q: ...and you would stay there until it got dark and then you'd go home.

A: Right.

Q: And you might do this twice a week.

A: ...when we came...it was March, by the time we moved in, it was May, and it was into the summer months, and then it was early Fall, and then- so actually, we came here at a time when daylight was getting longer, and the days were very pretty.

Q: When you started school, did you continue going down there?

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A: Yes...I made one friend in school. She was also a survivor, except she was from Vienna, and she had spent her war years in Italy. And, the reason we took to each other was that we both spoke German.

Q: Your major language then was German or Polish?

A: German. When I came here it was definitely German. But, you see it was very interesting. My mother immediately encouraged us to (inaudible) speak English.

End of Tape #2, Side A

**Tape #2, Side B**

- A: It was always, 'speak English,' 'speak English,' you know, from the moment we started school, Esther and I, and my parents were taking courses. It was always, 'speak English,' 'speak English,' and in a way it's too bad because I think because I was pretty proficient in German, and I was proficient in Polish, and I lost it. I really did.
- Q: Which people would you say, had the greatest imprint on your life in younger years?
- A: Here?
- Q: (inaudible).
- A: Well, Uncle Herman certainly did.
- Q: How?
- A: He's a dominant personality. He and Tanta Deborah, they were sort of gay and carefree...he was here 14 years by the time we came here...They were very approving, they were loving, they were magnanimous...everything was, 'Oh yes darling.' Everything was 'Yes darling.'...everything we did was wonderful. Whatever Esther and I said or did, was wonderful. And, I guess, because he was the oldest brother, and maybe because he was compensating for the fact that he had been less than encouraging about his sister coming here, and probably because he wanted to hear about what happened to the rest of the family, and my mother was really the last one who had seen the family, and because she was the youngest sister. They became a force in our lives. And also because he had a car. That was the other thing, he had a car. When we were in camp that first summer, he brought my parents to visit- That was a big event, because nobody came to visit their children in camp. They only went away for two or three weeks I guess, and the parents didn't come to visit. Well, one day, unexpectedly, there was Uncle Herman with my mother and Fred. Coming to visit us...and also, you see, Anita became a force in my life. Anita took me to school. She registered me in school. And your mother. You see, your mother was someone who's company I enjoyed because she was very interested in everything we did, Esther and I. You know, I remember she would question me very specifically about school, and how I, you know, and when we came to visit, she wanted to know specifically what I wanted to eat...she was sincerely interested. I felt that very specifically...and Mark was close to my age...I was fascinated by the stories he was telling me...
- Q: ...did you ever have nightmares from what you went through at any point?

- A: I don't remember having nightmares at that time. The nightmares really came later. It was interesting...
- Q: Later, meaning when?
- A: When I was in college. They started coming when I was in college and they're still coming. In fact, when this whole Holocaust issue- at that time, of course we didn't call it a Holocaust, you know, it was World War Two. I don't really remember when 'Holocaust' came into existence. I don't know...and when it became a subject that became a greater interest to the population here in the United States. I found that I started remembering more, and having nightmares. And, really, it's- I'm surprised that I still have nightmares about it.
- Q: What do you remember- I don't know if you remember your dreams when you wake up.
- A: I don't really remember, but really, I wake up in a sweat, and it seems so real, this, this whole business of- I'll tell you. One of the things that I dream about, that seems to be a recurring dream. Is something that happened to me, really, when I was a very small child. When the 'Krupas?' gave me to this family who lived in the country, they were near the forest, and I remember walking. I was able to walk from the farm there was a- I remember that distinctly, there was a running brook, with a little bridge, and once you went over there behind you was the forest. And I used to enjoy going there, and I remember one day, seeing this horrible looking person, who I assumed was a Jew who was hiding. And, I can't describe it. I can't describe that- it was, you know, I can't even remember if it was a man or a woman. But I remember that it was a human figure, that seemed so frightened at seeing me, or at being discovered. And, and just you know, running. And I still dream that. And I remember thinking at that time, that this must be a Jew. This must be a Jew. And that I wasn't suppose to tell anybody that I was Jewish. And, I still dream about that. You know, this is something that I still dream about. And I'm so furious when I wake up that I should so many years later, I mean, you know, this is what- 40-45 years later? And I'm still dreaming about that.
- Q: What makes you furious about it?
- A: Well it makes me angry because it's such an uncomfortable dream. And so I don't have to-.
- Q: Would like to erase it.
- A: Right. I don't want to have these. I don't want to have these dreams. I don't want to remember that.

- Q: Do you think that the attention that's focused on the Holocaust brought back bad memories in an unnecessary way? Like you, didn't dream about this, right before all these shows began, and the Eichman Trial.
- A: Right. No, I didn't. And I tell you frankly, I can't- for instance I tried to watch Shoah- I couldn't. I mean, I was in constant- I was crying so hard, and it evoked so many unpleasant memories.
- Q: Especially a lot of it takes place in Poland.
- A: In Poland, that's right. And what it particularly- you see, after the war, in Poland when I learned to read in Polish there was a lot of sort of yellow journalism that was coming out at that time about the Holocaust. Now, I had been a small child. And I had had my own unique experience. But I didn't really know what had happened to the other people during the war. When I started reading, and I started reading about these horrible things that happened to my people, the Jewish people. And as a child, I didn't have a strong identity being a Jew but I knew that I was one of these people. But I think what horrified me was to read that people- other human beings could be such,- act in such beastly way towards other human beings, and degrade them in that way. And humiliate them, and it's- I think that that was even more horrible than what I experienced personally. Because what I experienced personally, I thought, as I said my senses were kind of dulled and you know, I didn't experience my own pain but I couldn't accept that other people were treated in such an inhumane way.
- Q: I suppose you felt doubly lucky that you weren't caught, because you would have been treated that way.
- A: Well consciously I don't know if that was what I thought. But I had this, this terrible sense of pain when I read about how people were treated in concentration camps.
- Q: Did you ever meet people here in this country who evoked such thoughts in you, like if these people were capable of acting this way, then that person is capable of acting that way? What did it do to your faith in humanity in general? To know that people had acted that way.
- A: Well, you know, I'm surprised that I'm- it must be towards Fred's and my mother's credit in a way that I'm an upbeat person. I was always- though I'm not a cheerful person. I'm not really pessimistic. I'm an anxious person. I'm very anxious because I just- I always- I think what made me anxious was the fact that my mother was- you know, from the time I was a teenager my mother was always ill, and I always felt that imminently I'm going to lose her. You know, I had just found her. And imminently I was going to lose her again. In Germany when she became sick and she was in the hospital, you know, I had only been with her for a few years because I had been sick, and



this and that- so when she started becoming very sick, I became petrified that she would die. And if she died, I really didn't have anybody because Fred did not give me a sense of security. I did not fear- you see, I felt that my mother was the only person who really took care of me. Who was my shelter, and my shield. So, I've always been an anxious person, but I always felt that people were basically good. You know, I never really became cynical about people. I don't know why.

Q: Well certainly nothing like that could happen here, in terms of what these people did, what the Nazi's did. But, have you ever experienced anti-Semitism in America?

A: No.

Q: Never?

A: Never.

Q: Never personally had anything to you about the fact that you're Jewish- not at work, professionally, not at school?

A: Definitely not at school?

Q: What about work, and what about during the sixties when all the riots-

A: Well, you see, during the sixties I wasn't working because I was raising my children. So I wasn't working at that time. The only time I met- this was interesting. This was after I had graduated college, I had lived in California for about 7-8 months. And on the way back from California I was traveling by train, and it was just this long, tedious ride in the train, and I met a fellow who was a Southerner. He was from Louisiana. He didn't know I was Jewish. And he was making remarks about the Negroes and the Jews. And, I remember being struck by that because it was so strange to find an American who would make negative remarks. Sort of insulting remarks about the Jews. I expected him to make remarks about the Negroes because he was a Southerner. But I was really taken aback that he felt that way about the Jews.

Q: Did you say anything to him?

A: No, and that was the funny thing. I didn't tell him that I was Jewish. At that point, I really felt it was better for me to not to tell him I was Jewish.

Q: I can understand that.

A: So, I probably experienced a sense of fear.

Q: When you told me you had these nightmares, how often would you say you have them, if you can remember?

A: It's usually when I am anxious about something in my life. And so I really can't put a number on it. But, how can I say- I don't even know if it happens once a year. Maybe it does happen once a year. I really don't- the other thing about it, I'm not the sort of person that dwells on unpleasantness. I don't know- I think it's a protective mechanism I'm sure.

Q: Well before when you were in hiding, you sort of made sure you didn't have too much feelings about things...

A: That's right.

Q: What's your occupation? You went to Hunter and you studied Business Education, right?

A: I studied Business Education and I was very interested in teaching.

Q: What is Business Education?

A: Business Education is teaching commercial subjects in high school. Teaching stenography, typewriting, office practice, secretarial practice.

Q: So teaching would be one area of your profession, but you don't do that now. What is your occupation now? What would you call the work you do (inaudible).

A: I'm what's called the Legislative Aide. And that really encompasses doing anything which a legislative might require. Constituent service, community service, public relations. A lot of public relations. I was surprised for instance, a hospital, a quite prestigious hospital offered me \$35,000 starting salary if I would come and work for them as a community outreach person.

Q: Now, you're already worth something, right?

A: Yah! I said, 'well my experience is really worth something to someone else.'

Q: So you'd say you've done well on your work, right?

A: I like my work. I like my work very much. It's made me part of a community for the first time. Part of a community where I give back- I know the institutions, I know the make-up of the population. I feel comfortable (? Inaudible- Washington Heights?) I feel

I have a sense of continuity. I've seen children grow up. I've seen people go from point one- we've been living here in this area for 24 years.

Q: How long have you been doing this work?

A: I've been doing this work now for eleven years.

Q: What were you doing before that?

A: I didn't work for ten years.

Q: And before those ten years? Twenty-one years ago?

A: Not 21 years because before I started working in this job, I went back to teaching for about 3 years...

Q: Would you consider yourself, in financial terms, upper middle class, middle class, lower class?

A: Well, you see, I always have this discussion with Ralph because I yes, I consider us upper middle class, because in terms of statistics, when you read the breakdown of the income levels, etc., I would consider ourselves upper middle class, but you see Ralph, who used to be the son of a wealthy man and no longer is the son of a wealthy man, considers himself what he calls a proletariat. So it depends on which member of the family you speak to.

Q: I'm trying to get some kind of a breakdown on the financial level reached by the people who came here. So, if you give me a broad figure- you said that this place offered you \$35,000. Does your salary come close to that?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. If you had to think back now, what achievements in life, would you say you're most proud of? What do you take the greatest pride in?

A: Well, the children. I think that- I'm very proud of my children. And I'm proud, so I would say that that's the prime achievement of my life. I think that I had brought up two children who are going to be positive- who will make positive contributions to this community, or their community wherever they live. I think that they have high moral standards, they are honest. I think they are going to be an attribute to whomever they make contact with in their lives. I think they're going to be productive. I think they're going to be a positive force. Whomever they meet up with. Whatever they do. And I think that that's something that's a tribute to Ralph and me. That we were able to bring

up- you know, I don't think that they're going to be geniuses in life, but I think they are going to be good people. And basically, that's, you know,-.

Q: ...well. I think they are...

A: I like them. You know, I like them. I think they're likeable people, so that the other thing in my life is that I think I was able to form a good marital relationship which is something that is important in life to me and you know, I have some very good friends. I think I've been able to form good friendships. And, I've been productive in my work. I've helped a lot of people. I've done things that count in this community.

Q: No wonder your children are the way they are. Because those are the things you value. And you've been able to transmit that to them.

A: Not so much in words, you know.

Q: Was there anything that you'd say you were least proud of? I don't mean that you robbed a bank, but is there anything that you felt you would have liked to accomplish and you're sorry you didn't accomplish? Unrealized ambition?

A: Well, yes. I'm sorry that I never finished my master's studies. I'm really- I was always furious with myself that I allowed myself to be bamboozled into the idea that I would never have to work for a living after I got married, and so therefore there was really no reason why I should continue going to school, and so I never- I guess I never went back to finish my master's, and then I became too lazy to go back. Once I had two kids, and...then I was enjoying, you see, I became very active in terms of sports activities. I fell in love with playing tennis and skiing and ice skating and all of that. And that took a lot of my time and energy, really. And I didn't want to give that up to go back to school, so I never-.

Q: Before this recent problem, did you ever go to a hospital or anything?

A: No...and what happened in the Spring, really caused a real upheaval in my life.

Q: I'll say.

A: It required an adjustment (her voice slows and lowers ending with a sigh).

Q: You're making an understatement.

A: Right! (her voice picks up with a short laugh).

Q: It's an adjustment to Elizabeth too.

- A: Well, it really, it hit Elizabeth very hard.
- Q: Well, think back on yourself. You were worried when your mother got sick (inaudible) and (inaudible) she's going to lose you...
- A: Right. I think so...it really created a great deal of difficulty for me, and in a way I wanted her out of the house, because-.
- Q: (inaudible).
- A: I mean, that it was particularly why I wanted her out of the house, because I feel she's young, and she really shouldn't have to live on a daily basis with serious illness. And basically, that what it is. You know, I live- I mean, if you were to see me after one of my treatments, you'd see that I- I'm really just, I'm ill! I really am.
- Q: But the amazing thing is, that when you're not ill...it's like you never had anything wrong with you.
- A: I know...
- Q: (inaudible)...you have to see like a social worker or somebody to adjust to something like this?
- A: I joined the American Society Cancer Support Group. There is a support group. I joined them, and it meets once a week. It doesn't fill all my needs. But it's very helpful to meet with other cancer patients who are basically leading their lives-.
- Q: Until then, you never had any experience like that with a social worker... sometimes people who came over after the war would see psychologist or somebody like that, or they'd be asked to see somebody like that, or do you trust them?
- A: Well, maybe it would have been very helpful if I had had that available to me when I first came here. I think it would have been helpful because the strikes that you and I had against us, other than our feeling that we were different because we weren't born here, and we weren't raised here, and we didn't really share the experiences with our classmates. We hadn't lived through the same elementary school or whatever. There were also our parents who were different than the parents of the kids who were brought up here, who were born and raised here. And, our parents philosophy of life. Our parents expectations of us, and our parents fear for our safety.
- Q: Well, on that score, that's how your mother was, but do you consider yourself a cautious person?

A: Very.

Q: Very?

A: Not so much cautious for myself, but when it comes to my children, I really, I was in a constant state of anxiety about their safety.

Q: What about you, yourself? Are you willing to take risks?

A: I was, when I was- I was. You see, but the way the risks- the way I took risks was that I was very adventurous in terms of the physical things that I did. You know, I became a very good swimmer, and I would go into the ocean no matter what the wave-.

Q: You mean, not since you had children, you're not so risk-taking?

A: Oh, no. I was still taking risks. It's really only since I got sick.

Q: That's really atypical...

A: No, but it's really made me very- cautious...for instance...the doctor...said I can't go skiing this winter. It's very difficult for me not to go skiing...so I can't go- I don't know what you mean by 'taking risks.' I, you know, I took risks- physically I wasn't afraid to take risks.

Q: There are some people who will not walk in a bad neighborhood at night. They are afraid to. There are some people who will not go skiing, because they might break a leg.

A: No, I suppose in that respect, you can say that I take risks. But I take the subways...but I'm not stupid. When I take the subway, I try to stick to where the conductor is, and-.

Q: ...do you like being in charge of things?

A: Yes. I certainly do. (laughs).

Q: Would it be more important to have a job that provides security or more important to have one that's challenging, exciting.

A: I definitely would take a job that- I mean, security is a factor, I'm fortunate that I have a job that provides both, but,

Q: If it came down to it?

- A: If it came down to it, I would take a job that provided security. Because earning a living was always an important part of-.
- Q: When you see, you know, some people seem to be luckier than other people. Some people, luck seems to go their way. Do you think it's just a matter of, what happened to the people in terms of luck, or do you think that there's some element where lucky people make their own luck?
- A: I think that luck is a matter of attitude. Depends on what- it's very subjective, what you consider luck. I consider myself consider myself lucky, although, you know, I'm very unlucky that I got sick. But, I think I have a loving mother. I think that is primary in my life.
- Q: But you didn't make that.
- A: No.
- Q: So my question to you is do you think that people who are lucky, that sometimes make their own luck, in other words, they create circumstances which are obviously in the case of having a loving mother, you can't create it. But I mean, like some people see to make a million dollars, or something like that. Did they make their own luck- or do you think it's just how the chips fall?
- A: No. I think they make their own luck, because in that respect, there are certain people who just have the ability to make money. They have a need to do it, and they have the ability. And it's a combination of it. But you know, there are some people who make a lot of money, and they don't consider themselves lucky. That's why I say that luck is sort of subjective. It's the way people perceive themselves either to be like you or not to be like you. Know what I mean?
- Q: I do. Well, when you make a decision, do you tend to make a decision quickly, or do you like to think things over?
- A: I agonize over decisions. I don't make decisions quickly.
- Q: Do you ever find yourself regretting decisions?
- A: ...well, I don't regret it keenly. As I said, I made a decision not to go back to school, and I regretted that I didn't finish my master's studies...
- Q: Would you say you are more or less satisfied with the way your life turned out? Discounting this illness, I understand that, but besides that.

- A: Yes, I considered myself very fortunate that I have whole family, and-.
- Q: Do you feel you've done as well as could be expected under the circumstances, considering everything that happened here?
- A: Considering everything that happened, yes.
- Q: Do you think that things might have turned out better or worse, if you had lived elsewhere in the United States?
- A: I never really thought about it, because basically, I've always lived in New York. I was a little time in California, about 7-8 months, and I like it because it was a very outdoor life, but I think that eventually I probably wouldn't have liked the climate in California. I think that because I'm New York, I'm politically more aware, I think I'm politically more liberal, I think that the people running around are very stimulating, and life is exciting, you know!
- Q: Is there any way in which you think you might be different, than say the average American Jew in this country?
- A: That I'm different? I think I'm different because- to some degree I'm different because I think I have a unique relationship with Ralph, for instance, where he- my identity as a Jew is so much stronger than his, and so, in that respect, he and I really don't share this sense of Judaism being important in our lives. It's not important in his life. And, I notice that other couples have, well, sort of shared that either religious or irreligious identity much more than that aspect of their lives, I should say. There's a greater commonality between them in terms of the way they view their religion or irreligion or whatever.
- Q: This would be true of Jews who married people who are not Jewish.
- A: Yes, but you see, then it's expected. It's understandable whereas Ralph and I are- although, I know- I think I've meet other people with the issue.
- Q: Did he go with you to Israel?
- A: No, no. Ralph didn't go to Israel with me. He wasn't interested at all. But basically, it's not that he didn't go because he's not interested, but Ralph doesn't like to go on the plane, and particularly he doesn't like to travel by plane when it's a long trip, so- since basically, I wanted to spend time with my family, I didn't feel that I should make an issue of it.
- Q: Do you feel- and I can see it, that your adjustment to life in this country is pretty successful on the whole?



A: Yah, on the whole.

Q: Of all these factors, which factor would you say contributed most (inaudible-?often?) of all the things we've been talking about?

A: Well, I was young. I think it's because I was young and because I had to make so many adjustments in my early years, that coming here was just another adjustment

Q: Do you think that having lived through the Holocaust, that nothing terrible can really happen to you? It's almost as if you lead a charmed life?

A: No, I don't feel that way at all. In fact, I think that particularly because I lived through the Holocaust, you see, that I always had the sense that something really horrible will happen to me. I always had this sense of impending doom. That I tried to push out of my mind.

Q: You were just lucky it didn't happen then?

A: Right. I think it made me-

Q: ...just the other day you said to me, that you 'don't think that you were spared during the Holocaust, to have yourself die of this illness.' Isn't that sort of different than what you said just now?

A: Yes it is. But you see, this is in my moments of- when I-

End of Tape #2, Side B

**Tape #3, Side A**

- A: When I'm rational, I feel optimistic and that's when I feel that I'll pull through, and I'll be fine, and that's when I feel that I couldn't have survived this awful war, and really, where the odds were so much against me, just to succumb to this...(inaudible)...but sometimes I am overcome by this sense of doom, and I feel that- you know, sometimes I have these visions of something terrible happening. For instance, I'm afraid of heights. And as much as I love skiing, I'm comfortable on the chair lift when it rises very high, when we go up the mountain.
- Q: You don't mind living on the tenth floor?
- A: No...what bothers me, is when I'm out on the terrace...
- Q: You don't live with your 'bags packed,'...like some survivors think that gee, it could happen again...did you live in a state of that after this happened during the war, that you just can't take anything for granted, you can never be sure-.
- A: Yes.
- Q: How much do you feel that way?
- A: It's not something that haunts me every day. But it comes- it hits me every once in a while yesterday in the newspaper I just read that anti-Semitism had risen 12 % between '86 and '87 and immediately I thought to myself, maybe I should encourage- I mean, this really exactly what happened to me. I said, maybe I should encourage Elizabeth and Paul to move to Israel...
- Q: Do they have any desire to?
- A: No. Elizabeth said to me after she had been to Israel- that she was really very impressed with everything, except she couldn't live there because she said she couldn't live with the idea of her children having to go into the army and perhaps being killed. She said, 'You have to be born in Israel and to live with it to be able to accept it.'...
- Q: How old is she?
- A: 23.
- Q: How old is Paul?
- A: 20.

- Q: Your kids all had pretty good education, your kids. You considered it important for them, right?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Do you think it's really worth it, to spend all the years that are necessary to get a good education? Or is it better to get a minimum amount and then go into business?
- A: (laughs) I needed the education. I had to have college, because when I graduated high school, I just hadn't had enough schooling, because I had missed elementary completely. I had missed Junior High School. I really had very few years of school. Formal school by the time I came to this country. So actually when I finished high school I only had 3 years of high school...I was a very ignorant young person when I graduated high school...nothing to do with passing...I was not an educated person...
- Q: What about your kids? Do you think it was necessary to get all that education?
- A: For Elizabeth, it was very necessary.
- Q: Why?
- A: I think she- again, when she finished high school, she was half-baked. She really hadn't developed very much scholastically, or intellectually, basically, intellectually.
- Q: Is that a main benefit of education in your eyes? Intellectual development?
- A: Yes. Oh, definitely. I think it enriches your life to have the tools with which to pursue further knowledge, if you are so inclined. It is a great enrichment in life. Otherwise, really, what is there?
- Q: ...some people might say, go to any old college, get your degree and go out and go into a business, marry a rich girl-.
- A: I don't think it's necessary to go to an ivy league college...neither Ralph or I, really felt that it was necessary for her to go to Barnard...she's the one who decided that that's where she wanted to-.
- Q: How Jewishly did you raise them?
- A: As Jewishly as it was possible for me under the circumstances. And when I say, 'under the circumstances,' I mean, considering that they had a father who is totally uninterested, paternal grandparents who said to me, 'Why are you sending them to Hebrew School?' –

Ralph's father basically said to me, it's not good for them to be so Jewish. That's basically what he said. And he, of course the reason he said it is because of his experience as a Jew in Europe, because he had to run.

Q: ...he came here when?

A: He came here in 1939...they were assimilated in Czechoslovakia, except that Ralph's father was an industrialist and so he had business in Vienna, Germany and Czechoslovakia.

Q: And he doesn't feel proud to be a Jew?

A: No.

Q: Do you think that if Ralph had married someone not Jewish it wouldn't have bothered him?

A: No...

Q: Ralph have brothers, sisters?

A: Ralph is an only child.

Q: You did send them to Hebrew School, right?

A: Yes. Well, after school, yes. So we sent them to Hebrew School and I really must say that, whatever Jewishness Paul and Elizabeth have was single handedly accomplished by me, because by that time my parents had moved to Florida, so you see, that was really unfortunate that my parents moved to Florida when the children were so young, because they would have reinforced-

Q: They had a kosher home?

A: Yes...

Q: They went to shul?

A: Right- they were members of...(Rabbi Kret? And then the Vermedea? Synagogue here in the Inwood section)...orthodox synagogue...and I had to join a Reform Synagogue because Ralph doesn't know any Hebrew, and so-

Q: How would you feel if Paul or Elizabeth married someone who's not Jewish?

A: As long as my mother was alive, I thought that it would pain me terribly if they did it, because it would cause her so much grief and distress. I really, fervently hoped that they married Jews. Because, as my uncle said in Israel when I asked him what he thinks the situation, you know, why the Jews have such problems there, and he said, 'Our biggest problem is that we are three and a half million. If we were ten million, we wouldn't have a problem.' And, so in a way I feel that a Jew really has an obligation to remain a Jew and retain the faith. But I also have mixed feelings about that. I must tell you, because on the one hand, I say to myself, well, if they weren't Jewish, life would really be easier for them.

Q: And if they married someone not Jewish, they might escape being Jewish (inaudible).

A: That's right.

Q: Do you ever feel that being Jewish is a big burden to carry around?

A: Yes, I certainly do.

Q: In some other life, like to be relieved of it?

A: Well, I never thought in terms of- you see I don't dwell too much on what my life might be like and so on, if I were not Jewish. In fact, I never thought in terms of what it would be like if I wasn't Jewish, I never thought of that at all.

Q: But your kids, you see, didn't have the same experiences that define them as Jews, and therefore for them, it's quite possible. They are bona fide Americans.

A: Well, I think it's not unlikely that they might be faced with that. Because, let's face it, they really don't live in a singularly Jewish environment. They don't. They've gone to schools that weren't particularly Jewish.

Q: Did their visits to Israel affect their identity in any way?

A: Yes, I think that their visits to Israel were a turning point in their sense of being Jewish.

Q: (inaudible).

A: Yes, I think- it sort of made them aware of the fact that there is a Jewish nation, there are Jewish people, and that it's a Jewish nation that needs them.

Q: In one way or another.

A: Right.

Q: If they married someone who's not Jewish, would it matter to you if that person converted to the Jewish faith?

A: I think I would probably prefer that. But I really hope they don't. I really hope they marry Jews- What I face is this. Let's say that they really passionately fell in love with someone who wasn't Jewish. And that I could see that it was a really decent loving type of person. I couldn't really, I couldn't object to that. Simply on the grounds that the person wasn't Jewish.

Q: Do you feel that your children's identification with Judaism is different from that of your own?

A: Yes. I think it's less intense. But on the other hand, I think that it may be less intense, but I think that it's growing in awareness...

Q: Did you ever think that, like when you (inaudible-?talk behind the children?) that the world is really a bad place, and do you want to bring children into such a world?

A: No.

Q: Never?

A: No, I mean, I had children in 1960. I thought the world was a pretty good world...Elizabeth was born in 1966.

Q: What did you tell them about the Holocaust, do you remember? Or have you?

A: Interestingly enough, I have, but- it hasn't been one (inaudible-tale?) It's been bits and pieces here and there.

Q: Did you start at any point?

A: No, I didn't start at any point. I think it just sort of came out. I didn't one day decide that I have to tell them about the Holocaust and sit them down and say, 'Well, you know, you should know that such and such happened to me.'

Q: Do you think that you're being a survivor has affected them in any way?

A: Yes. Definitely.

Q: How?

- A: It's hard to say how. It's probably very subtle. I think that it has shaped my personality. So in that respect it has affected them. They've been brought up with a sense that the Jews experienced this terrible tragedy during W.W.2. Elizabeth, for instance, got terrible flack from Ralph's mother because she spent the summer in Germany. She was given a scholarship to spend the summer in Germany and it really caused sort of a rift between her and her grandmother because her grandmother just couldn't accept the fact- and you know, Ralph's mother also gave me a very hard time about allowing her to go to Germany.
- Q: You think that it would be the opposite, since they don't care that much being Jewish, while they feel that terrible things happened-.
- A: But they feel that we should not have any relation with Germany. We ( following line is illegible) German people. (illegible) that they feel that way actually. Ralph's mother feels that way actually. Ralph's father never felt that way.
- Q: You feel then that being a survivor has affected your children (inaudible)...
- A: Right. Also, I think it's made them aware that Jews are not really acceptable to everybody.
- Q: Did you ever feel that they couldn't really understand what you went through?
- A: Yes. They can't understand it.
- Q: Can anyone?
- A: (heavy sigh) Now, maybe yes. 'Cause there has been so much written about it and there has been so much visual-visually there has been a lot. In films, and on television. So, I don't know if people want to, you know, it's really such horror. I don't know that-.
- Q: ...(inaudible)...war movies...they put on these shows, T.V. Everybody watches...(inaudible)...whenever something's on about the war do you watch it (inaudible)...love seeing the Nazis get beat up, killed.
- A: These WW. 2 movies- I enjoyed the WW .2 movies, but not concentration camp-.
- Q: too close to home.
- A: Right.
- Q: Do you like WW. 1 movies too?

A: No, not particularly. WW. 2 movies, you know, that's an interesting- yes, I do like to see the Germans being made fools of.

Q: ...did you spend a lot of time with Paul and Elizabeth when they were growing up?

A: Oh, yes. I didn't go to work for ten years.

Q: What did you do with them?

A: Well when they were little I did the normal things with them. I took them to their dance classes, and sand boxes, and I took them to school and brought them back. But as they got older, they basically did the same things we did. I taught them to swim, they're very good swimmers, they're very good skiers, they're very good tennis players. We took them hiking, we took them hiking when they were still little- I taught them to water ski...

Q: Did your relationship differ between one and the other?

A: No- well, except to the extent that Elizabeth is a girl, and Paul is a boy.

Q: Did their attitudes towards the Holocaust differ one from the other?

A: When they were kids, when they were in Hebrew School, they were shown a lot of films about WW 2 and when they were kids, they felt it was cruel of the school to do that. I guess because undoubtedly it was painful or it was unpleasant. But that's exactly what they felt. They felt it was stupid-.

Q: But now their attitude?

A: But now their attitudes are different. They still don't like, for instance, Elizabeth couldn't watch Shoah either.

Q: But between them, their attitudes are pretty similar?

A: Yes. I would say that they talk a great deal to each other-.

Q: Do they ever complain that you were in any way over-protective?.

A: Yes.

Q: Do you think they were right?

A: No. No, I don't think so. I think I was very fearful for them, but I over-compensated and let them do a lot of things that perhaps other parents wouldn't.



Q: On this question of their attitudes towards the Holocaust- how do they respond to the fact that you survived? In other words, do they respond to it with respect, (inaudible), shame, indifference?

A: No. I would say that they respond with respect and admiration. And they feel I'm very strong and that I'm capable of overcoming anything and everything. You know, they always had this sense that-

Q: And you don't sense that they ever had any emotional difficulties in dealing with this or anything like that?

A: No, they had emotional difficulties. When they were younger, they felt very uncomfortable. You see, both Elizabeth's Hebrew school teacher, and Paul's Hebrew school teacher invited me to come to speak about the Holocaust to the children. And I sensed that it made them both very uncomfortable. There was their mother who was telling these terrible tales about her own childhood.

Q: But this didn't have a long lasting impact?

A: No-.

Q: They're pretty stable kids, (inaudible)?

A: Pretty. Paul more so than Elizabeth. But I don't know that Elizabeth's difficulties stem from the fact that she's the child of a Holocaust survivor. I think-that they, that's not what was the focus of her life.

Q: Were they harder to raise than the average child?

A: No...

Q: They get along well with each other?

A: They get along well with each other. They have a pretty solid-.

Q: They're independent now from you...Elizabeth moved out...Paul's away at school.

A: Yeh, they're pretty independent...Paul is more independent. Elizabeth is more involved with me and that's why my getting ill really hit her so hard.

Q: They don't have nightmares like what you described?

A: No...

Q: Do you feel sometimes that it's a problem that Ralph isn't a survivor in relating to him?

A: Well in a way Ralph is a survivor. He didn't really spend the war years in Europe, because they came here in 1939, but-

Q: Does the fact that he's a survivor in the sense that he came here as a refugee- does that make a difference?

A: Well...I look at Ralph as a survivor, but he does not look at himself as a survivor. Because he was very young. In a sense it makes it easier, and I think that was something that very much that I liked about Ralph, because I think he has a greater sense of security- I don't think he has the same sense of impending doom that I experienced when I was living with my parents. And, so, it just felt more normal to be living with Ralph than to be living with my parents.

Q: Was your home a religious one?

A: Traditional. It started out being a religious one, but it didn't- once Fred bought the store, and he had to have it opened on Saturday...actually when we came here, we used to go to shul every Saturday and we observed the Sabbath...

Q: ...did your mother mind?

A: I think she minded at the beginning. Yes, she always minded. But, then she became non-observant too. And just sort of- drifted away from it, that's right.

Q: You belong to a...reform synagogue. How often do you go?

A: After I got sick, and when I found out this horrible diagnosis, when it was (?finding?), told me in no uncertain terms, that I had lung cancer and when seemed very dire at that time, I you know, I thought I-I probably didn't have very much time to live. Well, anyway, there was one point that I just felt actually desolate about it, and I called up the Rabbi just on the spur of the moment. I called up and I said that you know, I'd like to come and talk to him and so he said, 'Sure,' and I went to talk to him and well, I can't say that it was- and I must say that I've had contact with him because of my job so I had more contact with him than just as a congregant who came on some odd Fridays

Q: What's his name?

A: Rabbi Steven Franklin. That I came on some odd Fridays or the High Holidays, you know, I really knew him in a more personal way. I used to meet them socially...any way he said that prayer might help.

Q: Do you believe in G-d?

A: Yes, I believe in G-d. I don't believe in G-d in the sense that there's some human form there that's G-d. I believe there is a G-dly force. And, he suggested that prayer might help, and so now I go almost every week.

Q: Do you find it comforting?

A: The thing is, not in the spiritual sense, but I find it comforting. I haven't really decided why.

Q: Is it maybe gives you a tiny bit more control over the situation in the sense that you're doing something about it...?

A: ...right...

Q: ...are there any Jewish holiday that you consider especially important to you?

A: Well, I always enjoyed Pesach very much because first of all, because it was a spring holiday. Because it was sort of like a renewal, you know, we would clean the house, and I just like the whole ritual. And I like the Pesach foods-.

Q: Do you ever make Friday night special?

A: No.

Q: Do you have a mezuzah on your door?

A: You see, this is very interesting. I have a mezuzah on the bedroom door, right? I wanted to put the mezuzah on our front door. And both Ralph and Paul objected to it.

Q: They didn't want to be identified.

A: Right...Ralph said that religious symbols make him very uncomfortable. And Paul said- and you see that was when I realized that while Paul feels very comfortable as a Jew, he doesn't feel comfortable with the Jewish religion. And that's basically it-.

Q: ...did you ever think about the whole question of why the six million died?...some people think that there was some reason why the six million died.

A: Well, I- you see, I don't agree with that. Of course, what people tell me, what I've read and what people tell me is that the way to justify the death of the six million, is that we got Eretz Yisrael.- But I'll be darned if I'm going-you know, if I accept that. I don't accept that at all. But I think that the Orthodox community feels that they can justify that in those terms-.

Q: Except that the real Hassidim don't want the State of Israel.

A: Except for the real Hassidim.

Q: I was with a man the other day, and he told me that- I said, 'Why didn't you go to Israel after the war?' He was a Hassid. And he says, 'Well, it was 1945,' and I said, 'Yeh, I guess it wasn't set up as a State. You didn't have anything to go to.' He said, 'No. It was because I was afraid that it was going to be set up as a state (inaudible).' (SM laughs heartily)...what organization do you belong to now?

A: ...I don't belong to any organization now...

Q: Do you belong to the Democratic party?

A: ...I belong to the Benjamin Franklin Reform Democratic Club...

Q: That's professional...what else?...

A: ...other than the Temple...I'm a member of the Social Action Committee of Riverdale Temple...I'm not a member of any groups...because I have so many meetings...

Q: Too busy?

A: Right.

Q: ...when you described these evening gatherings...they weren't like these morbid type of Holocaust (inaudible.)

A: They were not at all morbid. That was a very-.

Q: Found that amazing, right?

A: Right...

Q: How do you think after everything your mother went through, lost her family and everything, how did she retain the ability to laugh?

A: Well, again because I think that human beings have a certain resilience here. And I think that, you see, you can't live with a constant sense of morbidity. I mean, there are people who do, but those are the people who are- emotionally unsound. Or who are psychotic, or- but I think that most people who are sound, who are of sound minds, or you know, as sound as a mind can be for people who have gone through such horrors. I think that's what makes them survivors. That they are able to go forward. You know, to pick up their lives-

Q: How do you think they get the strength to do so?

A: I think it's innate. And I think because, and I'm really not sure about this, but I think that Jews have very strong family ties...Jewish parents, I think, were very involved with their children and gave them a sense that they were very important in a way, you know, that, that Jewish children and maybe that made them sturdy, even though they weren't lovey dovey and so on, but I think that they were a presence. The Jewish parents were a presence in the children's lives, and-

Q: You remember that your parents got together in parks- did they ever get together in clubs or cafeterias, or any other places?

A: They got together in each others homes a great deal. There was a lot of visiting back and forth. Particularly for coffee and cake. Cake was always a part of my life as I was growing up. Sweets, people were always getting together for sweets. And really, I mean really elaborate spreads.

Q: You would go with them to other people's homes?

A: Yeh!...every place you went there was this spread of sweets and tea. A lot of tea...in a glass. Right. No, they weren't morbid people...

Q: ...what do you do in your spare time? You ski, travel, read.

A: I used to read a great deal. Now I mostly have to read things that are related to my job. You know, reports, newspapers.

Q: What was the last book?

A: ...what I'm reading now is, 'Holy Days,' by ?Louis? Harris...the book before that was...Rosa Luxembour...I found that fascinating about the early Socialist movement in Poland.

Q: ...sticking to Jewish topics...

A: ...just very recently I've been reading these Jewish topics...

Q: What about newspapers and magazines?

A: I read the Times every day. Not cover to cover obviously, I don't read any magazines...I only read the New York Times- the Sunday Times magazine. I read the Riverdale Press, the voice selectively, the Village Voice...

Q: Mostly what do you do in your leisure time? If I gave you a choice, like between say, having friends over, watching T,V., movies, having relatives over, reading, sports?

A: Up until the time I got sick, I mostly did sports in my leisure time. Definitely.

End of Tape #3, Side A

**Tape #3, Side B**

Q: How often do you take a vacation?

A: ...we have systematically taken vacations. Ralph has always worked in places where he either had three weeks during the year or four weeks during the year. And I have four weeks during the year.

Q: You take off once a year for sure?

A: Oh, more than that. We used to go skiing two weeks during the winter, one week at a time, and summers, so I would say three times a year.

Q: Where did you go the last time you went?

A: Together? We went to England.

Q: You never had any pets, did you?

A: No. We were a highly allergic family. We're all sneezing and- we had gerbils and things like that.

Q: This neighborhood is mostly Jewish, right?

A: It became so, when we moved in now.

Q: Is it 50-50?

A: ...I guess Riverdale you would say 50-50.

Q: Are any of your good friends not Jewish?

A: No. Ralph's good friends are not Jewish (laughing). I mean, you know, friends that he has from school.

Q: Where did he go to school?

A: Ralph went to (illegible)...he graduated with honors...

Q: But you wouldn't say that any of your good friends (inaudible)- of your four best friends, would you say all of these are Jewish?

A: Yes.

Q: Of these four best friends, how many are survivors?

A: One...

Q: This time you went to Israel, it was the first time, right?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you ever contribute to...Jewish charities?

A: Yes. I contribute to the usual. UJA, the temples, Anti-defamation League, American Jewish Congress, the HIAS.

Q: You give a lot.

A: Yes, but I don't really give that much. Maybe once Paul's finished with school- and (laughs) I'll give more.

Q: ...Israel Bonds?

A: No.

Q: Have you ever given money to support Israel?

A: ...my parents always bought bonds...I'll tell you how I support Israel. I buy Israeli tomatoes, you know, which cost \$3.45 a pound- I buy Elite chocolates, things like that. I buy their products.

Q: You told me before that you couldn't really watch Shoah- did you watch that film 'Holocaust'?...

A: No. My parents watched that. My mother really- she suffered watching it. I turned it on, and it just made me so uncomfortable. I turned it off.

Q: Because of the memories evoked?

A: Again for the same reason that I found it so painful to read about it. It's, it's just- it hurts so much to, you know, to know that my people were made to suffer like that.

Q: You don't buy German products do you?



A: No.

Q: You avoid that?

A: Well...recently...I really wanted to buy and I just couldn't bring myself to buy...a present...when I saw it was made in Germany and I said to Elizabeth, I can't buy it. You know, and I didn't. And yet I really wanted to-.

Q: How do you feel now about Germans who were born after the Holocaust?

A: I find it very difficult to have any contact with any German after the Holocaust, before the Holocaust. But I tell you, I had a very interesting experience in Israel, that sort of made me feel that I really have to rethink the subject but I haven't had the opportunity to do it.

Q: Do you know what it is?

A: I'll tell you what it was. We were in a gift shop, or in a store, and there was this group of Germans, about 5 or 6 who were older than I am. Not much older, but somewhat older, and they were buying things. They were buying hats which said, 'I love Israel.' And they were buying tee shirts, you know, which said something about, 'I visited Israel,' or something like that, and I was amazed! I said to myself, you know. I just couldn't- I couldn't, my mind couldn't accept that. That here were Germans and they were acting like normal tourists in Israel. They were buying Israeli souvenirs!

Q: Did you feel that they didn't feel guilty about what they've done? What are they doing her?

A: Right. Right. Exactly.

Q: How dare they show up here?

A: I just felt that how come that I feel such an aversion to them, and they can come to Israel...(inaudible)...I feel an aversion to the Germans. I tell you. I once had a ski instructor who was a German. He was younger than I was. I was about 36 at time, and he must have been 26, or whatever, and he was a young German. I couldn't- I finally had to tell him. You know, I had to tell him. You know, he was blond and blue eyes, and tall, you know, and this real German- and I had to tell him that, you know, you are a very good ski instructor, but I must tell you that I feel very uncomfortable with you, and I feel a sense of hostility towards you, simply because you're German. I had to tell him why I feel this way.

Q: What did he say?

A: He said that- you know, he was a wise-alecky guy, and he said that 'People always see evil in what they want to see evil in,' he said, and it's just- he said, 'Like we in the West,' he said, 'We see evil in everything that's Russian,' He said, 'They're not evil people,' he said, 'The Germans are not evil people.'

Q: Not much point in discussing it with him?

A: No. But- and after that he felt very uncomfortable with me.

Q: ...he didn't say to you, 'Well, I had nothing to do with it, I'm younger,' he didn't say anything?

A: What he said was that he didn't feel that it was his responsibility that what the older generation did. That's what he said. I thought that was a terrible attitude. (laughing). I told him that too.

Q: ...how do you feel about Polish people?

A: Well, I don't like Polish people either.

Q: You have an aversion to them?

A: You see, I haven't had much contact with Polish people.

Q: ...contact with Germans?

A: I had more contact with Germans...Paul has a very good friend who's mother is German, whose mother is the same age I am. Paul went to school with this boy, and Ingerbord always wanted to be friends with me. She like Paul very much, and she liked me very much, and I didn't tell her, but I couldn't be friends with her...she made many attempts to be friendly with me.

Q: And you never told her why?

A: No.

Q: Think she knew? Suspected?

A: I don't know. But I just- you see, rationally, I said to myself, she's the same age I am, she obviously had nothing to do with the war-.

Q: ...(parts inaudible)...do you think most Americans are anti-Semitic?

- A: I think to some degree they are...I think the Westerners are probably more anti-Semitic...I think that there are people in the United States who have very askewed ideas about Jews, who think that Jews have it all. It makes me in a way, it makes me fearful. I think the Blacks are anti-Semitic. I don't know why. But I think that the Blacks are becoming anti-Semitic. And maybe in a sense it's because- I think that they have a sense that they are the only minorities who were wronged by the American culture and the Americans, and that any concession made to minorities in this country should be for them. Affirmative action, whatever. And I think that in a way, the Jews are oppressed to them. And you see, I sense, I don't know if they sense that, but I sense that perhaps the Jews have been spared a great deal because a lot of this anti feelings have been directed towards the Blacks. And so they're the scapegoats.
- Q: It would make a big difference...(inaudible).
- A: If the Blacks sense that? Why would that?
- Q: It would account the way you've explained it for some of their dislike of the Jews...(inaudible).
- A: I don't know if they sense it...
- Q: I wonder how many Jews sense what you just said...(inaudible)...what's your own attitude towards Blacks in terms of their (inaudible-?suffering?) their minority group (inaudible-?suffering?).
- A: ...when I started treading about how they were treated as slaves, and so on, I felt as badly for them, as I did for those people who suffered in concentration camps and other atrocities. I feel that they have-.
- Q: ...(inaudible)...what about other minority groups, like Hispanics?
- A: I don't feel that way about Hispanics.
- Q: And they don't feel that way about Jews..
- A: No, I don't think the Hispanics have- I don't feel that way about the Hispanics.
- Q: Well I'd like to get some idea, you own attitudes towards different groups...I'll give you a couple people, and I'll say to you that this particular person wants to make a speech in your community...and what I want to know is, whether or not you think he should be allowed to speak. Just tell me 'yes' or 'no'. Supposing somebody wants to give a speech here about...Blacks are genetically inferior. He's a racist. Should he be allowed to speak?

A: No.

Q: What about somebody who is, let's say, a communist?

A: Yes...

Q: What about somebody who advocates doing away with elections and letting the military run the country?

A: No.

Q: What about somebody who says he's gay?

A: Oh, I think a gay person should be allowed to speak.

Q: What about a person who admits he's a Nazi- neo-Nazi?

A: ...in this community, yes. But do you know why in this community?

Q: Yeh?

A: In this community yes, because he would speak to mostly a Jewish audience.

Q: They know what to tell him?

A: Right.

Q: Do you have this feeling that America is like the land of opportunity for everybody?

A: Yes, I feel it's a land of opportunity for everybody, and in a way, I'm somewhat annoyed with the Black people that they haven't been able to advance themselves- as a group.

Q: You mean they have the opportunity and they're not taking advantage of it?

A: Right.

Q: Why is it (inaudible).

A: I don't know...I just really don't know. You know, I think the color of their skin is really against them, because they're so- you see, when a Jew- a Jew is white and so, he can't always be recognized immediately as a Jew. And Hispanic people, most of them are

white as well, but I think that someone who is Black, immediately evokes a certain response among whites.

Q: 'Course Hasidim have done pretty well.

A: Hasidim has done well, but I think that's because they were able to do well among their own...(inaudible)...Jews have businesses and- Blacks don't...I think that those Blacks who had advanced themselves and made it, haven't really played enough of a role, as role models, and haven't- I mean, I can understand it...

Q: Given the fact that there's all this prejudice, how can you reduce it?

A: Well, by making yourself a little bit more part of the mainstream.

Q: ...when you say 'mainstream' you mean what?

A: For instance, learning to speak the way the general population speaks rather than speaking this jargon, or whatever they speak- very often I can't understand. It makes me angry that I had to struggle so hard to learn to be understood, and they were born here, and I can't understand them. That they speak in a certain way. That's one difference. Making themselves understood. Trying to get a job, even if they think it's a dead end. I don't know why this guy has to stand out there with a squeegee mop and swoosh around everybody's window shield, when he could probably get a job in Mc Donald's or wherever. They keep saying that there's a lack of- unskilled workers in service industries.

Q: ...there are people who are prejudiced against people, and they're not right. To them, it's a deep-seeded prejudice against Jews, (inaudible-?other?)- colored? people, how can you reduce prejudice among people like that?

A: (laughs). I think the only way to reduce prejudice among people like that is to expose them- I don't know if it's possible. You know, I think that familiarity sort of does away with prejudice.

Q: Now, these people have views about Jews, but from your perspective, do you consider yourself an American first or a Jew first?

A: I consider myself a Jew first. But I'm loyal to this country. You know, I think this country has been good to me, but I consider myself a Jew first.

Q: Do you think that the Jews can ever fully be accepted in American society if they don't give up their Jewish identity?

- A: ...I think so. I think that Jews are very loyal Americans.
- Q: And you are a loyal American yourself. Is there anything about American culture in life that you really didn't like? Of course, you came here at the age 13, so you were really brought up in America.
- A: It was interesting. There were things that I disliked about Americans, and right now, I can't really think about anything in particular. I think what I disliked about Americans, in a way, they were very self-involved. When I came here, they really didn't know about other people
- Q: Insular.
- A: Right, insular...but I think that's changed. Americans are traveling a great deal more.
- Q: How do you think they're too materialistic?
- A: Are they too materialistic? Probably. Probably they are too materialistic. Yes. I- the people I associate with on a really daily basis, are really not that materialistic.
- Q: ...you do deal with people's problems, right? Do you deal with people on welfare?
- A: I do, but not really, not that much.
- Q: Do you get the perception that most people on welfare really need it?
- A: No.
- Q: Why not?
- A: Well I do deal with people on welfare, but not really enough so that I can make a generalization that way. So I don't think that would be fair but I can tell you something else, that I deal with people who have other types of subsidies, and they don't all need them. They stash their money away.
- Q: ...do you have an opinion about psychiatrists, psychologists?
- A: Do I have an opinion? I think that they perform a necessary service. I do. I don't have negative feelings about them. I'll tell you what my reservation about psychiatrists and psychologists. I think that if you have the misfortune of getting stuck with going to someone who is not very good at that sort of craft, they can probably do some harm. (inaudible)...and that is what scares me about-.

Q: The mind is a very delicate (inaudible?thing?).

A: Right...but I think that there's a need for that.

Q: ...do you think it's okay in general for Jews to marry Gentiles (inaudible).

A: No, in general I don't think it's good.

Q: You don't.

A: No...(inaudible)...you see, again, it's not totally black and white. Sometimes I say to myself, well, the Jewish people have survived (inaudible) and this (?Persian?), and all kinds of persecution and so on and so forth, and so somehow, I want to believe, I have a need to believe, that there is, that it is important for the Jewish people to be- one of the people's of the world. But, you know, when I read about what's going on in Israel right now, between the Arabs and- I mean the Palestinians, and you know, how- the Israeli's have to respond, you know, sort of with this violence and fatalities. It makes me uncomfortable.

Q: ...what did you think of the Viet Nam war?

A: The Viet Nam war, I must say, passed me by without my feeling one way or another about it. It was a time of great involvement with my kids, you know they were little. I was having one child, then another child, I was much more interested in their development.

Q: ...take the next crises in this country...Watergate...

A: My reaction to Watergate was one of total disbelief. You know, that- sort of thing could occur in this country. That there was this whole network of- in the upper echelon of government, to suppress information, and to suppress the freedom of political activity...it was depressing in a way. The Iran Contra affair was in a way frightening. But on the other hand, there was also a ray of sunshine, because I said to myself, we're here with all these powerful people, and they were found, and there's a mechanism to-.

Q: Do you consider yourself a Liberal?

A: Yes...

Q: ...and you're more worried about going to the Left?

A: Yes...

- Q: ...(inaudible)...was there any political leader over all these years that impressed you (inaudible)?
- A: Well, of course Kennedy did...there was a charisma about Kennedy and there was a spirit about Kennedy that I liked very much. And that's irregardless of what type of president he was.
- Q: What did you think of Kissinger?
- A: ...it made me uncomfortable that a Jew played that type of role, vis-a-vis the Viet Nam war. I mean, he was you know, I was really sort of in sympathy with the people who marched against the Viet Nam war, even though I wasn't an activist myself.
- Q: ...is there any leader in this country that makes you especially nervous politically?
- A: Well, I mean- Jackson makes me uncomfortable...I don't like Pat Robertson...people who are evangelist make me very uncomfortable. George..Rockwell-
- Q: ...I read a statement from a survivor who said, 'please don't be shocked by (inaudible). The survivors of the Holocaust, in my opinion, (inaudible) are not the best people, are not the most noble people, the most good-hearted people, the (inaudible).
- A: I agree with that statement.
- Q: Could you elaborate a little bit?
- A: Well, I think that life had dealt them such a blow, they had to- that some of their nobler feelings or characteristics disappeared, utterly disappeared. Or they, you know, they didn't exist to begin with. But also, I think again, it's a blanket statement that you really can't accept fully because he said, 'Some of the people,' right? Some of the survivors, he doesn't say, 'the survivors.'
- Q: No, he says, (inaudible) survivors of the Holocaust. (inaudible).
- A: Because, again, there are those- I mean, look, we know for instance that in the concentration camps there were...right, these kapos. So there were certainly not admirable people. And I think that in the concentration camps there was probably a mixed-
- Q: There were people who say that the nicest people didn't make it- they couldn't.
- A: (laughs) The nicest people didn't make it. That's an interesting statement. I don't know that (inaudible).



- Q: You almost have to have been there to judge it anyway...(inaudible) you know, we all think about these things, right? Perception (inaudible)...think about it...
- A: I can tell you though, that after the war in Germany, when we lived in the D.P. camps, I was not impressed with the Jewish population and the way in which they conducted themselves. I think I told you that- toward each other.
- Q: No, you didn't tell me (inaudible).
- A: ...they were not people who would come forward and be helpful to others. They were very much involved with their own little group, clique, or family. They were very quick to anger, they were very accusatory, they were quick to accuse others of doing things that were harmful or crude, or whatever. People were not nice to each other in those D.P. camps. I don't know why...(inaudible). When I thought about it later, I thought the reason was also, that they were displaced people. That was basically it. They had no sense of commonality with those whom they met in those D.P. camps.
- Q: Unless they came from their home-.
- A: Right. Unless they came from their hometown.
- Q: (inaudible)...when you think about it, do you see differences between what happened to Jews during the Holocaust and what happened, say to- remember Biafra (inaudible) or in Cambodia, a couple million Cambodians were killed, (inaudible), Moslems, and Hindus killed each other, India, the Armenians that died- (inaudible) do you see differences between Jews (inaudible)...
- A: I think so.
- Q: What?
- A: Well I think that those were territorial disputes.
- Q: Moslems and Hindus were religious disputes.
- A: Those were religious-.
- Q: Cambodians were not disputing (inaudible) territory (inaudible).
- A: They were political disputes.
- Q: Right. And the Armenians-.

A: Well I think that that is sort of always compared to the Jews being exterminated...

Q: So you do see the difference or you don't?

A: I see a difference because first of all, it wasn't done on the same scale. And these, as I said, when it comes to the Hindus and the Moslems these religious wars are not uncommon. Religious intolerance has existed all the time, I think since modern history began, and even before modern history, so I don't view that as the same. And I think the other conflicts were political. Or economics.

Q: Do you think it's possible that the Holocaust might occur here?

A: I have not thought that it's totally- that it could be ruled out completely.

Q: It's unlikely, but not impossible.

A: Right.

Q: You don't think that there's a particular reason, (inaudible) you look back in terms of the most important reason for surviving?

A: For surviving? (inaudible) No.

Q: Given everything that you went through. And you went through a good deal, but you also had- you're happy you were born, right?

A: (inaudible) You see, I- I never, uhm,.

Q: You don't think that way?

A: I don't think that way. I mean, I never thought, 'Oh gee, I wish I wasn't born.'

Q: Did you ever think it would have been better if you had been born a Gentile?

A: I never thought of that either (inaudible).

Q: Remember, you said something, 'innate' before. What do you think- we Jews, we've been around a long time, right. Thousands of years. Syrians have died off, the Babylonians are gone, all of these people gone, and we, as opposed to the (inaudible) other nationalities, we survived without any land of our own. (inaudible)...what do you think accounts for that?

- A: Yes, I have thought about it. I have thought about it. And I haven't come up with an answer.
- Q: You're not the only one.
- A: I haven't come up with an answer, except that I think people, you know, people need some anchor, or some tradition, and uh-
- Q: We have it, and the others don't.
- A: ...right, right.
- Q: Why did we have it?...or what was our anchor?
- A: (laughs) Well, you know, I could say the Torah, but-
- Q: Well, until...200 years ago, there weren't any Reform Jews, Conservative Jews, assimilated Jews, so you could say 'The Torah'...you wouldn't be imitating a Rabbi when you say that. It's an answer.
- A: Well, but you see, I think that it's probably more than that. I think maybe because it was always ingrained in the Jewish people that they were- you know I remember from way back when I started learning about Judaism and so on- that the Jews were a Chosen People. Not chosen as a preferred people, but you know, chosen to carry the word of G-d.
- Q: So you think it's a form of specialness?
- A: Yeh.
- Q: (inaudible) enable us, that we believe that.
- A: Yes, I think that the Jews have always felt-been imbued with the sense of responsibility-
- Q: Well, in a sense, surviving Holocaust is like surviving the greatest catastrophe (inaudible)...did the fact that you went through the Holocaust help you in any way? Did you see any shred of (inaudible).
- A: No. I didn't see anything positive coming out of it. At ALL!
- Q: (inaudible)...what do survivors think can be done, if anything, to prevent future Holocaust from occurring?

A: Great vigilance.

Q: Do you think that the Holocaust in any way, changed the course of history?

A: I'm sure it did. I'm sure it did, but I- well, as I say, one of the things that came as a result of it is Eretz Yisrael. I'm convinced that, you know world felt very guilty and-.

Q: Wouldn't have had it at all.

A: Well, I don't know if we wouldn't have had it. But,-

Q: It helped.

A: I think it did, probably, yes. It accelerated.

Q: When you think about why you survived, what was it?

A: I think it was just a set of circumstances that were in my favor.

Q: Would you call it luck?

A: Well for want of a better word, yes, I think luck plays a role in our lives.

Q: Do you think your kids would have a chance of surviving, a good chance of surviving if there was a Holocaust again?

A: (sigh and pause). First of all, I fervently hope that, you know, nothing like that will ever befall them or any of my (inaudible) but I can't speculate on something on something like that. It's really too horrible.- But you see, the way I think about it is this way: I thought about it. I feel that hopefully they would be smart enough to go to Israel. Because you see, we couldn't.

Q: In time.

A: In time, right. I mean, we-there was no Israel. And that's why I feel so strongly that there has to be an Israel. But-.

Q: In this visit really.(inaudible).

A: Oh, yes, it gave me a very good sense (laughs) of safety (laughs).

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Q: (inaudible)...do you know of any survivors...have you ever met any survivors in the United States who were passing as Gentiles or who at least refused to admit that they were Jewish?

A: ...I haven't met anybody whose refusing to be Jewish, you know, who...I mean, I have met through Ralph's family and so on, I've met people who were as far removed-.

End of Tape #3, Side B  
Conclusion of Interview