

I'll just ask you again a spare question, and you answer it. What's the date today?

September the 4th, 1984.

OK.

I don't understand what you're asking.

You lived on Norman Avenue for eight years?

Yes, right.

And then where did you move?

To [? Mayfield ?] Road.

Tell me your full name, please.

Carmen May Appel.

And where were you born?

I was born in Worms on the Rhine River in Germany.

And did you grow up there?

No. After I was two years old, my parents moved to Frankfurt am Main.

And so you don't have any memories of Worms?

No.

Did you ever visit there later?

Yes, I did.

Can you tell me a little bit about it?

Well, I know-- even when I was there I know very little about it because it was a short time that I visited. And the reason that I even went there was because close by is a little village where my father grew up. And you had actually to go to Worms by train in order to catch another way of transportation to this little town.

What's the name of the little town?

[PLACE NAME] And--

Was your father's family there for generations then?

Yes, many generations they lived there.

Where was your mother from?

My mother was born in Frankfurt am Main.

And had her family been there for a long time?

Yes, they have. After they got married, they moved to Frankfurt. They also came from different areas in Germany.

Did you have any brothers and sisters?

No, I'm an only child. Never had any.

What sort of professions did your grandfathers have?

So my grandfather on my mother's side had a butcher shop. He owned a butcher shop. I never knew him, by the way. He passed away before I was born.

And my grandmother, his wife, grew up in the vineyard region near the Rhine River. She did not work outside the house. At that time, it wasn't as common as it is now.

And my father's father was-- they lived always in the small town of [PLACE NAME] and did some farming. Here again, my grandmother never worked outside the house.

Mm-hmm. What sort of education did your parents have?

Well, of course they graduated from high school. And my mother had a few more years of education. I cannot recall the school she went to, because she was born in Frankfurt, and Frankfurt was a better opportunity to further your education than in a smaller village, of course.

Mm-hmm. What sort of religious education did they have?

Well, they attended synagogue services. For my father, that meant he always talked about it, two hours hiking to Worms, where, by the way, was the oldest synagogue in Europe.

Mm-hmm.

And for my mother, that was no problem. In the city of Frankfurt, there were several synagogues. Other than that, there was no religious instruction as it is now.

They grew up. They were taught by their parents, and they knew how to observe certain holidays, and so on.

Were they Orthodox?

I would say conservative. Yeah.

So they were a little more liberal.

Yes, not strictly Orthodox, but I would say conservative.

Were they fairly assimilated, would you say?

Oh, absolutely, yes.

They had a lot of Gentile friends?

Some very close friends. Yes, in Frankfurt. I recall when I grew up, a couple who had a child my age, we were often together, non-Jewish people. But we associated also a lot with relatives. There were several relatives living in Frankfurt

with whom we met and got together.

What kind of religious training did you have? Did you go to synagogue regularly?

I attended a day school. And of course I learned Hebrew, writing and speaking, and forgot unfortunately a lot of it. But my father and I, we walked every Friday evening to the synagogue, and attended of course together with my mother the holiday services.

Did you have any relatives living in your home with you?

My grandmother. I shared a room with my grandmother on my mother's side, because she was a widow. As I said, I never knew my grandfather. Yeah, I grew up with her.

When you move for Worms, where did you go?

To Frankfurt am Main. That's where we lived.

Do you remember why your family moved?

Yes, it had to do with business establishment. And then my father's brother moved to Switzerland with his family, and he urged him to move because he saw great possibilities there. And so we moved to Zurich, Switzerland, where I attended school.

How old were you then?

Approximately six years.

Now, during the years you lived in Frankfurt, your grandmother moved with you and stayed with you there?

Yes, she did.

And what kind of home did you have? Was it an apartment or a house?

So we lived in an apartment at that time, very lovely large apartment. Yes, that I remember. When we moved back to Frankfurt, we lived in a house with a beautiful garden. And we did a lot of gardening.

Now, did you go to school at all in Frankfurt the first time you lived there?

I went to a Catholic kindergarten because there was no other available. Yes.

Do you remember if you were the only Jew in your class or were there others?

I think I was probably the only Jewish girl there, which didn't, at that time, make any difference.

You felt perfectly accepted?

Oh, yes. Yes.

Let's see. Then you moved to Zurich. And did you-- what kind of home did you have there?

Again, a very beautiful apartment with a balcony. I have even pictures from that. And I recall, we had a-- what would you call that? That time you called it a salon, a room with white furniture. And I remember the black piano in it. It impressed me quite a bit.

That sounds beautiful.

Yeah. And the school was quite different. Boys and girls went to school together. And in winter time, the teacher asked us to bring the sleds to school, and we went sleigh-riding. And then Santa Claus came, and each child had to recite something. And we got some goodies, apples and nuts or something like that.

Was this a public school?

Yes, that was a public school.

And again, how many other Jewish children were there?

I don't think any, as I remember it.

You also there felt perfectly accepted?

Yes, very much so.

You had some Christmas experiences then. What did you think of all that?

It didn't bother me in the least. I mean, maybe at that time I was already-- I was very broad minded, and my parents never objected to it that I should participate. I mean, I wasn't in any plays or any such thing, but when it came to gift-giving, I was all for it.

[LAUGHS] Yeah.

And accepting, not only giving. Yeah.

Did your family celebrate Hanukkah?

Oh, yes. We did. We had the lighting the candles and gave a little gift on the first night. Later on, and here in this country, I learned that it is customary to give a little gift every night, which we didn't at that time.

Let's see. When you moved back to Frankfurt, was that again for business reasons?

[SIGHS] Probably. My father was-- had done service in the army-- excuse me-- As a very young man. And he was called to the army. And he followed the call.

Oh, I see. So he was drafted?

Yes.

Oh.

He could have stayed in-- would have been in transient in Switzerland, but he felt it was his duty, so we moved to Frankfurt. And he was in World War I. Yeah, World War I.

So you and your mother and grandmother lived alone during that time?

Yes.

How long was he gone?

Oh, four years, I think. He was in Belgium. He was attached to the anti-aircraft division, they call it.

Mm-hmm. So what did your mother do during that time? Did she have any trouble with money at all?

Well, these details I do not recall. I-- maybe we were not so much aware of it as a child. We don't question where does the money come from or-- I know she did not work outside the house. She spent a lot of time with me.

And there was probably some money coming in from the army, I would assume. The soldiers, I think, had a small pay. I don't know.

So you went back to school again in Frankfurt?

Yes.

And was this still public school?

No, then I went to day school, Jewish day school. Yeah, and this is actually the school of preparation to attend college later on.

And what did you learn there?

Every subject. And most of the teachers were professors, by the way. So we learned a great deal.

Did you learn-- did you have religious classes as well as academics?

Yes, we did. Yes.

What languages were spoken at these schools you went to? Was there ever a time when you were in a school where a language was spoken that you didn't know?

Well, it wasn't actually spoken. It was taught. Is that what do you mean? Yeah, we learned French first for a few years, and then English. And we were well prepared to learn English because French is a more difficult language.

And some Latin slipped in here and there in the science courses that we took.

Your first language was German, right?

Yes.

Was German also spoken in Zurich?

Yes, this is the German-speaking part, Zurich. Switzerland has different parts where they speak different languages. Close to the Italian border, they speak Italian. And near the French border, they speak French.

And then they have a language all of their own, SchwyzerdÃ¼tsch, which I as a child learned very quickly. My mother didn't understand me at all when I-- so and English is a language that almost everybody speaks as a second language.

So did you live in Frankfurt until you left Germany then?

Yes.

And after you completed your education, what did you do?

I worked in a company, one of the largest in Europe, iron and metal company, what my husband is doing now. And they had a tremendous organization. And after I had to go through a test, I was hired.

And it's customary-- or was customary there that someone had to first work for three years as an apprentice and then go up the steps. It's not that you immediately are on the highest rung of the ladder.

So I worked in an office that was dealing with freights, because they shipped an enormous amount of materials all over the world. And so we handled the correspondence for the end insurance. And that's quite involved.

So you-- it was sort of secretarial work in a way?

Yes. Right, yes.

Did you belong to any organizations, or did your parents belong to any organizations like-- I don't know-- professional associations or social clubs?

My parents belonged to some kind of music loving group. I can't recall the name anymore. Because my father was very musical and played several instruments by ear. I had piano lessons for several years at the conservatory in Frankfurt. And my mother, previous years, had taken lessons.

So we often played as a duet, and my father accompanied us with the violin.

Oh.

We loved music in the house. Yeah.

What other cultural kinds of things did you enjoy?

Well, we had tickets to the opera house and to the dramatic presentations. And there was another little theater that presented operas, operettas, and also plays. We took every opportunity to attend those.

Were your parents politically active at all?

No. No. I would say I, in a little way, belonged to a group where we wore buttons that said pax, P-A-X, freedom. That's the only way I participated.

What organization was that?

I do not recall the name.

Mm-hmm.

We were, as young people are, very much for peace.

Did your parents vote for--

My parents-- let's see. If there was any voting going on--

Probably. I'm trying to think when-- Rathenau was chancellor. And I don't recall if they went to vote. I really don't know. This I can't recall.

How did you feel about Zionism? Was there any contact in your life with Zionist groups or?

Well, very little.

Did you have any feeling at all of Palestine as a kind of homeland or?

We personally, that I know, my parents were never talking about going to Palestine. My father, who had a lot of foresight, he realized what was going on. And he was the one who made the first steps to come to the United States when things got so bad in Germany that we had to fear for our lives day by day. And I cannot describe the fear we went through. It's impossible. It went-- got worse.

And my father contacted some cousins in New York that he had never seen, but he knew their address and so on. And he wrote to them that he felt not only was necessary to leave Germany but to leave Europe. And so they apparently heard about it or had read about it in the newspapers, and agreed with him, and wrote to him they felt was the best to start, and sent him the affidavit without asking him if he had-- if he was married or if he had family.

So it was for him alone. And when he received this, he was almost heartbroken. He didn't want to leave without his family. So we of course encouraged him. We said as soon as you are there, you can make the necessary arrangements for us to come follow you.

My mother accompanied him to Hamburg, to the boat where he left. And then from there on I wrote letters every day, telling him that things are getting worse, and we had to get out.

Did you experience anti-Semitism during your childhood at all?

Not until later. I went to a Jewish day school there. Of course, there was no reason to have anti-Semitism. And a very close friend of mine who was not Jewish, her family accepted me like practically their own. So no, I didn't have any experiences like that until Hitler started.

So a lot of people have said that it seemed up until the moment Hitler came to power, there was no anti-Semitism, and then it was like someone flipped a switch.

Yes.

Did you experience that, too?

Yes. Well, he aroused the anger by pointing out things to the masses.

[SNAPS FINGERS]

Was like hypnotism. That he convinced them they need more what he called Lebensraum, more space. For Germany is a small country, you know and this is all the Jews' fault. And whatever bad things happened, he blamed it all on the Jewish people. And there are enough people who believed that.

So I kind of wonder, though, that such a violent feeling could arise out of nowhere. There must have been some basis, some mistrust of Jews, at least, or something to build it on.

Well, I think from what I observed here, and you probably have heard these cases, too, when people are dissatisfied, anything you promised to them, which sounds better, they go for. Even if they hurt their next neighbor who they were very good friends with the person, they feel this is now a way I can live much better. And that's what he promised them. And of course, young people, you know how easily they are influenced.

How would you describe your childhood overall?

Well, I grew up like any other child. My parents did everything possible for me. My father worshipped the ground I walked on, I guess. The only child, you know. And he took me along when he sold interiors for beauty shops.

That's what he did later on. He was an architect, and then went into this line of business. He designed the interior. And I admired his salesmanship. I learned a great deal from him.

Did you have a lot of friends?

Well, a lot of friends? No, I don't think anyone has a lot of friends. [LAUGHS] Well, if you have one or two good friends, you're lucky.

I remember Jackie Gleason saying this once on the radio years ago. Someone asked him if he had a lot of friends, and he said a lot of people are interested to use him. They wanted to have his influence. And he said, if I have one friend, I consider myself lucky.

Yeah.

I think that's the way for everybody.

Yeah, I think that's true. Are there any special events from your childhood that you recall?

Well, nothing out of the ordinary. I mean, from the early childhood, you know, I remember we always had a nice dinner on holidays. And on Jewish New Year's, we were taught in the day school, of course, to write a beautiful letter to our parents, promise them from now on we do everything, and obey, and so on.

And that letter was put under the plate before dinnertime. And then the mother was very surprised to see this letter, and yeah, we were very proud of it.

Yeah. So you remember holidays particularly?

Yes, I do remember those, and birthdays. We were always celebrating birthdays together with other family members. My mother is also an only child, and she was close to her cousins, who were about the same age. And they got together for holidays.

Did you travel much and go on vacations?

I usually went to visit relatives in small towns. That was delightful, because for me it was a new way of life in the farm country, or some of our relatives owned vineyards. And I went out to the vineyard and sometimes helped to pick the grapes and associated with the children in that little town.

Oh, I saw the first time the milking of the cows and things like that, that we don't see in the city. I liked that.

Did you live with your parents until you got married?

Yes, it wasn't customary to move out at that time. Yes, I did.

Now, you worked for a while before you met your husband?

Yes.

So did you-- you didn't really feel a sense of independence, though? I mean, that you had your own income and--

No. In fact, I always felt an obligation to my parents. I gave them a certain amount, most of it, in fact, the largest amount I earned. And they kept it for me, yes.

How did you meet your husband?

Through his sister. She met me one afternoon. And in the evening, she and they-- no, she and her brother and I and a date, we had planned to go to the same dance. And this is where I met him.

During the evening, we exchanged partners.

Oh, I see. How did you meet her?

With some other girlfriends. Saturday afternoon, we went to what is called a cafe. Nothing to do with alcohol, by the way. So there was a band playing outside, a lovely garden. And we either had ice cream or a piece of cake and sat there and talked. That's where I met her the first time.

Oh, interesting.

But we every day appreciate to be here and have met wonderful people. That's just natural. Building with a ballroom. And I had a date to go there also. Her name at the time was [? Johanna ?] Appel.

So we met that evening. She came with her brother. She came with her brother. I came with a date. During the evening, we changed partners. This is how I met my husband then. Later, he told me that his sister came home-- they lived in a suburb of Frankfurt-- and said she had met a girl, and she would like for him to meet her. And this is how it started.

So she knew right away you were the right one. [LAUGHS]

I encountered some other-- a firm opposition on the part of the parents and sister because it was a tradition that the oldest son should wait till the daughter is married. And they stuck to this for five years.

We were going together, what they call here going steady, always thought of as an ideal couple. And my father at the time said, now, you either make up your mind to get married, or you break up. It's now long enough. This is when we decided to get married in 1933.

And I cannot pinpoint the date, but shortly after that, my husband was forced to sell. First of all, he lost his job in the company, was also iron and metal. That was coincidental.

And then he opened his own company.

What year was that?

I think '34, maybe. And he was very successful with one of his former co-workers. They opened this company. And dealing with the industry buying merchandise and selling it then to mills, I guess that's what they were doing, or to wholesalers.

But anyway, as things got worse, he sold the company to a non-Jewish man who knew the line of business but didn't know anything about bookkeeping. So he came to our house and said, if I would do the bookkeeping for him, if he brings the papers in the evening, and I said I, as a Jewish person, am not supposed to. But he said nobody will see me.

And so he came in the evening, and I did this for him. At the same time, approximately the same time, a young man that we only knew actually by name came. He was about 20, 21 years old. He lost his job being employed in a confectionery.

And also because they were Jewish owners, they were closed up. And he said he lives with his widow mother in a small apartment, and he needs to have some income what he could do. I said to him, do you have the recipes for this confectionery? Yes, he has.

So I said, come back in two days and I'll see what I can do. When he came back--

What year did all this happen?

I think that must have been '35.

'35. So he came back.

Came back, and I told him I lined up five bank clerks that would like to learn this, because we were always told that we should know some other way of earning money than being a white collar worker. In fact, when my father was already in this country here, he wrote to us, learn something different, watchmaking or whatever.

So he was delighted. He said of course I can teach these people. But where would I do it? I said, you can use my kitchen. He said, but I couldn't pay you much. He asked me what he could charge. And I gave him an amount which I cannot remember anymore. And he said, your husband can be one of the students, and I will not charge him. This was the deal.

He could use my kitchen, and my husband was learning this, making the most fantastic candies. Now, the problem was to get the ingredients, because it all was rationed. Eggs were rationed, butter, and all these items.

So we had some connection with the country, and someone got us butter, eggs, or whatever they needed. At that time, it must have been already later, because-- maybe '37. Because my father was here and had advised us to learn something else.

And also we had applied for a visa to leave the country. And that meant you would have to be prepared any day that some of these Nazis would come and search the apartment. So when we heard the doorbell, they immediately threw their aprons, which I had made for them, and the recipes in the kitchen cabinet. And they were sitting around the dining room table with English books in front of them, pretending they learned English.

Mm-hmm.

Fortunately, never anyone came. When someone rang the bell, it was just someone else, not the one we expected or were afraid of. And they made a beautiful assortment of candies. And this man who bought my husband's business came in the evening, and we showed him, and he was the best customer we got.

So my story is not as dramatic in most instances than maybe some others. But it shows you what went on. So when we came to New York, my husband was full of ideas. He was making candy.

I want to back up before we get to you coming to this country.

Yeah.

Where were your parents and your in-laws during the time that you were-- after your father had left? Where was your mother and your grandmother?

My mother lived with my grandmother in an apartment. And we had our own apartment, of course. My in-laws also left-- lived in a different apartment not too far.

And we were very eager to leave the country. And of course, my mother could have come here so easily as the wife of a person who already was a resident. But she wanted to wait for us.

Now, since we had applied for the visa, we were asked to make a list of every valuable item we want to take with us. I don't know if you have heard this story before from others. I had to go through the apartment for weeks to write down, picture depicting a scene with an old frame, every item. And of course it takes a long time.

And this had to be approved by some of these Nazi officers, let's call them. Also we had to make a list of the items we would take along on the trip. Now, my mother and I both owned a muskrat coat.

Some people have dared to sew money into the lining, which we never did. Because we heard then what happened to these poor people. So when I came to the office where I presented this list of the items we wanted to take, this man said to me, you have-- it was November, November 30.

You have here three cotton dresses. What do you want with cotton dresses in winter? I said, well, I figured these are house dresses. I have to launder them, you know. Our FÃ¼hrer would say a toothbrush is enough. I said, if that's what you feel, all right. We take a toothbrush. We had to be very careful with what you were saying, how your reaction was and so on. And they let it go through.

But we were searched on the train. You know, these items and they looked in the lining and so on. A person risked their life if they wanted to get money out this way. They put-- they sewed money into stuffed animals that the children carried. People got the strangest ideas.

We were allowed \$4 per person to take with us. And we went with-- we were actually fleeing from our apartment, because that was about the last day we could get out, the night of November in '38. Our boat wasn't supposed to leave, I think, until the 20th of November or so from Hamburg.

We never made it to Hamburg, by the way. We took the train in Frankfurt. When they came to the train station, the Nazis were lined up there, and they said don't hurry. Your last train has left. We didn't listen and went to the platform and we got the train.

And in the compartment, one man next to my husband started a conversation. When we came to a stretch between Germany and Holland, it's called no man's land. When we were there, he said, well, aren't you glad to get out of this mess? And my husband said, I don't want to discuss it. We had the feeling this was someone who would probably have reported us at the next stage. And so you couldn't even talk to anyone. We were very much afraid.

We arrived in Amsterdam and went to the house of some friends that my husband had known. He grew up with them. They had settled in Holland. And they were very Orthodox. It was on a Friday night when we arrived. They woke up their maid and had some lunch prepared for us.

And that was the first time we saw eggs again because we were allowed one egg a week, I think, because we had a small child. And nobody ate it. We were going to keep it. And usually by the time we wanted to eat it, it was spoiled. But that was the situation. But--

So when you left, it was you, your husband, and then--

- My mother.

Your mother.

And our daughter. She was born in Frankfurt.

And your grandmother you leave behind.

My grandmother we had to leave behind.

She didn't have a visa?

No.

Why? Why didn't she get one?

Because the American government made it very difficult for us to come here. I don't know if anyone else told you this, but the requirements-- it wasn't like it is nowadays. They let the Cubans in. They let all kinds of people in-- not that

time.

You had to have someone who vouched for you, what was called an affidavit. One was-- we were at, I think, at least four times in Stuttgart, which was the seat of the American consul for the city of Frankfurt. In Frankfurt, there wasn't any.

And we were rejected four times because they said, that's not enough for a family. Of course, things were not so rosy here at that time. In 1938 was the Depression. And also on the other side, as much as they wanted to eliminate the Jews, they wouldn't let anyone out of the country who had any criminal record.

So this worked both ways. They didn't want us to leave. Here they didn't want us to come. And we needed-- in addition to the person who gave us the affidavit, I think it was the first affidavit was from a relative of my father's. That was rejected, and then another brother of this cousin or somebody also filled out an affidavit.

And through someone I had helped in Germany, who had a very rich cousin in New York, this person made-- at that time had an income of \$1,000. He gave us an affidavit, someone we had not known, had not seen, or anything like that.

So finally after all these papers were approved, and we had to go every time to Stuttgart, one time, I think the last time we were there, there was also a physical examination going on there. And besides, we were asked what are you going to do there? We don't know yet. We were warned not to say we have a job. We didn't have one, but everybody was told, because they don't have jobs enough for their own people here in this country.

And we left, as I said, in November. My grandmother didn't have the papers. We had promised her we would send them for her, the same for my husband's parents. Unfortunately, they didn't make it. They perished. They were taken to concentration camps.

You left, then-- it seems to me that Kristallnacht was at the end of November in '38. So you left right before.

I think that night was when they rounded up the Jewish men, and we just made it out of the way. In fact, when we came to Holland, the word spread there's a family with a child arrived, a Jewish family. People came and bought gifts for my daughter.

We had never seen or heard from them, because they were so surprised. And from there we went across the channel-- we were terribly seasick. It was a very stormy night-- to England, to London, to wait there for the departure of the boat from Southampton. And we stayed there with relatives in London who were also very Orthodox.

And how were you related to these people?

My father-- my husband's first cousin. They lived in a very lovely house in a suburb of London. And the heating was a big problem at that time in England. They had fireplaces in every room. Then we sat in front of a fireplace. It was warm. In the other corner, it was very cold.

But we were very happy to be there. And we heard through-- I cannot tell you through what sources that my husband's brother was taken to the concentration camp.

So that soon after you left?

Yes, I think the next night or whatever.

Do you know which one?

Buchenwald. Also my father's sister's husband, my uncle, was taken to concentration camp. We were worried, of course, for both of them very much. And my husband, I think through a former business friend who was living in London, he got in--

[INAUDIBLE]

[INAUDIBLE]

Oh, I think it's fine. You're having trouble with your memory.

Yeah.

So for the cousin you put money in?

For my husband's brother.

Brother.

This man was willing to do this. I went to a shop on Regent Street in London. I can't remember. A very famous business street, to a tobacco store. There's this little cigarette holder in my hand. And I asked them if they knew who would manufacture these.

They directed me to a place in Hammersmith, a factory. And I should ask for Mr. Simon, who was the owner. So I went there by bus, I think, to this factory, asked for Mr. Simon, and was led to his office, and stood there in front of a man I'd never seen.

I had to convince him that this was very urgent. I showed him this little cigarette holder-- it was the only connection I had-- and told him that we have to rely on the kindness of some strangers to get this man out, my uncle who was arrested in a concentration camp, because he was Jewish, for no other reason.

And he listened to me for a while, and he said yes. So he got the necessary papers ready, and my uncle and aunt finally we came to London. But we had already left when they came.

I wasn't aware of a couple of things. First, I'm not sure when the concentration camps actually started, when the Germans started doing them.

Probably in 1933.

And so I wasn't aware also that you could get people out.

At that time. Later, not anymore.

And they had to put up money and?

Yeah. Not anymore later. No. I translated some of these documents, which are exhibited in Jewish Center's building. I don't know if you have seen them. Have you?

I believe I have, but I never-- I don't understand them, so--

- Well, they are in English. That's what I did. I translated them into English. And--

I must be thinking of something else, then.

In glass cases. And there was black and white, what their plans were, to eliminate everyone in houses and how they went about it. But I accomplished at least to get my uncle out, and my husband got his brother out

And then we went from Southampton on the boat to New York. Then my father picked us up at the pier.

What had your father been doing during all this time?

He had this great talent of being able to draw and paint. So someone he met in New York, he was advised to go to a store, 6th Avenue or wherever. And they gave him postcards and asked him to paint on it whatever he wanted to and bring them back, which he did for several weeks.

He wrote us at the time that he did 100 postcards, which sounds too many people impossible, but I was standing as a child next to my father, I knew it's very fast work.

So he did this for a while. And one day he came to this place. It was closed, and he asked neighbors, and they said they don't know. It disappeared. So he lost his last pay. Then through someone else, through an artist, he was able to be hired by a studio. They painted trays and silent butlers and hampers. And I can show you some beautiful work.

There he was [? 12 years. ?] And of course during the first year or so, we arrived. And he had rented a furnished apartment for us. In the taxi going to this place in Manhattan, he told us all that counts here is the mighty dollar. And how right he was.

So we were in this apartment. And the first Sunday, we went to this man who had actually helped us with the lodging, someone promising he would take care of us. He lived on 5th Avenue, and we saw the doorman opening the door and these things that were not familiar to us.

And his name is Rich, by the way. And he was rich. So my husband had prepared a beautiful assortment of candies in a lovely box. And he presented this to Mrs. Rich. And he said, that's what I want to do now is make candies himself.

She tried one, and she tried another one, and she said, how much would you charge? He said \$1.20 a pound. She discouraged him very much. She said, here you can buy the finest candy for \$0.60. And you have nothing with marshmallows. We knew from marshmallows like the man in the moon. We didn't know what it was.

And you don't have any with peppermint filling. To us at the time, chocolate and peppermint together was unheard of. So we had mostly used chocolate and almonds and other nuts. She was not very optimistic about it.

I told her, I would like to paint paper napkins, make initials on the paper napkins. She said, oh, this is nice. How much your price? I said 100 for \$1. So she said, oh, many of my friends would like that. So she gave me some addresses.

I did 100. I found some cord in the room and hung them up to dry, and did 100 by Saturday, delivered them, and got \$1 for them. This is what we did in the beginning.

Just little odd jobs.

Then my husband heard about Fuller brushes. And we sold Fuller brushes for a while. And he said we have been very, very good inside training in American business. We learned a great deal. So at the time from these meetings [INAUDIBLE].

I just realized that it really must be something.

[INAUDIBLE]

What was your first impression of New York? I've heard mixed impressions. Most of the people I talked to came through New York. And some have said because it was not as old as the city they came from, they were a little snobbish and weren't impressed. But--

Well, we were glad that our lives were saved. So anything that would have been offered to us was wonderful. My father's boss and his wife and her sister came to visit us in this apartment, which we had rented. Their question was, how

do you like New York? Wonderful, we said. How do you like America? Wonderful.

And then they told us always to say thank you, which we were not used to either. I have learned English in school and later on. But we learned a great deal. And I, after this experience with the paper napkin, I found all kinds of jobs. I'm someone handy with doing things with my hands.

What I had in mind, I thought I would make lampshades, which I had made for our own use in Germany. Or I would sew leather gloves by hand. None of these things I would do. I found-- what was the first thing I-- some metal discs with holes in them, where we had to sew beads on in a certain pattern, and they were used as ornaments to wear on the coats. The women wore these on the coats. They paid approximately \$0.35 for a dozen.

Did you do this at home?

Yes, that was home work. When I found another place where they had cut the horse shoes and riding boots, and they also were on a pin also as ornaments. Now, you had to stuff-- this was leather. You stuffed these horse shoes with cotton, and then the boots, and stitched them, and about \$0.35.

And so while you're talking to other women, you found different kinds of shops of that type. One time, when I went with a friend by subway. Our usual was downtown to a place where they showed us vests, knitted vests, cardigans.

They showed us, let's say, flowers embroidered in the front. We copied this without pattern on it. But looking at it, it gave us a dozen home, a dozen \$1.50 to embroider. Now, some of these women who came brought them back with only one side embroidered. That's how much they knew about this sort of thing. They just were glad to have something, but it was obvious that they didn't know much about embroidering.

When one day he said to me, here is another pattern. That was the whole scenery, a Dutch windmill, and a Dutch girl, and a Dutch boy, and tulips, and \$4.50 per dozen. So you can imagine, it was much more difficult. And he said, you're one of my best workers. Why don't you try this?

I tried this for \$4.50 a dozen. We took our leather hat boxes where we carried this stuff. Sometimes we went to a nearby park and sat there and stitched. That time, you could sit. There was no danger.

But it seems like a horrible amount of work for that little money. I have embroidered things before, and it's a lot of work.

Yeah, it is. Well, when I was sitting at home doing this, I had the radio on. I listened to the radio. A boy and a girl met, and they went to the park, and they were sitting on the bench and talking about their future. And Pillsbury is the best flour.

Now, this doesn't make sense to me at all. So I asked someone what in the world does that mean? Were commercials. I have never heard of this. Commercials, you come across something that, for you, is everyday very thing that happens and never give it a second thought. But I learned a lot of English from listening to this, English that you can use.

We went in the butcher shop. And I heard women say, give me a piece of meat, not fat. They didn't know the word lean. You don't use all these words daily when you learn English. This is a different story to come in the country and speak it.

So you learned a lot of slang and idiomatic phrases.

Yes, yes. And one day, this friend of mine who was a milliner in Germany said I have a wonderful address. Finally, I get into my field where I know something. And you have to come with me. You have to go in the evening.

Why in the evening? We didn't know. We were laughing about it. We said, we have a night job. After we went about 9:00 in Manhattan uptown to an apartment, and there were two sisters. They were very nice to us, and they showed us straw, gave us straw.

They said you start with 18 inches and make it 3 inches wide. I didn't know what they were talking about, and I think my friend didn't either. So I said, would you mind showing us at least the beginning, that we don't ruin your material? It turned out these were brims for hats.

I think it was \$1.50 a dozen. For the first few, I took more than three hours, I think, for one till you get the knack of it. I had never worked with straw before.

So when we went there with a lot of other women, by in the evening we still couldn't understand it. One day, he called the two workers, and he said, you are my best workers. Please come to my factory.

Then suddenly a light went on. The factory's on 39th Street, downtown. And don't go inside. Just bring your work to the cashier. Why not inside? Because of union jobs.

Oh, I see. He was avoiding the union.

Yes. Excuse me.

This is the second interview with Carmen Appel. This is Julie Orenstein. It is August 3, 1984.

And when we talked last time, you were telling me about making brims for straw hats, and how you had discovered it was a unionized job. But I wanted to go back a little bit and ask you about this couple, the Riches, who you first went to them to find this type of work. How did you hear about them?

We had in Frankfurt, Germany, a business similar to what we have here, iron and metal, which we bought from factories and sold to mills. And when Hitler decreed that the Jewish families should not have any non-Jewish employees, domestic help anymore, we hired a young man as a butler.

And it was his brother that we gave a job to in the business. And he was very anxious, of course, to leave like everybody else who was Jewish. And I was helpful in getting him the papers. I went with him to different agencies and places where he could get the necessary papers he needed.

He had one cousin in New York that gave him the necessary affidavit and this same cousin after this young man came to the States, he said he would do what he can to help us to get out. This was Mr. Rich who gave us additional affidavits.

And would help you to find little odd jobs later.

No, he was not the one. No. And besides, this was not the only affidavit. I think I made it clear that the American consulate refused us several times. And the reason was that they said it is not enough to back a family of four-- my husband, my daughter, and my mother who had waited for us to, go with us across the ocean.

And so the American consulate considered the circumstances. Here was a depression at that time. That's why they were anxious to have people with a large income to vouch for us that we wouldn't be welfare cases. And then that was the reason we needed more than just one person's affidavit.

We had my father's cousin who gave the affidavit, who was the one who had brought him over. And several people was-- one was not enough. As I said before, my mother could have come here earlier as a wife of someone who was already here, but she decided to wait for us.

Could you tell me a little bit about the apartment that you lived in?

In New York?

Mm-hmm.

Well, again, I have to mention my father was the pioneer for our family. He had rented a furnished apartment in Manhattan. And that was the first time I was confronted with things that I had never seen before. Above the sink was a contraption that you had to pull, and it came down. And people hang their laundry on this.

And when the weather was not good. When the weather was good, you hanged your head outside the kitchen window with a pulley that was attached to the next house. And this is where you hung the laundry on in good days. And of course, since I hadn't seen this before, no one had told me how to work it. I sometimes-- the first few times I suppose-- I hung this laundry over the sink, and it was still dripping wet. And I was told this is not the way to do it.

So we also learned in the elevator that the men took their hats off when they were in the presence of a lady. This was also new to us. And of course, as I learned later, more people go up and down in New York than they walk on the even ground. They go on the elevators.

Then of course, the shopping. When we discovered Campbell's soups, [INAUDIBLE] soup, it was a big treat for us. So and things we just didn't know the word for we pointed.

And then the merchants on Broadway-- we lived close to Broadway-- they wanted to do us a favor and started to speak in broken German, which we certainly didn't want. I wanted to improve my English. So we struggled along.

Was it a good neighborhood or?

Middle class at that time. Now I understand I haven't been back to this neighborhood. It's probably mostly Puerto Ricans and people from other countries living there.

You mentioned friends several times. Most of the people you met, were they people that you worked with on these little jobs that you did?

Yeah, by the way, these jobs, the addresses that I got were from agencies, from Jewish agencies.

Oh, I see.

And they were mostly located around Times Square. Now, when I used the subway the first time, I came up the steps and looked around and saw all these beautiful lit-up commercials there. I try to remember one particularly that I would know next time, where to get off and how to go to this place.

So when I told someone I go by the red roses that are up on the building, they laughed. They said that's a whiskey, which of course, I didn't know.

So this is how I got the addresses. I went there like many other of these newcomers, were women. And then we were on our own. We went to the wholesalers and got the work.

When you were not working, did you have time for social life?

No, no social life and no cultural events. I mean, we could go to the museum, which was free, of course. And my father was already acquainted with these things. He took us to these places. And we took advantage of that, of course. Opera or concerts were out for us. We didn't have the money for it.

But parades we could see. And we were so busy worrying day by day about income that we just didn't have time for that. My daughter was small, and my mother took care of her when I went on these trips and picked up work and brought it back.

You were living with your parents?

No. No. My mother came and took care of the child.

So you and your husband were both working. She was selling Fuller brushes?

Fuller brushes, yes. Yes, that was our aim, to get work and get some income, even if it was not much. But we wanted not to be a dependent.

You were telling me when the phone rang when we stopped last time about your first discovering with this other friend of yours that you were in a unionized job but--

Yeah, right.

What happened then, when you got to the door? You had just gotten to the door. It was night time then.

Oh, I see these two young ladies that gave us the work. We had no idea why we had to come to their apartment. They gave us the braided straw and-- am I repeating myself now?

I think you had the man finally told you--

Yes, to come to his factory. I thought I had talked about it. And that was a unionized job-- company anyhow. That was the reason he didn't want us to go inside. We just were told to talk to the cashier only, which we did, of course.

But as I said, I learned a great deal there, until my husband found this position in Dayton and after four weeks called and said, we should get things ready and come.

So how long were you in New York?

All together, 18 months.

And how old was your daughter when you moved?

How old when we moved? When we moved to Dayton?

Mm-hmm.

She was about five years.

So she hadn't started school yet.

No.

So how did he discover the job in Dayton?

Through a relative of my father's. He was in a related line of business. And my husband had found a job also through someone he met or knew before-- I don't know anymore-- in Bergen, New Jersey. Which meant we had to get up at 5:00 in the morning. And he had to take the subway, the streetcar, the ferry, and other means of transportation to get to this place.

And there was, as he explained it to me, a large hall where they soldered metal. And in that same hall, they also melted metal. Now, he came home five times he was metal poisoned. And that was so bad that I said it cannot go on like this. You cannot continue on this job.

And when they raised the wages from maybe \$0.35 to \$0.45 an hour-- I cannot remember exactly-- then they shortened the hours, so that it didn't really mean much, the increase.

And he decided then he couldn't stay there, getting sick every time, and talked to my father and was introduced to some men who knew that Mr. Duberstein from Dayton, Ohio would come to the Waldorf-Astoria for a convention. And he was looking for a purchasing agent.

So my husband was introduced to him, and he hired him. And my husband said, would you-- is this a permanent job or what are the conditions? He immediately offered him, I think, \$45 a week and would pay for the transportation of our furniture. And the answer was that this man said if after three or four weeks you are not doing a satisfying job, then you're not worth more. Otherwise, you get an increase.

And it turned out to be the man kept his word.

Now, this was the same, working with metal?

This isn't-- was a metal-- iron, metal company who later folded up. My husband then went on [BACKGROUND NOISE] after being with that company approximately [? 25 ?] years.

So you were telling me last time, after we were done with the interview, that you arrived in Dayton, and that you had some difficulties when you first arrived.

Yeah.

Where was it you lived? What street?

My husband had a furnished room on Grand Avenue, and then I think I mentioned that I was called to the phone, and the moving people were on Norman Avenue. I don't know if I mentioned this or not.

That the moving people came in just one day?

Yes. And we lived on Norman Avenue. Then I asked my husband where is the grocery store? Where can I do my shopping? And he didn't know. He was not familiar with that neighborhood at all.

So I asked the neighbor, and I decided at that time that the people who would come after me, I would be there to help them find shopping places and whatever was necessary. And I made this known to the Jewish Community Council, which was at that time located on 4th and Main Street.

And whenever they got a telegram telling them a family is arriving tomorrow morning by train at 8:00 or whatever time, they asked me to come to the station and act as interpreter. And that's what I did. And about this experience alone I could write a book.

I'd like to hear a few of your favorites. I'm sure you've told me of a few.

I've met some interesting people. Most of them, by the way, were from Poland. And they were asked in New York-- they came through the agencies-- what is your skill, and can you work as a tailor? And most of them said yes, because they knew it wasn't a good place to stay, in New York. They wanted to get away from New York.

Some came, I don't think they ever had a needle in their hand, but they said they're a tailor. And they were employed by Metropolitan or stores or whatever. And I walked with them the streets, and we found employment.

And the agency sometimes sent me with them to buy clothing. Maybe they didn't have enough clothing with them. And I don't know if I told you this story about my daughter. This is an interesting story. That is something that doesn't happen to everybody.

There was a family by the name of Ackerman. He was a shoemaker, not a tailor. They lived on Main Avenue. And I

think I had some dealings with him also, but I can't remember what the reason was. And one day, Mrs. Ackerman called me, and she has also had a sister here that was also from Poland by the name of Liebeskind.

She said a third sister was sent from the agency from Europe to Florida. And on the boat she met a young man, and they fell in love and got engaged. They would like to get married in Dayton, Ohio, because the two sisters lived here.

She said, when my sister comes, she already told her on the phone she would like to be married in white. Could I get a wedding gown for her? I said, well, I will try. I called several people who all gave me a legitimate excuse. My gown is packed away. My gown, my daughter will have it, and similar things.

So I decided I better call a store. And I called the store on Ludlow Street, and talked to the owner, and told her the circumstances a little bit. I said this young lady, her greatest wish is to have her wedding gown. She said, bring her in.

So I called Mrs. Ackerman back. Can I meet your sister? She had arrived in the meantime in Dayton. So we met at 3rd and Main Street. I had never seen this woman before, so I figured just by seeing her, she's about size 12.

We went to the store on Ludlow Street. That doesn't exist anymore now. And I introduce her. I think the name was Mrs. Goldfleece was the owner, if I'm not mistaken. Anyhow, she said, all right. Let her pick out a wedding gown.

She picked out one. Then she said, do you have a coat, going away suit, a hat, a bag, gloves? To everything, she said no, she doesn't have it.

So she picked out different other items. Then I called Mrs. Goldfleece to the side, and I said, maybe you misunderstood me. This lady just arrived here. Her two sisters who live here, their income isn't so great. She cannot possibly pay for these things. Maybe we'd better tell her it's not possible.

She said, I tell my salesgirl to wrap it, and this is my present for her wedding.

Oh, that's sweet.

I was so touched. I thought that was just wonderful. Now comes the important part. When they got married, they asked me to be matron of honor, which I had never done. It was at Beth Jacob Synagogue on Kumler Avenue.

I said, can I bring my husband and my daughter? Oh, yes, certainly. We will be glad to have a few people. They didn't know many. They had met some Polish people, but not many.

So I did my job as matron of honor. And then downstairs in the social hall, they had some meal prepared and a gathering. And this is the day when my daughter met her future husband.

He came with another Polish family who had brought him over to Dayton. And there she met Charles Frydman. That led to their wedding.

Oh. That's interesting.

Yeah, I think so.

I think it's beautiful.

So in the meantime, the Ackermans moved away. The Liebeskinds moved away. This other couple who were married here moved to Florida, where they like it very much. And we are not in touch anymore. But this sticks out in my mind because my daughter met her husband there.

[INAUDIBLE]

Yeah.

I want to ask you, I guess, some questions about your impressions of Dayton when you first came.

I was in love with Dayton the day I arrived. As I said, my husband had a home on Grand Avenue, and my daughter and I, we went for a walk in this vicinity. And it was the beginning of May 1940. And we found violets blooming and other flowers. And we are great nature lovers, and I was so impressed. This was so different from New York.

So then we-- his boss-- one of his bosses had told him neighborhoods. In fact, he drove with him around Dayton and showed him where he could rent and where he would better not rent. And so this is how we found this apartment on Norman Avenue, where we lived for eight years, I think.

So that was where you lived when your daughter started school and--

Yes, she went to kindergarten in Fairview-- in Fairview Elementary School. And of course I registered her for first grade. Then one of the kind neighbors, not in the same building, a half a block away, heard about it and made it her business to tell the teacher or principal there that we lived on the other side of Rustic Road, which divides the school zone, that my daughter really belongs to Brown School.

So I was told my daughter has to go to Brown School. Later on, I found out who the person was, the busybody. But then she was a student at Brown School.

Was that easier for you or?

About the same. I mean, the distance was about the same. Didn't make much difference. I sold Avon products in the beginning. And at that time, it was still possible to go to people's houses. I had a certain area, of course, in the neighborhood where I lived.

And the women, the young girls who worked, they were the best customers. So I went to them in the evening, which also you couldn't do anymore nowadays. I met people. I enjoyed it. And it was profitable in the beginning.

And then you were also doing this volunteer work, helping others.

Well, then that's when I started picking people up at the trains. And then they called me for the most unusual thing. There's a stray dog in our yard. What should we do with it? What is the word for whipping cream? Whipping cream was rationed in Europe.

And so I told them but then one day a woman called me that I also had met at the station, that her husband would like a child, an additional child. They had two grown daughters. I should go with her to the gynecologist.

So I made an appointment, and this doctor was my own doctor, too, said you have to go with me to the examining room because she wouldn't understand me. I wouldn't understand her.

So I was present at the examination. I mean, I was in some circumstances that were really strange. With these people I had some interesting experiences.

I guess the word spreads. I don't know. One day I got a letter from a Mr. [PERSONAL NAME] He worked at the field, and he wrote to me that he, his wife, and son lived in a furnished apartment where they had to share the telephone in most undesirable circumstances, and he would love to move but he doesn't know how to go about it. And that time, it was very difficult to find apartment. Not like nowadays.

So I called him. He had given me a telephone number how to reach him. And I said, I'm willing to put an ad in the paper with my phone number. I realized at the field he couldn't accept phone calls. And oh, he didn't want to accept it. I said, all right, you pay me for the ad. You know, and that's about all.

So lo and behold, I got a call from someone who owned a house on Richard Street. That's on East End. And he wanted to keep one room for himself. And I said it's a wonderful family, a very nice, young boy. Never had seen him. But so he said, all right, let this man come next evening.

My husband went with him, and I had called him and told him bring some money for a deposit. So they moved to Richards. He rented the place on Richard Street. He calls his wife and two sons who lived in-- well, this I'm mixing something up here. It's the [? Luria ?] family. No, I secured some other place for them.

But this other family that my husband met, the man in one of the Shell stations, and the owner or the manager of the Shell station introduced him. This is Mr. Meyer from Germany. And my husband called me and said, I met this man is here only a short time. Can I bring him home for dinner? Yes.

So he was several times in our house for dinner. And then he said his wife and two boys are still in Massachusetts. And of course he would like for them to come to Dayton. And this is where I think I have this story with Richard Street house, that's what he rented.

He called his wife that he had now a place to live for them. And they were very excited. And they said, we're coming the next day by train. They arrived. And one evening, he came to our place and said they walked all day from one place to the other, from hotel to rooming houses. They couldn't find a place to stay till their furniture would arrive.

So I said, you can stay with us, this man, I said he should stay in his furnished room, and his wife and two boys, I said, we'll make some arrangements. So my daughter gave up her bedroom for the two boys. And the woman slept on the couch.

And well, when finally the damned furniture didn't arrive as fast as mine. When it arrived, I helped them getting a little settled. And I think that was the deal when I was pregnant and had to have an additional-- well, another cesarean and needed a blood transfusion, and this man gave blood. See how these things work out in life?

What goes around comes around, I guess is what they say.

Right, strange.

That's very interesting.

In the meantime, they moved to Columbus. My daughter even took the two young boys to school to ask permission. They were sitting in there I think a week. Took a week till their furniture came.

Gave them something to do then.

Yeah.

What year was your son born?

What year? 1949.

How old was your daughter?

At that time?

Mm-hmm.

She was close to 13.

So was she excited about him or?

I would say so. She was excited, yes. But I was told siblings have a rivalry, all this. And she being the older one and the only one for so many years, a little difficult adjustment, but it worked out.

At that age, it seems that especially girls enjoy babies.

Yes, I guess so.