

*Tape four, side one:*

And I had gone to live in Louisville, Kentucky, because my husband was stationed in Fort Knox, and I went to live with him, and many months later, I don't recall exactly when, my mother wrote me that a Red Cross nurse had come to visit her and had brought her a few small mementos—an old automatic pencil, and I remembered from my father that for me for many years had not had lead in it, and a very tiny little photograph, I believe, and a couple of other things, and told her that my father had been taken to Auschwitz and that he was among those who was chosen for immediate extermination because he was already 50 and in very bad shape because of his long imprisonment prior to that time. She herself, by the way, had been taken, she was a member of the French Red Cross and had been taken along, by mistake, and when the Germans realized their mistake, they immediately released her, wanted to release her, but she wanted to stay a while to help the other people and contact others and possibly get messages to their families, etc. In fact, I believe that she is the person who is mentioned by the Klarsfelds in their marvelous book, or listing that they have, marvelous in the sense of the enormous work it took of giving the names of all the Jews who were deported from France between '42 and '44. I don't remember the exact title of the book. I have it here but I don't recall now. And, in any case, they mentioned her. She was one of those who has helped them in their work because she was so involved. She became so emotionally caught up in that whole tragedy. I thought, at the time...we all did, that he had been taken in July of '42 or around that time and that was the time that he had been killed, and it was not, in fact, until April of this year, when I saw the list that the Klarsfelds had put out. I found that he had been among those who had been sent to a camp—I believe it is called Darcey [Drancy] or Dancy near Paris, and there was held until November of '42, and then he was sent, in November, in early November to Auschwitz and was then put to death. I believe that the date was November the 6th, 1942. I, unfortunately, had nothing left of him because one of his letters were burned in a fire, but sometime later, I found one of his letters to me, among my mother's effects after she had died. And it was...his memory is one which for me has always remained with me, and many of the interests I have had in my later years have really influenced the entire course of my life because, when in 1958, I decided to begin college studies—I had never had a chance to go to college—I decided to go into college studies to major in English and decided to go into teaching because I felt strongly that my father would have wanted me to do something useful with my talents, and I thought that that would be the best way in which I could be useful, which was to teach others and so I got my PhD in English, in great part because of my memory of his values and his emphasis on education and being useful to your society, etc. And in general...and, of course, the money that I got from Germany from restitution because of uncompleted education and also for the effects of his apartment and also because of loss of him as a provider, etc. all that money I used toward my education, undergraduate and graduate studies, so that I could never feel that I was using this money

for any selfish motives, but just to advance those things that I knew he would have applauded.

And there were a couple of things that I just wanted to emphasize in discussing this whole situation. As I look back, it seemed to me that those Jews in Germany who had a closer Jewish identity, as I said, like those that I met when I was in Silesia, in general, had a slightly better time of it, because they did have a sense of their identity and there was a certain feeling of mutual protectiveness, however ephemeral it might have been, which we just did not have. We felt, in a big city, we just felt that each of our units was totally isolated. We could not...we didn't dare to, as I said, I walked the streets but only in the day time and not that much, and we certainly could not be free at night. We were not free to talk on the phone. We really could not socialize freely, so we felt totally isolated. We felt that we were sort of immunized from each other, and the sense, as I said, of this Jewish identity might have been a better protection and psychologically, for me, it left a great...the entire period left many problems for me only because during those early years, as I said, I simply had nothing positive in a Jewish image to hold against the caricatures and the vilifications that I was hearing daily. My father had been a banker. The main attack of the Nazis was against Jewish bankers. My father liked the German girls, and he liked the girls who had round knees and who were a little plumpish and not terribly intellectual, and the usual caricatures were of Jewish men chasing their blonde secretaries around the desk and, of course, I knew that this was not rational, to connect this directly to my father and yet, unfortunately, there was somehow to my immature mind, there was enough in all this talk to make me feel that possibly there might be something in it, and, as I said, I had no one to talk to about it. I had no mature judgment to set against it, and I had nothing but, really, fear around me and I had nothing but a world of adults around me who really didn't want to discuss the entire situation. As in my mother's case, would discuss things only in the most cataclysmic ways. It was almost as if the last day of judgment had come and she...my mother tended to be a tremendous pessimist and always saw things in the worst possible light and put the worst possible interpretation on everything, and that didn't help matters either. She just did not put things into perspective. My father, on the other hand, lived in some ways in a world of fantasy and illusion and some sort of a delusionary optimism which was the opposite problem, and so, I had very few people that could really help me set these things straight.

I should add one more thing, by the way. The major, who had been my gymnastics teacher, and who had been so kind to me for many years, had at one point shortly after the Nazis came to power, had come up to me and said with tears in his eyes that I could no longer come back to his class. Of course, he was not allowed to have me in his class any more and I always felt that he was one of the very few people that I considered as a humane and decent, but, as I said, he was very much in the minority. I might add, by the way, that my sister who was 11 at the time when we left Berlin, sustained in many ways an almost worse trauma. I am not going to go into all her psychological details, but the fact is that some years back she had occasion to go to Russia because her husband was a correspondent

for the New York Times and they were living there for a number of years and she became...came down with an acute case of paranoia to the point where she had to leave the country and could never come back. One time some years later, when they tried to go back, she had a tremendous setback and they realized that there was just no way for her to ever live in Russia again. In earlier years, in Germany, at a time when she was too young for us to tell her what was going on, had left a tremendous mark because she felt that something terrible was happening and that people hated us and that we could not do this and we could not do that and that we had to talk in whispers, but she didn't really know what the problem was and we did not dare to tell her. She was quite a chatterbox and we were afraid, so, in any case, we had to be very careful with her and, of course, she somehow must have thought that this was directed against her, and this may well have been the initial situation that caused her paranoia to grow later on.

And, now, coming back to my own situation, as it developed from the outgrowth of all these, of this early background, I came to really dislike the whole business of the persecutions and the Jewish sadness and the misery and, as many young people I guess had that sense for survival and self-preservation, and for the first several years after, all I wanted to do was just forget about it all. For one thing, I refused to speak German, and my mother practically had to force me to talk German to her in New York and my husband and I—he was from Austria—but we agreed almost immediately that we would never speak German together. Moreover, he had converted already. That was another very crazy story that I cannot go into at this point, but the fact is that he had converted to Protestantism and that I, obviously for some reason, again, or possibly as a reaction to all these years of sadness and repression and misery, wanted to get away from it all and what I saw as into a world that was not neurotic and that was not repressed and not limited and not driven by fear, and I married him and thus began many years of, really, a very crazy-quilt situation that developed into a very unhappy marriage and into many other by-products that were not healthy, and that turned out to be very unhappy, and I realized that many years later that I had gone the wrong road and I could no longer live that life of what I considered really a denial of my Jewish identity. And, unfortunately, my husband had lied to me about his background and I didn't know this until much later, until it was too late and we had adopted two children, who were Christian and, after he became ill and then I divorced him and he died, and I never did find out why he had lied to me but, in any case, to make a long story short, I then, finally, after so many years went back and tried to recover my Jewish identity or, rather, build one which I really had never had, and I am still having a problem because, of course, there had been a background of a general humanistic background. There was a certain amount of political liberalism. There was a certain indifference to religious upbringing. I had never had one. Plus a growing feminist consciousness and I simply could not adjust myself.

I could never really quite fit in to the Jewish organizations in New York City, after I came back to live in New York, after my divorce, and I tried religious observance, even

a very limited one, and found it very difficult, and I tried to belong to Jewish organizations, but if they were much pro-Israel I would have a problem, and if they were very radical, then I had almost more of a problem, and it has been just an extremely difficult situation and, I guess, to American Jews this is not a problem because they having...not ever had this kind of battle to regain or to create an identity, they have not had to try to figure out how to form an identity. I had to try to create myself as a Jew in a sense at age 46, after all those years of tremendously difficult and different kinds of environment conditions, and I have come to some kind of a medium situation, I guess. I have always tended to be sort of moderate in many ways, and this was one of those situations and I have my little observances in moderation, and I am pro-Israel in moderation, and I am Jewish, consciously Jewish in moderation, again, and, I guess, trying to gain some kind of equilibrium. But it has never been an easy situation and some of the habits that I had developed in those early years, especially the two habits of becoming inconspicuous, making myself inconspicuous and not rocking the boat, and the second one of having a poker face and tightening up like a taut spring at a moment of crisis, those are two habits that it has taken me many years to overcome, and I still haven't quite done it. At least, I am now managing to be less inconspicuous, but that is still not that easy and it cost me a great deal in terms of career advancement, because I just never learned how to make enough of myself, because of those many years of early conditioning, and I hope in the next few years to continue what little I can do to maintain the memories and to be a witness to those events that I did witness. And I feel strongly that those of us who had some knowledge of what went on in those early years of the Nazi period, must retain consciousness of it and must speak out and, also, that we must be alert to the early warning signs of that kind of pervasive anti-Semitism that is so common and has always been so common in Europe and, unfortunately, in many communities in this country.

I do not believe that we would ever have that kind of situation in this country as happened in Germany but, unfortunately, there are, as the economic situation deteriorates—throughout history it has been shown that these are times of danger for Jews because presumably because of their specific relationship to financial institutions, so that whatever the economic situation might be, they will be the victims of attack of those who are criticizing the particular economic situation, and therefore I feel it is incumbent on Jews to be alert and also to refute slanders and attacks. I have for many years now been a compulsive “letter to the editor” writer and I have written to everybody in existence that could possibly have said anything to do with the Jews, with Israel, and not only those issues, many other issues, and I think that I almost [have a] compulsion for communication [which] goes back to those early years when there was so much I wanted to say and do that I could not say and do, and that I was prevented from doing, and that I could not communicate with the outside world, and I could not speak up and I was powerless to defend myself. And I think that I am afraid I am stuck with this kind of compulsive need to communicate with everybody from the President about the Vietnam War, civil rights, or

the current administration or the New York Times, or almost anybody that one could think of. And so that it seems to me that, in some ways, I think those of us who did not go through the actual experience of the Holocaust, in some ways—and this may sound ridiculous to those who did go through it—I think, in some ways, the psychological burdens are greater only because we have that pervasive feeling why were we spared, and, in spite of the fact that I know that I did everything that I possibly could to save my father, I will never lose the tremendous sense of guilt over what I have perceived to be an abandonment of him, almost as if he had been a helpless child and I was the parent who just did not take care of him and, of course, I realize that much of what happened was really his own doing, but still I feel that I should have done something, and I think that this sense of guilt is, of course, unfortunately, endemic to the Jewish people I guess partly instilled because of the sense that we were...had...by the earlier rabbinic authorities that we are being punished for our sins, and, also, I suppose, because when you have been a victim for so long, you come to the point where you think that there has to be a reason why you are being victimized constantly. The reason has to be something within you, but these are elements that I find pervasive, and I think those are the one thing I see very little of in the current generation and the next generation growing up in Israel, and I think that is one of the good things of several good things about Israel that perhaps these new generations will finally get rid of some of these tremendous burdens of guilt and self-blame and self-effacement and so forth. Whether that is going to be at the cost of many other fine qualities, I don't know. That is not for me to decide. But I think that, as I look at my own life, after these years, I know that the after-effects are long lasting. I recently, in fact, at the recent conference in Worcester met a woman who had been in several concentration camps and was a survivor and I was absolutely amazed at her resilience, at her good nature, at her positive outlook, at her lack of bitterness, and I think it was probably those qualities that enabled her to survive to begin with. I understand she was very young when she was arrested in Berlin and still quite young when she was released, but, still, when I compare myself to her, here I am, I'm afraid, hopelessly pretty neurotic and with all kinds of psychological burdens and not all of them due to the Nazi period, I suppose. But, in any case, I think that the Holocaust survivors...they faced a situation and they overcame it and in that alone there has to be some sense of...I don't know if I want to say pride, some sense of satisfaction, although I am sure that many of them have tremendous guilts, and I know of many who have afterwards suffered horrendous after-effects and lasting ones. All I am saying is that those who say—and I have had this said to me many times—“Why don't you forget about those years? Let's put it behind you. It's dead and it's gone and it's the past, and let's not go back into the past,” and so forth and so on—it enrages me, because people do not realize how important it is to keep these memories alive, because we must bear witness. It is as simple as that. The Jewish history has been one, really, of bearing witness to so many persecutions and tragedies and none, of course, numerically as great as the Holocaust, but, yet, it is part of our, unfortunately, part of our heritage and those who say that we must bury the past and

not look at it simply do not understand the overwhelming need that we have, those of us, or most of us, at least, who went through these periods, to remember these things and to, at least, put them into some form whether written or, as in this case, oral history and get it out of our heads into some form where it can be preserved. I think that that is a great service that your oral history is doing, because over the last few years I have had much psychological pressure inside me to get these things that I remember down on paper.

One additional fact is some explanations for why the Jews did not emigrate earlier. Why didn't they leave Germany earlier? Some of the reasons I have already discussed. Among them the fact that many of these people felt that if they were to go out into a world, an unknown world where they would have to start from scratch, where they would have to do manual labor that they were not physically or by training prepared for, that they would have no money, that they would have to be in a strange land and cut off from their former world—these were all real and frightening, but they were not all the explanation. There were additional factors, such as what [that] the German government and the Nazi government deliberately loosened the reins on occasion, as, for example, in, I believe, sometime in '34, then came the Nuremberg laws in '35 they tightened it again, and in '36 things loosened up again. And each time there was this loosening up experience, some Jews would say, "You see something is going on, things are getting a little bit better," and their will to deceive themselves that eventually things might, in fact, get better was so strong that it overcame their reservations about the reality of the situation. Plus there was, of course, as I said, the additional fact that we all know that many, many major countries were really closed to the Jews. England was by and large closed, and in order to emigrate to England, you had to have a job before you came there. This was almost impossible for many people because of problems with training and finding jobs and having the proper connections and so forth. In America, on the other hand, you could not come in if you had a job because of the idea was that you would then be taking a job away from an American. In England, they had consideration. On the other hand, was that they did not want you to be a public burden so that if you came to America, you had to protest and to be able to prove that you were not coming there to take a job. All of these were realities and limitations that made emigration ex...

*Tape four, side two:*

...Some South American countries: they were looking for people. Honduras, for example, they were looking for people who could do very simple manual labor and they were willing to close both eyes, as to whether the former professionals—doctors, lawyers, school teachers, etc.—were prepared to do this kind of work. There was the additional matter that many of the people who did want to emigrate were older people. They were middle-aged at most. Many of them had already gone through the First World War. They were not all that well. The young people, in some cases at least, were going to Palestine, or trying to go to Palestine. That was another difficulty, as we know. There were restrictions by the British and it was a dangerous thing to smuggle in these young Jewish Zionists. So, there were many, many aspects to this problem and I have, unhappily, found a great deal of total misconception and error and really willful distortion, almost willful distortion among the Jewish community in this country, and I am not even talking about non-Jews. I don't expect of them any sense of comradeship, or any sense of empathy for the plight of the German Jews, but I did find—I remember only just a year before I went on a weekend from the American Jewish Congress, and at the table were two women who were talking and talking and complaining about German Jews. One was saying, "I can't stand this. They are arrogant. They are snobbish and I don't want anything to do with them," and I turned to the woman and I said, "You know, I am a German Jew," and she said, "Well, of course, you are different," and I started laughing and I said, "You know that sounds very familiar to me." And at the same table was an elderly man who is a psychiatrist, a well-known psychiatrist, reads *The New Yorker* regularly and obviously not at all a stupid man, not at all an uninformed man, and he turned to me and he said, "Well, then maybe you can explain to me why the Jews were so passive during the Nazi years and why they allowed themselves to be treated that way," and he said something else which I now remember, which I no longer remember for the simple reason, I think, it was so offensive to me that I really blocked it out, and then I proceeded to give him a half-hour lecture as to what had really happened and he said, "Well, I didn't know any of this. Why don't you write about it?" And I said, "Well, why haven't you read about it all these years?" And to make it even worse, I had just now this Worcester conference in October, there was a man there who is from Austria and apparently a well-to-do Jew who is a great fan of Hannah Arendt. I suspect that he really is not that well-educated. He likes to put it on, and he and I got into a fight about some comments that she had made that I had found offensive and I, again, found this same kind of total lack of information, and I think that this was one of the [not clear] facts that impelled [compelled] me to want to write about my autobiography about those early years. I wanted to tell people a little bit about what made German Jews act as they did during those years. I also wanted to show the reality of what it was like to live under this kind of a dictatorship. It is very easy for Americans who don't understand what it is like to live in that kind of country to say they could have defended themselves, they

could have done this, they could have done that, not understanding one iota of what actually happened and I am...and I think that anyone who can, even in the slightest, contribute to clearing up some of these misunderstandings will add something to general sense of mutual understanding. I might add, finally, that I just now listened to a debate about nuclear freeze and arms in wake of the WABC movie, "The Day After," which had this enormous media hype, and during this discussion that followed, Elie Wiesel said, "We must remember the things that have happened because memory becomes our shield for the future." And I think that was a magnificent comment, and I will end with that, only to say I hope this has been interesting to you. If there is anything further that you want to know, please call on me and I...I cannot say that it was a pleasure, but it was an interesting experience and I say good night to you now. Shalom.