

*Tape three, side one:*

NP: ...Tarlow. This is tape number three, 11-19-93.

ET: Now where did I leave off?

NP: About the children.

ET: Oh, yes, yes.

NP: Your father's sharing with them.

ET: Yes. My father adored writing, reading, knowledge, and so he imparted a lot of that I think specifically to my son, who very much enjoyed history. And it is important that my children know this. It is utterly important that my grandchildren will know of this, when they are ready to hear this. I want them to know who they are. I want them to know how fortunate for me it is to have had them, to know that from that which I came, they also came. And I do see in all of them certain traits of my family and whether it's true or whether I want to read it into them, I don't know. In turn my daughter has named her eldest for my father, whose Hebrew name is Simchah.

NP: Oh.

ET: And that's a delight. And, my eldest grandchild Joshua was named for Joseph, who was my father's father, Joseph Meinberg. His little sister, Rayna Sophie, her middle name is Sophie for my grandmother, and I dearly love that. And my youngest granddaughter, Alexi Michelle, Michelle is for my father's father, who was Max, or Mordecai. So they all in turn are someone...who has been. And I'm very grateful for that.

NP: Your grandmother would have said you did well.

ET: Yes. I think I wanted to go on with that, and that's again stepping back a little bit. Since we arrived in September, it was three months before Pearl Harbor, in December of 1941, and there were only two communications from my grandmother, because everything stopped after that. And she wrote a letter in English at her age. And that was not her favorite language. She loved French more. And she wrote and she said, "I am writing to you in English because this is now the language you have to know and learn. And I want you to read English all the time. And I hope you're doing well in school, and I hope that you're getting A's." And if ever anybody whipped me into it she certainly did. And I did get A's. [chuckles] It was very important. And, I think she deeply touched me with that, when she said, "Do well." She knew she'd never, ever see me again and what must have gone through her mind to have let go of me. I was one of three grandchildren, but I was living in her home, and I was very special to her. So, yes, I...think that because of her I made a very strong effort to really do well. And I think I imparted that also into my children. I think they're very strong. And, I've talked with them and I know because of my background they have become strong individuals. Notwithstanding my husband, but the difficulties that I had encountered I think made them realize that whatever might or would have gone wrong in their lives couldn't measure up to what I had to battle. So I think it

gave them a lot of strength. And they're very productive people and they've married wonderful people in turn who complement them very well. And...

NP: You did do well.

ET: Yes, I did. I really did. And I think now, as I am getting older, much more about the past. And I read an article about that pertaining to people such as my background warrants. The reason we remember now, because the further we are away from it the closer we get to it. I think the spanning years mean nothing. I think the beginning and the latter, well, the beginning and what is ahead of us now is the important thing. And the focus is different now, that we realize that we lived in an incredibly intense part of history. It was so overwhelmingly awful, and we were caught up in it, and here we are. And no matter how little time passes or how much time passes, again and again and again, you will read about the Holocaust. You will read about Nazi Germany. You will feel it. You will look at it on television. It never goes away. And it's more intensified now than ever. It goes on and on and on. I personally have watched everything on television. I don't know whether I am trying to punish myself by doing that. But my mother could never watch one single thing. I can understand that. She was older. She didn't want to hear about it. She didn't want to read about it. She didn't want to know about it. My father read intensely. He followed everything. She wanted away from it all. It took too much out of her life. But I have watched all the horror and terror documentaries of the camps. And I feel compelled to watch it. And I see faces. I see children with whom I played who I know did not get out, the relatives I had known who I know died in it. But most of all I see myself and I have probably said this before. But I do see myself in a camp. And I marvel at the people who I've met who've come out of them. And I wonder how weak I would have been in one. I can't imagine myself even being that strong. And so I am compelled to look again and again and again at something which I was saved from by, I think a slot and a slit in time, a door through which I slipped. I slipped through that little crack of time which separates me from that fate. And I...cannot really not think about it, especially as we're talking now. And I want to know if other people feel that strongly too. Do they express it?

NP: Some cannot—some do. It's something that you, time helps them cope, and makes things not so raw.

ET: Hmm.

NP: This is not across the board. This is up to the individual, they never forget, time helps people to cope, with your testimony and other testimonies, history is really now just being written. There is an awareness now like never before, and it's very important to get these stories together.

ET: Well I have written a lot to my hometown. I've been in communication with them. This *Lyceum* which I attended had a 100th year anniversary, and they very gingerly approached me, would I write something about myself? Since the very first daughter of the town of "Mosaic persuasion" was my aunt named Else Meinberg, and since I was Ellen Meinberg, I was the last, would I write to them? And, also, that I should understand that

the last director of the *Lyceum* was certainly not politically involved, and was a wonderful person. Well, I wanted to be very honest, and I thought, well, if they won't publish it, and if they won't, you know, disclose it, that's O.K., but I'm going to write exactly the way I saw it. The director was a charming man. He was not a political man. But he was a coward. Because the day I could not go swimming—I talk about it all the time, it was the most, probably the greatest soul insult to my little life, I was only ten—he knew about this. I was the only Jewish child in that school. And he knew. The edict came to him. He then told the gym teacher. So I wrote back in this little testimonial for the 100th anniversary of the school, "You explained to me how apolitical he was, and what a marvelous person he was." And I said, "Yes he was. He also instructed my English class. Other than being a director he was a fine teacher, and he was a fine man. But he didn't have any courage, because if he had, he would have had the courage to ask a little ten-year-old into his office and said, 'It is out of my jurisdiction. It's not in my power to get you to that pool. I just want you to know I'm sad you can't go.' He disregarded it. So, I'm sorry to disagree with you. He was not that wonderful. He was not big enough." They published it.

NP: They did?

ET: They did. They really did. And I was happy. And, it's a big book. I have all these books over in my little library here. And, again my public school, which I attended for four years, was renamed Anne Frank School. And the family, what is this woman's name, a descendant of the family that housed Anne Frank? A Dutch woman, who came to the dedication. And they took an excerpt of one of my writings and they had this little girl named Gabriella, who was my age, read, and, "I am the voice of Ellen Meinberg." And she read of my being alone in the town and being denied access, and the story of the pool, and my whole life there. And the children of that school go once a month and clean up the Jewish cemetery. So, progress is being made. And while I was there during my visit, I tried to enlighten a few people. Because, I felt that I had come from another planet, and plopped myself into their midst. The hotel in which we stayed, the people who ran it were in their 30s, at that time the age of my children. And my daughter came every morning to visit for breakfast. And they didn't quite get the connection.

And one day they said to me, "You always speak German to us. Why is that?"

And I said, "Because I want to practice my German. I'm in Germany."

They said, "Well all the other people who come here don't want to talk German."

I said, "Well, I can understand that."

"And why do you?"

And I said, "Well, it's a language, and I want to be able to keep it, and I'm here, and I'm talking German."

"Well why is it that that young girl doesn't speak German?"

I said, "That's my daughter."

"Oh. Well, she wasn't born here?"

I said, "Do you know who I am?"

"Well, yes, we know the young couple, we know who you are. A lot of you come every week and stay here. And, but were you born here?"

I said, "Yes."

"Really? What happened to you?"

And I said very simply, "I lived near the Triangle Park."

"Oh, well that's a cultural center."

I said, "Yes, it is. But that was once a house in which I lived."

"It was!?"

"Yes, it was."

Oh, so they were listening. And, I said, "I went to the same..." I said, "Where did you go to school?"

She said, "*Lyceum*."

I said, "So did I."

"Really?"

I said, "I lived here. I breathed here. I went to all the stores you went to. I was a real person. And I've come back."

And, they cried.

And I said, "You've learned nothing of what happened here?"

And they said, "No."

But now they are teaching it. I know.

NP: Now they are.

ET: Yeah. And I also went to the bank to cash an American Express check, and the man recognized—I was talking German—and he said, "Oh, someone else came in this morning by the name of Tarlow, a blonde young woman. But she didn't speak German."

And I said, "Oh, that was my daughter."

"Oh." He looked at me strangely.

And I said, "Well, I was born here."

He said, "Really? Where?"

And I said, "I lived at ta ta ta..."

He said, "There was no house there."

I said, "Yes there was."

And he said, "Well, anyway, I'm from another part of the town."

I said, "You know, sir, that's irrelevant." I said, "This house was burnt at the time by the Nazis." He said, "Well, I...didn't live near there."

So those were the answers we got. Well, we talked to some older people who were very interested in the war in Russia, that it did them in. I could care less. But nobody wanted to ever address the issue of me at all, except the Burgermeister had a meeting for us and I gave a speech, which I couldn't believe. I talked about my life a little bit. I did thank them for bringing me back, but I gave them a little dig. And my three maids came forth when I was there. They were true blue. They were never involved politically. They were farm women. And they just wanted to see me, and that's all. If there's anything else I've missed...

NP: No, eh...

ET: I'm sure I missed...

NP: I want to thank you, and to assure you that future generations and serious scholars will benefit from your testimony. And to extend my sympathies for the ordeal that you and your family had to endure. I'm glad you're here, and I thank you again.