HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

LIESL LOEB

Transcript of Self-taped Memoir

Date: November 17, 1998

Holocaust Oral History Archive
Gratz College
Melrose Park, PA 19027

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SELF-TAPED MEMOIR[1]

LL - Liesl Loeb [interviewee]
Date: November 17, 1998

Tape one, side one:

LL: Side one, oral memoir by Liesl Joseph Loeb, recorded on November 16th, 1998. My name is Liesl Joseph Loeb. Spell it L-I-E-S-L. Joseph is J-O-S-E-P-H, and Loeb is L-O-E-B, like in Bob. I was born on June 17th, 1928, in a small industrial town in the Rhineland, West Germany. And the town's name was at that time Rheydt, and it's spelled R-H-E-Y-D-T. Rheydt was a town with many textile mills, some other industry and manufacturing. My father, Josef Joseph (the first Josef is spelled with an "f," J-O-S-E-F, and the second J-O-S-E-P-H, was a prominent lawyer in Rheydt. My mother, Lilly Salmon Joseph (Lilly, L-I-double L-Y) Salmon is her maiden name, S-A-L-M-O-N, and Joseph, J-O-S-E-P-H. My mother was born in the next small town. And the name of that town was Odenkirchen, and that is spelled O-D-E-N-K-I-R-C-H-E-N. Today, these two smaller towns are incorporated into one large municipality with another adjacent town, and that is called today Moenchengladbach. And that is spelled M-O-, "m" like Mother, O-E-N-C-H-E-N-G-L-A-D-B-A-C-H. It's a little bit hard to pronounce, I know, but-- and these separate little municipalities are simply called Moenchengladbach One, Two, Three, and so on. There are, I think, four or five areas all together that are all under one city government today.

Jews were already living in this area in the twelfth century. A local historian wrote the history of the Jews of the area in 1989, two thick volumes, and my mother's family plays quite an important part in that history. Her family can trace its years back to about 1800 in that area. And from there the family seems to have come from Nürnberg in Germany, N-Ü-R-N-B-E-R-G.

My mother's father, my grandfather, had a men's clothing manufacturing concern, and my mother told me that during WWI my grandfather was a great patriot, always inviting soldiers to the house when they were on leave. If any of his employees came home on leave, he invited them for dinner and brought them home. And my grandparents had a very hospitable home. My mother was the youngest of three daughters, of my grandfather, whose name was David Salmon, S-A-L-M-O-N, and my grandmother was one of twelve children who came from the town of Kaiserslautern, [K-A-I-S-E-R-S-L-A-U-T-E-R-N]. My grandmother's family was quite liberal and among her many siblings there were some intermarriages already in those years. One of her more well-known cousins was Nathan Strauss, who with his wife sank on the *Titanic*. Also my grandmother can trace her relationship to the Macy/Strauss family, well known here in the East Coast of the United States.

[1]Based on questions provided by the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive.

My mother and father married in 1927, and I was born in 1928. And I must say that the first ten years of my childhood were as ideal as any could be. I am an only child. The first six years of my life I had a governess, who came to the house every day. She didn't live in, but came every day to be with me. And then when I started school, she got married and she insisted that I would carry her veil at her wedding in church. I mention this fact because when I was six years old, the year was 1934. And at that time already, Hitler had come to power and certain antisemitic sentiments had become very noticeable in Germany. Children with whom I used to play, children in the neighborhood, often called me names such as "dirty Jew" and other such names and I didn't understand why they did that. And carrying the veil in church my mother felt might be dangerous, not just to us, but perhaps also to my nanny. But she insisted that I must be at her wedding and so I did what she asked me to do. And I have to say also that throughout all the years we were in Germany until we left, she came to visit us regularly. I was her one and only charge at that time. She came to us straight from the school where she had trained as a kindergarten specialist. And there was much more between us than just an employee relationship. She was like my second mother. And our contact was discontinued during the war but was taken up again after the war until she passed away in 1987.

My grandmother lived nearby and often came to our house. And I was extremely fond of my grandmother. She was the only grandparent I knew. I had aunts, an aunt and uncle, nearby. Until 1937 I had a big cousin nearby who was like my big sister, who then--who however came to the United States to Philadelphia in 1937. And I had various other cousins and aunts and uncles, of whom I was extremely fond and whom we got to see at least once each year, even though we didn't live in the same cities.

We were a close knit family. I think I was a happy child. I was sad at being an only child, and therefore I loved to go to school and I loved to be anywhere where there were other children. My parents were comfortable. We often had concerts in the house. Various friends and their musical friends came to make music. And my mother also was a trained coloratura soprano singer and I loved it when she sang to me. Very often when I was sick--and I was sick very often during my childhood in the wintertime--she would sing to me. And I do treasure the memory of that a great deal. After *Kristallnacht*, my mother never sang again.

My father also played the piano as did my mother, and I had piano lessons starting at age seven. And I must say I just loved the piano. After being in bed sick for days on end, the first day when I was without temperature and I was allowed to come downstairs, my first place was to go to the piano and start playing. I'm not sure that I would have made any kind of a class artist on the piano, but I did love the instrument and to this day I love piano music best and I do love classical music.

As I said, I loved to be where there were children. I went to a Jewish school. In our town, at the time of my childhood, the population was approximately 70,000 people. The Jewish community consisted of about 100 Jewish families and it was a close knit

community. Everybody knew everybody. And the Jewish school was a one-room schoolroom. All eight grades were in that one room and the teacher was not just a teacher who taught all those grades and everybody learned, but he was also the Reverend. He was not an ordained rabbi, but he was a Reverend. He was the Cantor. He did the marriages and he did the divorces and he visited the sick. And he was an all-around person to minister to his congregation. We often made fun of him, as children do, but in retrospect I must say here that he was a most heroic person because later when it came to the deportations, the time when the deportations started--long after we had left already--he did have a chance to leave Germany with his family, his wife and his two children, but chose to stay with his congregants who were still there, and was sent with them away to the ghetto of Riga. I think that is a most heroic thing. And I have revered him ever since I have known this about him. And I only did find that out about him in 1989.

So, life was nice and comfortable and safe. And as long as my parents were around, I always felt very secure. But this did not last, unfortunately. I would say that on the night of November 10th, my childhood suddenly was brought to an end. My childhood, my security, my whole life, came to a stop that night. What happened that night? What changed my life and the life of my family? It's called *Kristallnacht*. Up until that point, I think my father, who was politically very knowledgeable-- he was an active Social Democrat, which in itself was already a very negative thing to be in Germany of those days--he always believed that things that were going on in Germany just could not last, that the regime would change, something would change. It was such folly. He couldn't believe that Hitler would go on and on and on. But after *Kristallnacht* I think all the non-believers of the Hitler intentions changed their minds.

Actually, at one time, I think it was in 1936 or seven, my father considered emigration to Palestine. At that time one could still take out a considerable amount of money. And a friend of his, as a matter of fact, a Gentile friend of my father's, married to a Jewish woman, went on a trip to Palestine to inquire what living conditions would be like. During the time that he spent in Palestine there were Arab riots, and civilians, especially Jewish people, Jewish settlers, were killed and there was much malaria. Tel Aviv was still a little village on the beach. And there was lots of sickness. Things were very primitive yet in Palestine. And he came back and he said to my father, "We cannot expect our wives to have such a lifestyle, to live under such conditions." So that idea was tabled by these two men. As it happens, this friend of my father's, and his wife, unfortunately, both went to the concentration camps and were killed eventually.

We did have other non-Jewish friends. First of all, my parents were friendly with the family of my governess. Then my father, who had been a bachelor until the age of 45, had a very close friend. This friend was also his client. My father was the attorney for his firm. He had some kind of a manufacturing concern. But they were buddies. And they hung out together. This friend never married, although he had a woman friend, but never married. But they did all kinds of things together, especially before my father was

married. Sometimes they would take trips together and just hung out together, maybe rode their bicycles out into the country on a weekend or something. And those--my father didn't drive. He never drove a car. And there weren't too many cars around yet in those years anyway. His name was Albert. And after my mother married, Albert was still part of the household. He'd come drop in for dinner any old time and very often he also invited my parents for dinner. The men had this special friendship that rarely exists among men, and for me he was Uncle Albert. I mention him because he will come up again later in the story.

The boycott of 1933 and the Aryan laws that Hitler brought out which took away the privilege to practice for doctors and lawyers and other professionals of the Jewish faith, temporarily put my father out of his job more or less. My father had a junior partner and the firm was well known in the area. He was admitted at court in the capital of our district, which was Duesseldorf, a larger, well-known city in the Rhineland. And you spell that D-U-E-S-S-E-L-D-O-R-F. My father lost his practice for a short time, but after a while these laws were modified and everyone who had already been practicing before the beginning of WWI was reinstated. I guess maybe they found out they had a brain drain or something. At any rate, my father had been a judge in Cologne before WWI and he served in the military tribunal during WWI. My father was a pacifist in those days and he was glad not to be in any kind of front lines for the Fatherland. I don't know if you would say he was not a patriot, but definitely his philosophy of pacifism made it so that it was against his principles to actively engage in fighting, I suppose.

At any rate, my father was reinstated, which was really not to his advantage because again, he must have thought that things wouldn't get any worse--if anything they might get better--and he didn't want my mother to have to change her lifestyle. And so he perhaps became a little too complacent until a few years later, when his practice had to be limited only to Jewish clientele. Slowly but surely the Gentile friends that used to come around stopped coming and there came a day when his friend Albert, my uncle Albert, called him up on the phone and told him, "Listen, Jupp," he, my father's nickname was Jupp, J-U-P-P. And he said, "I'm sorry, but I'm not going to be able to speak to you on the streets any more, and I can't call you any more, and please don't call me any more, because I've just been reinstated as an Admiral in the German Navy and that would compromise me too much. You must understand." My father was terribly hurt from this phone call. You must understand that all this information was told to me by my mother, but I can well understand how he must have felt, how his friend of so many years suddenly seemed to turn against him. Most likely, though, his phones were being tapped and he was being watched because it must have been knowledge also of the local little spies or the local Gestapo that Albert had a Jewish friend. At any rate, they did not communicate from that time on until the last day that we were in Germany. And I'll tell you about that a little bit later on too.

And nevertheless, my nanny came to visit whenever she was in town. She had moved away from our town and she didn't let anybody tell her whom she could visit. She had gotten word from the Nazi Party, the local Nazi Party, through her father, that it would be better if she didn't come to visit with us. And she said she was going to visit whomever she wants to. And then they suggested that maybe she shouldn't be seen coming into our house during the daytime. And she said that she would come whenever she wanted to, daytime or evening time. She wasn't going to let anybody tell her whom she could visit.

My nanny's name was Otty, O-T-T-Y. And Otty's father was a member of the Party. That doesn't mean to say that he was a Nazi. He--it was sometimes expedient to belong to the Party. And as a matter of fact, when the non-Jewish children started to bait the Jewish children on their way to school, which started to happen frequently that they threw stones at us or harassed us in some way. They kind of tried to knock us about a little bit. Otty's father told the powers, the local powers that be, that he wants this stopped. He also spoke to the superintendent of schools. And at that time it was mentioned that in return maybe his daughter wouldn't be so friendly with the Jews. But as I've already told you it didn't make much of an impression on her.

Then one day, in school, something happened that really touched the whole school. We had one family in town, a Polish-Jewish family that had come into town a few years before, trying to make a better life for themselves. They were quite poor. And the father was a handyman, hired himself out to whomever needed work done. And everybody tried to keep him working in some way or another, which wasn't so hard to do. One always has to have--there are always people who need to have a handyman. And the children went to our school. They came one day in October of 1938, with their *Shabbas* clothes on, their best clothes. And they said they had come to say good-bye. And we didn't understand why, and they told us that they and their parents were being sent out of the country. What really had happened was that Jews who were not German citizens had been ordered to leave the country. There were more people like themselves, people who had mostly come from the east, Jewish people, to find better life, more possibilities of making a living, had come into Germany, had not become citizens of Germany. Whether that was by law that they couldn't become German citizens, or whether that was because of their own desire not to, I don't know that. At any rate, these people were all expelled from Germany at that time and they were sent to a no-man's land, which is a certain area of land between the borders of Poland and Germany where German people lived and also where some Polish people lived. And one isn't quite certain just exactly to whom that strip of land belongs. It's a kind of no-man's land, as I said. And there they lived off the generosity of farmers, perhaps, and perhaps not. But the living conditions were like animals. And it was a terrible situation.

A boy in Paris by the name of Herschel Greenszpan, Herschel, H-E-R-S-C-H-E-L, Greenszpan, I think, was spelled G-R-E-E-N-S-Z-P-A-N, I think. [Grynszpan.]

Herschel Greenszpan lived in Paris, and his parents were among those people who had been chased out of Germany. And they had written a letter to Herschel and told him about the terrible living conditions that beset them. And Herschel was terribly upset to such a point that somewhere, somehow, he got a gun. He went to the German Embassy and rang the bell. The person who answered was a minor official at the Embassy, and Herschel just shot him. He was so distraught, and so angry, he shot this man and killed this man. This was the match that lit the pogrom that we know today as *Kristallnacht*. And the shooting in Paris must have happened around November 7th. I'm not quite sure. But it must have happened around November 7th. November 9th had been my father's birthday and my mother had a few guests in. The Gestapo had been at the house some days before, looking through all kinds of papers of my father's, because my father was president of the *B'nai Brith*. And the *B'nai Brith* was considered a subversive organization as far as the Nazis were concerned. And so they riffled through all this stuff and took some of it with them, with not too much of any friendly words for my father.

On the morning of November 10th there was a harsh knock on the front door. And there stood some men in black uniforms, with black boots on. And they wanted–they asked to open up and they came in and they said they were arresting my father. I was extremely upset, because I couldn't understand why anybody would want to arrest my father. What had he done? He hadn't done anything. I was terribly fond of my father. I idolized him. And I can't tell you how upset I really was. They didn't give much of an explanation. They just took him away. My mother, of course, was on the phone with friends and relatives to find out whether anything--anyone else was being arrested also. And she found out that unless somebody was able to hide, unless somebody had heard about this ahead of time, the men, all the Jewish men in town from the age of 16 on up were arrested.

We didn't know where they were taking my father. We had no idea where any of these people were being taken. And you can imagine the distraught women, who didn't understand or didn't know what was happening to their men. Of course I didn't go to school that day and was very aware of the anxiety of my mother and myself was just as upset.

At the time we had a visitor from Bonn, B-O-N-N, the present capital of Germany. She was a very, very close friend of ours and had come to visit for my father's birthday.

We at that time had a young Jewish girl helping my mother in the house, since we weren't allowed to have non-Jewish domestic help any more. That evening, I was torn out of bed in the middle of the night by my mother.

Tape one, side two:

LL: There was a terrible noise going on downstairs in my house. I was terrified. I hadn't woken up from it, but once my mother tore me out of bed, I was aware of all this crashing noises that I heard. Somebody was–seemed to be trying to bash in our front door. And my mother put some housecoat over me and dragged me upstairs to our tenants. We lived in a very large, 20-room house, and we had rented one floor to tenants. They were not Jewish. They occupied the third floor in our house. And my mother, together with our visitor, and our domestic help, knocked on their door and they took us into their apartment.

In the meantime, all this noise kept going on downstairs and I couldn't understand what was going on. I was ten years old at the time. I was a little, a slight, little girl and very attached to my parents. I had been so upset during the day about my father having been taken away, and now somebody was trying to break into our house and I couldn't understand why, and what was going on. I did not know of the shooting in Paris at that time. I did not know that that was what caused all this commotion. All I knew was I heard terrible noises in my house. I also heard fire engines and sirens outside. And it turned out that these were going to the local--to our synagogue, which had been set on fire. And I was so upset that I wanted in the worst way to run downstairs and tell whoever was down there to stop, to stop this noise and to stop breaking up our house. But my mother had a very hard time to hold me back, because surely they would not have left me unharmed had I gone downstairs. However, the man of that apartment, our tenant, went downstairs and he told those hoodlums that they should kindly keep their activities on the first floor, because he and his wife occupied the rest of the house. The hoodlums didn't know what was going on in our house. They at least accepted that and kept their activities on the first floor, because mostly the vandals, who made all the destructions, were usually called from out of town, so that nobody could finger them. Nobody could recognize them, if they were seen. And they wouldn't know exactly whose house they were destroying. They were just told an address and told to go there and do their thing.

Another one of, probably, Mr. Josef Goebbels' fine-thinking, Josef Goebbels, and you spell that J-O-S-E-F, and his last name is G-O-E-double B-E-L-S, was the Propaganda Minister of the Hitler regime, a small, crippled man with a club foot who became a social misfit but seemed to have found his niche in Hitler's cabinet, so to speak. And the other thing was that he was a native son of our town. Not only that, but as a student and after he graduated college and was very poor, he often ate at my father's table. But that's "a whole another story". At any rate, the noise went on downstairs. Glass was broken. And it was just a night of terror. Somebody stood at the front gate. We could see somebody standing there with a cigarette in his mouth. And luckily nobody smoked while they were doing their thing downstairs, because they had pulled the gas range out

of its connection. And if it weren't for the broken windows and that the gas could escape outside, they could have blown up the house.

As it got light in the morning, they left, and as soon as my mother was sure they were gone, she went downstairs and called the police. And the police told her to come over--and she took pictures of the house and the destruction, the broken windows. You could see from the outside. She went to the police station and they said, "Oh, why didn't you call us? We would have come and stopped that." That sounded very nice, but there wasn't much truth to that. And when I finally came downstairs, I was completely speechless. All I saw was our beautiful furniture hacked into pieces, the legs of tables and chairs strewn about the floor amidst the shards of glasses and crystal and window glass and eggs thrown in the midst of that and other food articles, a piano turned over on its back, on its front, and the back side had an ax stuck into it. I mean, just simple, pure vandalism. It looked like a bomb hit there. Books had been torn out of the bookshelves and everything was strewn about. It was just the biggest mess you ever want to see. And I was very upset about that. I loved my house, and I loved everything there. My toys had been thrown around and broken up too and that wasn't so good either. But I was just completely speechless when I saw this. Our visitor decided that it would be best if my mother and I came back to Bonn with her, because it so happened that her daughter lived with her, and her daughter had married a Jewish man from Holland, a Dutch gentleman. And the house in which they lived therefore became that of a Dutch owner, and even though you had the vandalism of *Kristallnacht*, the law of the land said that any foreign property was off limits to Nazi intrusion. That was still at that time. And so my mother decided that was a good idea. She had boarded up the windows and did what she could, and we went back with our guest to Bonn. And I stayed there from November 1938 until May 1939.

From that time on, all normal life stopped and a whole other routine began. In Bonn there was also a Jewish school. And it so happened that that school was in a building that from the outside looked like an office building, not like a school. The schoolyard was behind the building, could not be seen from the street, and therefore the school was not in any way vandalized. So that school was still in session and I could continue to go to school in Bonn.

I lived with our friends and there were quite a few adults living in the house there and everybody was very caring toward me. I also met one of my best friends in Bonn, who is still one of my best friends today. We were ten years old when we met each other. And her way led her through Auschwitz to Philadelphia and my way led me through the *St. Louis* to Philadelphia. And today we are still very close friends, as fate would have it. We both have stories to tell.

Naturally, there was no more school. The school building had been vandalized, although the teacher lived on top of the school building and his apartment was not destroyed. As a matter of fact, the only other house in the city that was destroyed like

ours was right up the street from us. It was a villa that belonged to a Jewish shoe manufacturer, one of the very wealthy men in town. Otherwise Jewish businesses had been vandalized, but no other private homes. I don't know who or why picked on those two houses, but they did.

My father' practice was at an end. His partner had also been arrested. As a matter of fact, his partner was sent onto concentration camp, I believe, whereas my father was fortunate enough to have been taken to the local jail. Knowing most of the people there at the police station, because he had to visit his clients in jail sometimes, they were not too hard on him. He was confined, but he was not harassed by anyone. And as a matter of fact, a policeman one night called my mother. My mother had gone back to Rheydt in order to straighten up the house and perhaps put it up for sale and see what she could do to get my father--to find out where my father was and possibly help him to be released. And the policeman did indeed call her one night, asked her to meet him in some dark alley, and that he had news from my father and would she please bring some of his medication and some clean clothes and underwear for him also. And so my mother, who was very brave, I think, to take a man's word for it that he's a policeman and to meet him in a dark alley somewhere. She took some money along for him. And she met him and he did indeed tell her that my father was all right, that he was not being mistreated, and that he would let her know when he will be released. I think the policeman got in touch with her several more times and finally also called her when he was indeed being released from jail.

All the men who had been incarcerated as a result of *Kristallnacht* had to sign, upon their release, that they would leave Germany very quickly, as quickly as possible, within a certain time limit, and that they would never tell what happened to them or what they saw. This was especially directed to the men who were put into concentration camps and most of the men were taken to the camps. There was already Dachau, D-A-C-H-A-U, and there was, I believe, Buchenwald. That's spelled B-U-C-H-E-N-W-A-L-D. And I think there was also Sachsenhausen. And that's spelled S-A-C-H-S-E-N-H-A-U-S-E-N. And some of the men were much mistreated. Some were even killed. And they too had to sign that they would never reveal what they had experienced or seen in these camps and would leave Germany at all possible speed.

Now it so happened that my parents had made friends with a Cuban couple who had gone to Cuba to visit; had come back to Germany. They were living in Bonn at the time because their children were going to university there. And while they were in Cuba, they found out that the Cuban government seemed to be issuing immigration permits for a price. And knowing that my parents were desperate to leave Germany, they bought these immigration permits and brought them back to my parents. The real story is that the immigration official of the Cuban government, at the time, was a very enterprising man. His name was a Mr. Gonzales, G-O-N-Z-A-L-E-S. And he decided he would print these

immigration permits on official looking stationery and sell them at the--any kind of price that he could get for them. And he was making a nice little pile of money that way.

The president of Cuba, who at the time, was President Bru, B-R-U, heard about it and he wanted a share in the profits that Mr. Gonzales was cashing in. And Gonzales said no, he wasn't going to share with him. So as president, the man said, "Well, if you're not going to share, I'm going to declare these documents illegal, because they really are. They're not--they haven't been issued by permission of the government. You're just printing them. And you don't want to share? I'm just going to say they're illegal and that's that."

Well, my parents had gotten a set of these immigration permits and luckily the German government had announced that they were scheduling a ship to sail to Cuba that would be available for Jews to leave the country. The Germans made leaving difficult for Jews, and the American Consulates also made emigration into the United States difficult for the Jews of Germany.

In 1937, when there was a new wave of requests for emigration into the United States, mostly by Central European Jews, the Consulates decided to give out numbers like they do in the delicatessen store. First come, first served. Because there was such an onslaught on the German quota of emigration into the United States. The United States has quotas of how many people can come into this country from the various countries of the world, so many from Germany, so many from Holland, so many from Poland, so many from wherever. And at the time the German quota allowed 25,000 people per year to come into the United States from Germany. There were 350,000 Jews approximately living in Germany at that time, and you can figure out how many years it would take for everybody to be able to get out if everybody would request to come into this country.

My parents, as soon as they heard about this number business, went to Stuttgart, S-T-U-double T-G-A-R-T, which was the locale for the American Consulate closest to us, to get their number--they had to be there in person--and were fortunate enough to get what was considered at the time a fairly low number. The number was in the 14 thousands. By the time my mother could call her mother in Berlin--my grandmother was living in Berlin at the time--by that time--and until they could get to their Consulate, which I think was right there in Berlin, their number that was issued to them was in the 76 thousands. And unfortunately, that number, it was later determined, that number, was also their death sentence, because it never even came up at all any more.

So, that was the next thing that--the next step to be taken toward our emigration. My parents, for some time before *Kristallnacht*, had made inquiries here in the United States to see if they could find some relatives that would give us an affidavit. An affidavit was required for any immigrant to come in. And what it was was a guarantee that the immigrant would not be a burden to the State, that in case the immigrant couldn't find work, the guarantor, the issuer of the affidavit, would support that person, so that there would not be a question of the immigrant becoming a welfare person. The Depression

was still on in ’38 and ’39, and the American government was very stringent about that. Besides that--the--we have found out from the Holocaust Museum in Washington that there is evidence that the Consuls in the various European cities and countries were told not to make immigration so easy; to make things as difficult as possible, because America was not too anxious to receive people without means.

By the time, in 1939, that immigrants left Germany, they could not take any kind of finances out of Germany any more. As a matter of fact, they were stripped of all their assets. Everything was confiscated. Bank accounts were confiscated. Houses were confiscated. Businesses were confiscated. And by confiscated, I mean just that; taken away. A bunch of people would march into an office, into the offices, or the headquarters of Jewish businesses and manufacturers and doctors and lawyers and would say, “Your practice or your business is now being confiscated by the German government.” And out you went. That was it. Your bank account was confiscated. If you didn’t have some money stashed away somewhere, you were out of luck. Your jewelry had to be turned in, with the exception of a wedding ring, a wedding band. All silverware had to be, all valuables, all precious metals and jewels had to be turned in, coins, except for one set of silverware per person to eat with. The Jewish people were being stripped of their belongings by a government that sanctioned this highway robbery. Can you understand that? I can’t understand it, and I never will. I will never understand that people can come into your home and bash it into pieces; that people can take you away because you are of a certain religion, put you in a jail. Even though it’s still happening, I still don’t understand it. Who gives them the right? I don’t understand it. I don’t understand how the Holocaust could happen. I don’t understand that the whole world could watch this and nobody did anything about it or doesn’t even believe today that it might have happened. I don’t understand. I don’t think any of us do.

But to go on.

I just want to back track for a moment, to the morning when we came downstairs after *Kristallnacht* on November 10th. The way these hoodlums had gained entrance into our house was that they had sawed off young tree trunks in our garden and had ran these tree trunks against our front door, which was a very sturdy, heavy oak door. And also they had gained entrance through one of the first floor windows, which happens to be the room in which my grandmother would normally sleep. My grandmother had moved in with us after her oldest daughter had emigrated to Holland. And she was now living with us. But at the time, luckily, she was visiting her other daughter, my aunt, in Berlin, because the hoodlums who came through the windows there had stuck a knife into the top of the mattress in her bed and had just slashed from top to bottom the mattress and the coverlet. And if, God forbid, there had been a person sleeping in there, I don’t think you need much imagination to know what would have happened. This was an example of what some people, with the permission of the government, were capable of doing.

Now it was very important for my parents to get out of Germany. And it seemed so lucky that they had gotten these immigration permits and that the ship had been scheduled that was sailing to Cuba and was going to take German Jewish refugees out of the country. The ship's name was the steamship *St. Louis*, and it sailed under the German flag and the German company known as Hamburg America Passenger Line, or HAPAG, Hapag. I'll be mentioning the name Hapag from time to time. The *St. Louis* was scheduled to sail on May 13th, 1939. I was still in Bonn, and my parents were busy finalizing their emigration. I want you to know, though, that until they had found a guarantor--and the guarantor happened to be, not even blood family related, but related by marriage--and the day after *Kristallnacht* the affidavit had arrived, even though up to that point they had felt that my father was too old to make the emigration trip. That as a lawyer he would not be able to practice law in this country, he didn't know the language too well, and of course would have to study all over again. And at that time my father was already in his late 50's. He wasn't in the best of health. But nevertheless, the day after *Kristallnacht*, the affidavits arrived per whatever, air mail, or per wire. And so we had the prerequisites of leaving Germany. We had the affidavit. We had the quota number. And my father wanted to wait for that quota number to come up somewhere else out of Germany. He wanted out. He had to get out, and we had the prerequisites. And also, fortunately, still enough money left to buy tickets first class on the *St. Louis*. And we were getting ready for the trip. I was still in Bonn, and my parents sold the house and they managed to supervise the packing of the furniture. These transports of furniture were called *Lifts*. And one *Lift* went to New York, because that was our intended goal eventually, and one *Lift* with new furniture for the tropics went to Havana, Cuba, and was shipped out. Various documents had to be signed yet by my father, one document saying that he owes no taxes and that financially his slate is clean, he's done what he's supposed to do, and turned in what he's supposed to turn in, and so on. I happen to have those documents and that's how I know about them. And surely my parents must have been very harried about all the preparations for emigration.

I came back to Rheydt just a few days before we were leaving, in order to say good-bye to those friends of mine who were still there. Lots of them had already left with their families, were fortunate enough to have emigrated out of Germany to other countries as far away as South America, the United States, perhaps closer by to France or Holland or Great Britain. But there were still quite a few left and I made the rounds to say good-bye to my friends. And one of the people that I visited were the two children of our teacher. Our teacher, Mr. Heymann, H-E-Y-M-A-double N. Their names were Edith and Walter. And while I was visiting there, we played some games and we were playing with a deck of cards. And Walter showed me how to shuffle the cards like they do in the casinos. That's really where I learned how to shuffle the cards that way. And to this day, I remember what he said while he was doing that. And every time I shuffle the cards I think of that. He said to me, "You know, Hitler said that by 1942, there will not be any

Jews alive in Germany any more." That was a very frightening sentence. And I've never forgotten it. And I always think of it. I always think of those two young people that I visited to say good-bye to for the very last time. What happened to them, and to their father and mother, I've already told you. They stayed behind because the father did not want to leave his flock, and they were all sent to Poland to, I think to Riga, to a ghetto, and from there to extermination. It's a very sad thing, and sad memories, among many sad memories in my life.

Our departure took us first to Berlin, to say good-bye to my grandmother and my aunt and uncle and cousin. My aunt, my mother's sister, was a doctor, and of course she too had lost her practice. My uncle was a professional concert pianist. My grandmother was going to stay there with them in Berlin and my cousin, Guenter, G-U-E-N-T-E-R, was one of my favorite cousins. He was a year younger than I, a blue-eyed, freckle-faced, blond little boy, cute as a button, and full of humor. He often could speak the dialect of Berlin and made jokes in that dialect and he made-

Tape two, side one:

LL: Liesl Joseph Loeb. We also used to love to play duets on piano together, not necessarily Beethoven and Bach, but little funny ditties that we made up together. We just had a good time together when we saw each other, which was unfortunately not that often. And that was the last time I saw him, too.

We stayed in Berlin for three days. We didn't go out at all. And then left by train to Hamburg, H-A-M-B-U-R-G, which was the port from where the *St. Louis* would sail. My aunt accompanied us to Hamburg. In Hamburg we stayed in a very nice hotel, but at the door of the dining room was a sign that said, "Jews are not permitted." So we had to go to a restaurant, find a restaurant where we could eat. But they did take our money for renting us rooms in that hotel. I think we were only in Hamburg for two days. My father bought for my mother and me just a few leather trinkets, I remember, to spend the last money that he had in his pocket, because everyone who left Germany was allowed to leave with ten *Marks*, *Deutschmarks*. And, or rather, *Reichsmarks*, or R-E-I-C-H-S-M-A-R-K-S. And that was equivalent to $2.50 at the time.

We boarded the ship on Saturday, May 13th. I remember that it was a Saturday, because they even allowed the Orthodox Jews to board on Fridays, according to *halachah*. And it was a matter to be discussed and so I remember that it was a Saturday, that when we boarded, we were not Orthodox. I don't remember much about the city of Hamburg, other than that there was the first time where I saw a black man. You know a ten-year-old child takes all these things in with so much wonder and finds out new things about the world. And boarding the ship was also like a new adventure. I realize that my parents were very sad to be leaving, not because they were sad to be leaving Nazi Germany, but they were leaving a country where their families had been rooted for hundreds of years, and where the graves of their loved ones were, and where they left behind still family. My father had a sister and my mother had a sister in Berlin and, with her family, as I've already described. My father's sister was a widow. She lived near Frankfurt, F-R-A-N-K-F-U-R-T, and as a matter of fact, he had bought tickets for her for the *St. Louis* and immigration papers, and had hoped that she would come aboard in Cherbourg, together with her two sons who had been sent to Holland with *Kindertransports*. And we were hoping that they would come aboard in Cherbourg. But they did not come. My aunt hadn't sold her house yet, and decided she would come on the next ship. Well, the next ship never sailed and unfortunately she and her two sons ended up in concentration camp. One son survived. The other and my aunt did not.

Sometimes people made very bad choices and didn't even live to regret them.

At any rate, boarding the ship was a whole new world for me. It seemed to be a hotel floating on the water. We had a very nice cabin on the B deck, right across from the purser's cabin. And my parents slept in the lower bunks and I slept in the upper bunks, even those whose first class, the staterooms then were not what the state rooms on a

cruise ship are today. The *St. Louis* was indeed a luxury cruise liner, which usually sailed between New York and Havana in season, the season being probably from Spring through late Fall and perhaps even in the winter time, since Cuba was a tropical country.

But the Germans had scheduled the *St. Louis* to sail to Havana because they actually had a reason to schedule the ship, that being an espionage mission. Now, none of us knew that. It wasn't known at all by any of the passengers. And it was only really made public when the book, *Voyage of the Damned* came out, which had been well-researched by its authors, Max Morgan Witts--that's W-I-double T-S--and Gordon Thomas, two non-Jewish, British authors who decided that the story of the *St. Louis* could in a smaller way detail a Holocaust happening.

In the year before the beginning of WWII, German spies had managed to come into this country and were looking for military secrets to carry back to Germany and had indeed gotten information in this case about the, about American submarines. Mr. Hoover had managed to expel them from this country and they had decided to go to Cuba, which was an easy country for people, such as spies, and international crooks of all sorts, to assemble there. The Cuban government was a very corrupt government and with a little extra money in their pockets they didn't look too closely as to who came in and what they were doing there, except of course maybe Jewish refugees. And there were secrets to be picked up from Havana, and in those days not having yet the communication systems that we have today per computers, per satellites and so on, they [the Germans] had to send a man over to pick up plans, plans of submarines. And they decided if they scheduled this ship, they could let the Jews pay for the journey. The Jews had to pay not only their passage one-way, but round trip, just in case a country, the country that would be the destination would change its mind and close its borders and not accept the people who were on the way, in which case they would have to be returned and therefore the round trip fee for their passage. And so that paid for the expense of sending the ship to Havana. It was very thoughtful of the Nazis to provide such a beautiful ship for us, I would say. As a matter of fact, some passengers had already booked on other ships that had reached Cuba but changed their minds because they had teenage daughters who might want to meet nicer young men on a ship such as the *St. Louis* and had changed their tickets from one ship to another. I have met people who told me these stories, of personal experience. That's just a little sideline.

At any rate, it was a beautiful ship that I found--I went all over the place to explore. My mother finally allowed me to wander about, knowing I couldn't get lost being on the ship, because she was usually always very concerned as to my whereabouts. And I rode the elevators up and down and I saw that there was a gym with all these fun machines and there was a swimming pool once the weather got warm. And they had a place where they showed movies at night. And they had dances and they had deck games. And there were gift shops. The grownups enjoyed lounging in the sun on deck, and for the children, there was much entertainment. We had over 200 children among the

passengers and there was a program to keep them busy and entertained throughout the day, so that the parents could relax and know that the children were also looked after and were having a good time.

Things were made very pleasant for the passengers, and the sadness of the departure soon faded somewhat from people's memory. When the ship had left Hamburg, the band played the usual tune upon departure, which is a German song called "Must I Leave My Little Town Today?" And for us it was much more than a frivolous song on a cruise. For us it was definitely a final good-bye to the homeland where we were born and raised and where our families were buried. And especially to the adults, it was a tearjerker, to be sure. I myself remember seeing my aunt standing on the docks and waving to us and in my ten-year-old heart I knew, I knew--I felt I may never see her again.

But as the weather got warmer, as I mentioned before, things got a lot brighter and people's spirits became more positive and they were looking forward to reaching the destination, which meant freedom. Freedom to be out of Germany, to be out of the hellhole it had become.

The Captain, however, had heard some rumors that there might be trouble upon reaching Havana, Cuba; that it was possible that the Cuban government would not allow the passengers to disembark because the ship that had left before us had been turned away. And so he decided to call together a few men from among the passengers because he felt he might have to communicate some bad news to the passengers. The Captain was a very sensitive and very intelligent; a highly intelligent man. Years later we heard about him and that he was really a Renaissance man who loved classical music. He played the cello, he wrote poetry, and was quite the opposite of what one might have imagined a German Captain of a ship to be in 1939. He was not a Nazi, it turned out, and he was determined to take his passengers to their destination because that was his job. So he called together a few of the men from among the passengers to act as a liaison between himself and the passengers. Probably he realized that a man in a German uniform at this time in history, when so much had happened in Germany, and when the people on board had suffered so much already, that a man in such a uniform might be intimidating and not really trustworthy; and he figured that a group of passengers would be a good way to communicate with the passengers. At first there were five gentlemen who were called to the Captain's quarters. Later on they added two more gentlemen to this committee. Most of the men were lawyers and there was a doctor amongst them and also a businessman. There were, no, actually there were two doctors on the committee and two businessmen and the rest were lawyers, summing up when the committee was complete, seven people.

My father was chosen by these men to be the Chairman of this committee. And so a period of time began when I didn't see very much of my father, especially not during the day, and many times it was late at night until he came to the cabin, even though he ate

with us every day. But as we came closer and closer to Havana, the more often he seemed to be in the Captain's quarters.

News had been wired to the ship that there may be trouble landing the passengers and telegrams began to be sent out to Jewish organizations in New York and to people of importance throughout the world. That meant that telegrams were sent to President Roosevelt and to his wife, Eleanor Roosevelt, and to Prime Minister Chamberlain of England, and to the mayor of St. Louis in Missouri, because, kind of fishing for help because of the name.

We reached Havana after two weeks and the ship did not pull into port. The authorities came on board, uniformed shore patrol, and all kinds of Cuban officers. And the ship threw anchor about a mile outside of the harbor. We children would ask these men, who let us play with their hats and who smiled at us, "When can we get off?" And the answer was always, "*Mañana,*" a word that I've never quite forgotten in Spanish. It means, "Tomorrow."

I remember our entry into the harbor of Havana. It was early in the morning and the houses along the shoreline all were in pastel colors. And they were outlined, sort of, by palm trees and the beach in front of that. It was a beautiful sight, a magic land to me. I had only seen pictures of palm trees and here was a whole city with lovely little houses and the golden-domed capitol, which looked very much like the capitol in Washington, DC, except that the dome was golden. And it seemed like a magic land. Plus the weather was balmy. It was warm. I've always loved warm weather. And it was just such a lovely sight. And I was so happy that we would be staying in this place for a while, at least.

But it was not to be. People had lined up their luggage on deck. All the luggage had been brought up and tables had been set up to process the disembarkation. And a few people seemed to start leaving the ship when everything stopped. And from then on, the whole situation seemed to change.

When we were not making any progress in leaving the ship, after a while, little boats started to surround the *St. Louis*. Being in the harbor, the ship was in somewhat shallow waters and projected to quite a height out of the water. And the little boats which came out to, with people who were looking for their relatives, seemed to be far down below us. I remember it that way, but sometimes the heights and depths to a child are much exaggerated. But that's how I remember it--this big ship, with little boats, surrounding it day after day. You see, there were many relatives and family members who had come to Havana to meet their loved ones who were on the *St. Louis*. My cousins who were on board the ship had their father already in the United States. He had preceded them in this immigration, and he had come down to Havana from New York to meet his family. And he came out on this little boat and, as did so many others, and people would be lining the deck and also the portholes in their cabins. And somebody would shout, "Could you please find so and son? I'm the father, I'm the husband, I'm the uncle, I'm a friend, I'm a cousin." And people would be called that somebody's looking

for them. And there was all this shouting going on. And I know that my cousins saw their father and could only shout some words to him but they couldn't touch him or hold his hand or give him a hug. And it seemed very sad to me that they were in that kind of a predicament, as were so many other passengers. This scene was to be going on day after day, as long as we were sitting there in the harbor, for, until it got dark every night. They came out early and they were there until late in the evening. It was a very disconcerting scene.

I don't think that the publicity of what was going on was too favorable toward Cuba. And after a week the Cuban government requested that the ship leave the harbor. They said that the conferences and the communication would go on, but that the ship had to leave the harbor. In the meantime, the Captain had told the spy that, "If the passengers can't leave the ship, you can't leave the ship either, to do whatever you have to do in Havana." And the spy told the Captain, "If you don't allow me to leave the ship, you must know we have your family in Germany and you'd better think about the consequences." So, the Captain had to let the spy leave the ship to complete his mission. The Captain himself donned civilian clothes, as is shown by photographs, and went into Havana to try and confer with the powers that be to allow the passengers to leave.

Eventually a declaration came forth saying that if there were funds enough to pay five hundred dollars per head for each passenger, the Cuban government would consider allowing the passengers to come on land and they would probably put the passengers into a confined area on the Isle of Pines. How wonderful that would have been is something we could only conjecture. It never did happen in the first place.

Somebody had come down from New York from one of the Jewish organizations and had the money with him. But he wanted to bargain with President Bru, who had declared the immigration permits as illegal. And he thought he would try and reduce the price a little bit. In the meantime, President Bru had set a deadline for these communications and declared, "The deadline is over. I'm not going to accept any kind of money. The ship has to leave." That was the final word from the Cuban government, and the Captain only requested one more day so he could load provisions, because after all, he only had enough provisions to make this trip one way. And he was permitted to do that.

The day that the *St. Louis* sailed out of the harbor was probably the saddest day for the passengers that they spent on the ship. Slowly the motors started to rev up. And with the accompaniment of the shore patrols and cars upon cars lining the ocean front boulevard that accompanied us until they could go no further, tooting their horns, and the people in the boats shouting after us encouragements and "¡*Hasta la vista*!" which means, "I hope to see you again," the ship left Havana out to high seas. And I can imagine how desperate the people on board really were.

We had already had an attempted suicide while we were still in the harbor. A man who was so despondent after his experiences in a concentration camp, and on the

prospect of not being able to leave the ship, had jumped overboard and had cut his wrists. And a German sailor jumped after him and rescued him and he was taken to a hospital in Havana. His wife and daughter who were on board were not allowed to join him there, and after he--his wounds were healed, his physical well-being was restored, he was sent back to England where, meanwhile, his daughter and his wife had landed. So imagine, the man jumps overboard and tries to--he cuts his wrists, and his wife and his daughter are not permitted to accompany him to the hospital. They don't know how he will be treated there. And it's just one more example of what people had to suffer.

Many people saw this event. It was after lunch, and many people were taking a *siesta* on deck. And it was an extremely upsetting event; you can imagine. On top of that, the German sailor who rescued this man was written up by the Gestapo on board. You must know that wherever there was a German presence, whether it be on board a ship or in a foreign embassy or many places all over Germany, Gestapo was always present. Gestapo being the Secret Police. And on board the *St. Louis*, the Gestapo posed as the firemen of the crew and they were present and kept tabs on everyone and had regular indoctrination sessions for the crew, to keep them in line; to make sure there was no fraternization between sailors and passengers.

Slowly we approached the shores of Miami Beach and as we passed by, we could clearly see the luxurious hotels which lined the ocean front, the ocean front boulevard, which turns out to be Collins Avenue. I remember it as a child, seeing these beautiful high structures, and in 1989 when the *St. Louis* survivors had a reunion in Miami, exactly on the 50th anniversary of our passing Miami Beach on the *St. Louis*, we were taken out in a private yacht to exactly the place where the *St. Louis* had passed. And it corroborated my memory as to being able to see all the details of this beautiful avenue with its beckoning luxury, that we could see as the ship slowly passed by.

At that time, on the *St. Louis*, the Captain had thought that perhaps approaching Miami Beach at night, he might be able to land the passengers. But the Congress sent down military planes and the shore patrol in the waters close to Miami made sure that the ship kept moving. This was an added insult to the people on the ship, to send military planes. It was unbelievable. After all, the majority of the passengers on board only wanted to wait for their turn on the quota system to come into the United States. They had all the prerequisites, the proper papers, and visas and affidavits and guarantors. What was the harm of taking in 900 some people, which included 200 some children, in this country, that was so large and had so much potential, to give a safe haven to these poor souls on board? In retrospect it's something I don't understand at all.

Tape two, side two:

LL: Liesl Loeb. Now the really busy time began for the gentlemen of the committee. Day and night they were called to the Captain's quarters. Day and night telegrams went out. Day after day, encouraging messages were posted outside of the elevators throughout the ship, encouraging people and telling them that they are in contact with this or that country, this or that organization, especially with the Jewish, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, whose offices in Paris were also in contact with us. When telegrams arrived that were encouraging, they were posted also on these bulletin boards. Much of this material is now in Washington, DC at the Holocaust Museum, because my father had the, many of the original material that was the communication means with the passengers in those dark days that we were on high seas going no-where.

The Captain tried to stay in the Western Hemisphere, just in case some good news might come through that could take us quickly back to Havana, or perhaps into one of the other Central or South American countries, with whom there was also communications. The cry for help was publicized in all the press of the world, but there was no answer from any one for the time being. And eventually, the *St. Louis* was ordered to return to Europe. It had to resume its cruise schedule between New York and Havana. And as much as the Hamburg-America line was trying to be helpful, after all, I suppose, business is business, and the ship had to return. And we couldn't endlessly stay on the water without any end in sight.

I know one of the wires, as we approached Europe, requested the Joint office in Paris to try and find another ship to take over the passengers in case the *St. Louis* had to resume its cruise schedule and to delay having to return to Germany. Not only that, there was a small piece of paper that I found among my father's documents. It was written in, scribbled in pencil on a torn off piece of paper and in German it said, "When the ship reaches Hamburg, there will be over 100 empty cabins." It was a desperate and threatening and unbelievably terrorizing message. There were some young teenagers, or I would say perhaps late, male teenagers, who were hatching a plot to take over the ship, to commit a mutiny. And luckily the committee found out about it and discouraged these young people from taking such steps. It would have been unthinkable. Also, patrols were formed to look in on cabins, to make sure that nobody was going to attempt any desperate acts. And the committee people were visible practically all the waking hours of the passengers, assuring them and encouraging them, even though they themselves sometimes didn't know why they are doing this, because there was nothing to be encouraged about.

We had been on board since May 13th. On June 13th, a telegram arrived on board. That telegram also is now in Washington, DC. It came from England and it said that four countries--England, Holland, Belgium and France--would be willing to take one quarter

each of the passengers. When the news was ascertained that it was really so, immediately the passengers were asked to assemble and the happy news was announced to them both by the Captain himself and also the committee. And you can imagine that the slow realization that after all they didn't have to go back to Germany, came upon the passengers. In retrospect, what could have been, if we had returned to Germany? Nobody had a home any more. Nobody had money any more. Nobody had any means of living any more. The relatives that were still behind barely had enough to get along on their own, because they had no means of making a living any more either. And so the solution would have been to put us into a concentration camp. That would have been our, the solution to our problem, and our fate.

However, the Captain had confided to the committee that if nothing else came forth, he would take the ship off the coast of England. He would set it on fire, in a way that would not endanger the passengers, and it would force the British to take the passengers in. However, it didn't ever have to come to that, thank goodness. The telegram with the good news of our redemption arrived, and so then plans had to be made how to divide up the passengers into each of these four countries. Some people had relatives in any of these countries. Some people may have had bank accounts there or some other reasons of going to the continent, that is to say, to Holland, France or Belgium. But the majority of people wanted to go to England. However, that, it wasn't possible to grant these requests. England, after all, was somewhat separated from the continent by a body of water and one felt a little safer, being as far away from Germany as possible. The committee set up tables on deck and everything was properly organized. People were asked to give certain information as to relatives in certain countries and addresses of these relatives and other information. And all this information was taken down.

The ship arrived in Antwerp on June 17th, 1939. I remember the date so distinctly, because June 17th was my birthday, my 11th birthday. The passengers had been aboard that ship for 40 days and this was the day of our rescue. Mr. Morris Troper, who was the Chairman of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, with headquarters in Paris, had been responsible for our rescue. It was through his efforts that finally these four countries agreed to take in the passengers of the *St. Louis*. And on that day he was expected to come aboard in Antwerp, where the ship landed on June 17th, together with his secretary and with his wife and an entourage of people. All the children on board had been gathered together on deck and formed a semi-circle when Mr. Troper came on board. And because it was my birthday, and because of the hard work that my father had performed, I was allowed to greet Mr. Troper in the name of all the children on board. And my father wrote this little speech for me, which in essence said that we were sorry that we couldn't greet him with flowers, because our flower shop had long been depleted of its merchandise, after being under way for 40 days. It was a small little speech, but Mr. Troper took it much to heart and the next day sent me a bunch of beautiful red roses. That

was my first gift of flowers from a gentleman, I suppose. Pictures were taken of the girl with the flowers, and in the hardcover book, *The Voyage of the Damned*, it is included in that book.

In retrospect, I have to say that I am eternally grateful to the JDC for its efforts on behalf of the *St. Louis* passengers, as well as for its efforts still going on throughout the world for people who are politically persecuted and who need help, who need to be rescued, who need to be fed, who need to be nurtured. I think it's a most wonderful organization. It deserves everyone's support.

To get back to June 17th and Antwerp, eventually people began to disembark. And here's a humorous note. On board there had been a very heavy, obese lady, who unfortunately had broken her leg and was in a cast and had difficulty getting around. The children, being children, had nicknamed her "Big Bertha," and were now quite curious to see how she would get off the ship. Perhaps they would have to take her off with a crane. And everyone was watching to see what would happen. After all, in even the saddest situations, children do have a way of getting through things with their own sense of humor, so to speak.

The people going to France and to Holland were taken per land to their destinations. People were also put up in camps until homes could be found for them or families could be found who would take them in. Because after all, an influx of a sudden group of several hundred people had to be put up somewhere. And many of these countries were not set up to simply put them into hotels. The people who went to England, however, were first put up into hotels until homes could be found for them. My family and I--my father and mother and myself--were bound for England, and we were transferred together with all the other passengers going to England, onto a small German merchant ship, the *S.S. Rakotis*. It was spelled R-A-K-O-T-I-S. And it took another few days for us to reach Southampton.

During this little trip on the *Rakotis*, my father and I were taking a walk on deck and I noticed these heavy rolls of what looked like carpeting, rolled up in brown paper. It's the best way I can describe it. And I said to my father, "What do you think is in these big rolls?" And my father said, "Child, those are cannons." And he was absolutely right. Hitler was ready at a moment's notice to go to war. And this little merchant ship, together with probably the entire German merchant fleet, was ready to arm itself at a moment's notice.

We arrived in Southampton and took a train from there to London, where we were received by the committee that was going to look after us while we were staying in England. *St. Louis* passengers were considered guests in England. They were not permitted to work and they were supported with a meager sustenance from the Jewish organization housed in the Bloomsbury House of London.

This on the one hand allowed people to learn the language, to relax, to finally resume a life of more normalcy. And also it seemed like *St. Louis* people got together

socially in London very often and shared their common experiences and made plans when the time came to emigrate from England, and just enjoyed each other's company. They had so much to talk about, so much to share from the past few months. Everybody was in the same situation. Nobody had any money. Everybody was being supported and when the get-togethers occurred, most everybody had to bring his own cup and his own saucer and his own little cake plate. Some "yesterday cake" was bought, and coffee was made, and everybody was happy to be in a safe place, in spite of everything. So everybody was poor. So what? In the wintertime, when it got cold, and you had to put money into the little heater that was in the room. Instead of doing that, my parents often went to the free library and spent time there. It was warm there, and they could be comfortable for a few hours of the day.

To get back to our first days in England. We went to York in the northern part of England and we accepted the hospitality of the Rowntree family, a truly Quaker family with the highest principles of Quakerdom being practiced. We lived in a beautiful villa. Food was plentiful. Our hosts were most generous and hospitable and it seemed like life was pretty good, considering what we had experienced. But soon my father felt that living in York, we were too far removed from where things were happening, which was in London. My father was anxious to get out of Europe as soon as possible and he wanted to be near the headquarters of the committee that would further our emigration out of Europe. And so at the end of August, we moved back to London and we moved in, first into a rather religious Jewish neighborhood, Stamford Hill.

The end of August was also the time when the politics in Europe were coming to a very threatening situation. As a matter of fact, on September 1st, the Germans invaded Poland and all the school children in London were summoned to the playgrounds of their schools. I had been enrolled in a neighborhood school, the Jewish Secondary School of London. It was a very Orthodox Jewish day school, because this was the neighborhood where lots of Orthodox people lived. Not only that, apparently a lot of Jewish refugees were living in this neighborhood as well. So that many of the children who came to the playground on that day, spoke German. Some of them didn't know how to speak any English. I had already learned quite a bit. And everybody gathered on the playgrounds. We were issued gas masks in little boxes that we had to wear around our necks and we were shown how to put on these gas masks. We had also been told to bring our lunch along, to pack a lunch, and perhaps a little bit more, and clothing for 24 hours.

This went on for three days. On the third of September, England declared war on the Axis--Germany, and, I suppose, also Italy. And things became more earnest. The school children who gathered on the playgrounds on that day were taken to train stations and bus stations and were dispersed to the countryside, outside of London. The authorities wanted to make sure that the children would be safe. They didn't know what to expect when war broke out and they wanted to assure the safety of the children.

Our school ended up in Bedfordshire in three villages. We were kind of separated by age. There were three villages. The central village was the one which housed the kosher canteen, where we would eat our main meals. The village was called Clifton, and the people who took in the evacuees were subsidized by the English government. I was very fortunate to be billeted with a family by the name of Whittington, Mr. and Mrs. Whittington. They were in their 70s, and I think, in retrospect, they were very brave to take in two foreign children who might not know the language too well. And they had no knowledge of what type of children we were. I mention two children. As a matter of fact, a little boy age eight, his name was Eddie Shul, was my companion at the Whittingtons'. His parents and my parents had rooms in the same house, in Stamford Hill, and so we kind of teamed up together when we got off the buses and it was time for us to be housed with people. And I think he was happy that he knew me and that he was with somebody that was familiar to him.

Mr. Whittington was the village shoemaker, and after a while I was his helper in carrying out the finished shoes. Mr. Whittington had bought me a bicycle and that helped me in my job. And for each pair of shoes that I carried out, he paid me two pennies, or tuppence. So I made a little allowance for myself along the way. Eddie and I were both very happy with the Whittingtons. They were almost like our grandparents. They were very sweet, old people. And we loved being there and living in their little house with them. The village was quite small. Our house was right opposite the church. And our classes in Clifton were held in the large hall of the church, the social hall of the church. It was a very big hall, as I remember it. And to heat it, there was a very small coal-burning stove. I had volunteered to start the coals going each morning, because I was living so close by to the church. And I would be up and over there about 7:00 o'clock in the morning and start up the coal burning in the oven, in the stove. There was another reason why I was anxious to volunteer for that, because watching the fire I could sit near the stove and be warm, at least during the assembly time, before classes began, and get a little bit warmed up at the beginning of the day.

We had arrived in Clifton in September, but as the season progressed it proved to be a very severe winter and sometimes the snow was up to my waist. And being very small, a small person to begin with, it was difficult to negotiate even the trip between the Whittington house and the church across the street. But life settled in, and I became accustomed to a whole new way of life–a whole new lifestyle. The school being Orthodox Jewish, the *kashrut* laws, the laws of keeping kosher, were strictly reinforced and we were permitted to eat with our landlord, only breakfast and high tea and supper. We were not allowed to eat any meat. Our main meals were served in our kosher canteen, and the system was run a little bit like systems were run in the army. Students had to take turns in serving, in preparing meals, in KP, kitchen police, peeling potatoes and vegetables and helping with the preparation of the food. Everyone had a turn and

everyone did it very cheerfully. Nobody complained. We were just glad to be able to get a warm meal every day. And even if it wasn't always to our liking, being hungry we ate.

In addition to sitting and eating together a meal every day, the highlight of the week was always the Sabbath, the *Shabbat*. On Fridays the main meal was served in the evenings and dinner was enhanced with much singing of songs both on Friday nights and on Saturday mornings after services. Services were conducted by students and teachers. I became very well-versed in the prayers, in Hebrew, in the Grace After Meals, which I memorized after a while. And I loved all the songs that we sang all the time. Everyone was in high spirits and observing the Sabbath strictly, became a routine that one just got used to. You didn't ride your bike. You didn't ride at all on Sabbath. You walked wherever you had to go. And your methods of playing were also restricted to certain things that were not done on Saturdays and certain things that you could do on Saturdays. But it became just part of our lifestyle and I became completely used to it, to a point that when I visited my parents during my evacuation, I visited them twice--on Hanukkah and on Passover--I did not eat meat in my mother's house. On the other hand, my parents, after all, didn't have too much food to share, and in retrospect I'm glad that I didn't eat meat so that they could have a little bit more of the meager food supplies that they could afford to buy. As a for instance, my mother would buy two ounces of salami for the whole week, for instance. Very little butter. And generally they were on very much of a restricted diet. In retrospect we children had plenty of food and were well-taken care of and looked after.

I made friends with other children at the school, some friendships which have lasted to this day, one friendship actually. And it was an experience that even though I was separated from my parents again, as I had been when I lived in Bonn and I was living with strange people, I was treated well and it was an experience that I wouldn't have wanted to miss in a way. It certainly added something to my life, an experience that perhaps matured me in a way and taught me the values of friendship and loyalty and being able to cope with any situation that comes up. And to this day I'm grateful for that, because as most people have experienced, one does have to adapt to many different situations that come in in a lifetime.

We did not--(author) [tape off then on]--not feel much of the war in that year that I spent in Clifton with the school. Nor was there much war activity in London. Certainly, one saw few young men in the streets and if one did, they were mostly in uniform. Once I remember that an air raid siren went off while we were asleep. I woke up and I said to Eddie, "Let's put on our gas masks, just in case." We didn't have a shelter to go to or anything. We didn't really know what to do, so we put on our gas masks and went back to sleep. And when Mrs. Whittington came to wake us up in the morning, she shrieked when she saw us, because it seemed like little monsters from Mars were lying in the beds, when she came to wake us up. It's another episode that brings forth a smile, when I think about it.

In the meantime, there was an occurrence at Dunkirk that changed the whole war situation. There was a time when the Ascot races began, and apparently most of the officers in the British military came home to attend the Ascot races and Hitler had decided that this might be the right time to invade England. But at the last minute he changed his mind. However, at Dunkirk, there was severe bombings from German military planes. There were no officers available to give the orders, and it was generally a big defeat, that battle. And after Dunkirk, things changed. For one thing, all the German and Austrian Jewish male refugees from the age of 14 on up, were rounded up and interned. It was said that amongst the refugees, there were German spies posing as refugees.

Tape three, side one:

LL: Liesl Loeb. My father was among those who were rounded up and interned. He ended up in a camp on the Isle of Man, together with many, many other, others in the same boat. And my father's mail to my mother was censored. I have a stack of his letters, with the censorship marks on it, at home. In it he often wrote about some of the people he met. And he met some rather auspicious persona--writers and musicians, all kinds of people. And also there was quite a rumor line going on in the camps--all kinds of information as to where to go and whom to see if it was your turn to leave Great Britain and emigrate and so on. And eventually, when our quota number came through that summer of 1940, my father was able to tell my mother which offices she had to visit in order to process him, to get him expedited insofar as, I think he had to pass a physical and had to see some authorities in London. And she was able to accomplish all this because of the information that my father wrote to her from camp.

I was very upset hearing that my father once again had been arrested, so to speak, and I was quite anxious to get back to my mother when school ended in June. Even though the roundups had taken place and Dunkirk had been a very negative aspect of the first war years, nothing much had happened to London so far. The school year ended in June and I returned to my mother. But soon the air raids began.

We, as I said before, we lived in this rooming house where lots of other refugees lived as well. It was kind of a humorous situation at times. The owners of the house were a couple, who were school teachers. They lived in a house nearby, a few blocks away. They had a daughter my age and sometimes they invited me to come over and play with their daughter, as a matter of fact. And they had invested in this house, taking advantage of the need that refugees had to live some place. And most of the refugees couldn't afford to pay for a whole apartment. They made do with a room in a rooming house. Next door to us lived a Polish opera singer, who was also an air raid warden in his spare time. And across from us lived a family from Cologne. And downstairs lived a Hungarian opera singer. And upstairs lived some Irish prostitutes. And after the invasion of Belgium, we got some Belgian refugees into the house. There was only one bathroom on the second floor and one bathroom on the first floor. And everyone had to share that bathroom. If you wanted a bath you had to pay money in a slot in order to draw hot water. If you wanted heat you had to put money in the little heater. If you wanted to cook something on a--you know--an electric burner, you had to put money in that. If you wanted to put the light on you had to put money somewhere. All utilities were well-monitored with little slots where money had to be deposited. Of course, also the telephone downstairs in the hall was a pay telephone. The only good thing about all this was that lots of these money devouring slots didn't work too well and you often got more back than you put in, which was a blessing. And the idea was to find out which machines were so blessed.

My mother got busy trying to get all the things done she had to do, once it was clear that our number had come through and we could possibly leave England within a short period of time. She would go into town and if there were any phone messages she would call in once in a while, in the public phone downstairs in the hall, and I would take the messages for her. Also, some of the pennies that I had earned carrying shoes out for Mr. Whittington, and money that I earned together with my co-students in the school, helping the farmers, were quite helpful to my mother, in order to have car fare and to use the telephone.

As the spring came along, the students in the school were told that we must help the farmers, and so there was a period of time where we got up at five o'clock in the morning and were out in the fields picking currants and picking peas and various other vegetables. And for a certain amount of fruits or vegetables that you picked, for a certain weight you got paid. And I put the money away and I was happy that I could help my mother a little bit that way. It was, unfortunately, not pleasant for her to have to take from me, but we had to do what we had to do.

As the summer progressed, the bombings increased and today we know the spirit of the time as the "Blitz of London". We lived in what was essentially a private home and it had a back yard. And homes like that, all over London, had what was called an Anderson shelter. These were hastily built at the beginning of the war. And what it was, was a hole in the ground, perhaps three feet into the ground. It was an area that was dug out, that would eventually hold perhaps six people along each long side and two people across the bottom. There were benches, so to speak, installed, which were really boards mounted on some bricks to sit on. And then the whole thing was covered by a corrugated metal dome. And that corrugated metal dome was covered with dirt, so that from the sky you couldn't see that it was anything than just a yard with dirt in it; with, you know--you couldn't tell that these were shelters where people were hiding from the bombs. And starting in late June, we would pack, my mother and I would pack a brown bag with sweaters and long slacks and perhaps a blanket and something to eat for a snack during the night and for possibly breakfast in the morning. And no sooner was it bedtime--perhaps at around ten o'clock at night--the sirens would sound and everybody scrambled out into the shelter. Many people in London went to the Underground, the subways, well, because they were very far below the street level and were pretty safe from bombing. But in these private homes, people usually sat in their Anderson shelters.

In our case there were about 20 people living in that house, and most of the time, the men would stay outside and the women and children sat in the shelter. But I do remember one night, when we had fire bombing. The bombs would burst into flames just before they would hit the ground. And you could see these things coming down en masse. And it was very, very scary. And I remember that the men all jumped into the shelter when they saw those fire bombs dropping.

By the time we were ready to leave England, my mother and I had not slept in a bed for a full night for close to three months.

As the end of August approached, it seemed that all was ready for us to leave England. We were told that we would take a train from London to Glasgow and that the men had been brought to Linfield, which was a camp much closer to London, and were going to be taken onto the train and would be traveling in the back of the train in a sealed car under guard of Scotland Yard as though they were common criminals.

All along the trip to Scotland we really weren't very sure whether or not the men were really there. It was just hoped that they would be. It was a long trip, an overnight trip, and three times this train was stopped because of air raids. And finally we did arrive in Glasgow, which seemed a very dreary city. We were taken to the port and there the customs officers examined us very thoroughly. The lining of my coat was ripped open to look for possible hidden money. We were not allowed to take out any valuables or anything that could possibly incriminate us as spies and so on, as though anybody had any money. But then there were some exceptions. For instance, we were traveling together with a lady that my mother had befriended, and she had a young child, a little girl who was carrying a doll. And this lady had confided in my mother that she had hidden money in the head of the doll and then pasted the wig back onto the doll's head. It was one of these porcelain dolls. My mother got terribly nervous about this information. It would have been so much better if this lady had never confided in her. Because, why should she have been nervous for somebody else's daring? At any rate, in spite of the bodily examinations, nobody thought to take the hair off of that doll and the lady got through with flying colors. But much too much of a worry to my mother, which shouldn't have happened. We boarded the ship and we were anxiously waiting to see my father. Nothing happened, and the ship was ready to leave toward evening, when finally the men filed on board and what a wonderful and moving reunion that must have been. I don't--I know only that I was just overwhelmed to see my father. And my mother has told me many times, that the reunion of the men with their families, made the sailors cry.

What had happened was that somebody had decided to put this carload full of men from the internment camp onto another ship that was going to New Zealand, and the men had actually started a mutiny because they were not going to put up with that sort of thing. You see, the British deported many of the younger men, who had been rounded up from among the Jewish refugees, and shipped them out to New Zealand and to Australia,[2] where they were then, not confined, but where they were out of any sort of area that

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[2] "Some 8,000 aliens were sent to Canada and Australia..." (*Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, NY: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1990, p.610) No mention is made of New Zealand. For an experience of this internment, see testimony of Harold Stern, collection of Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive.

could be harmful to England. And somebody took it upon themselves to put all these men, who were for the most part older and family men, whose families were waiting for them on the ship, and thought they're going to ship them out to Australia as well or to New Zealand.

At any rate, the outcome was happy and our reunion was ecstatic. I think that the Jewish organizations had paid for the tickets and that at a later time my parents and the families reimbursed these organizations, once they were in a situation to do that. Our cabin was on D deck, which meant no porthole-inside cabins. We had many many children on board. As a matter of fact, this ship was a Scottish liner, it went under the Scottish flag, and the name was the *S.S. Cameronia.* It did not have a first class. It had a second, a tourist class and a third class. And of course we were in the third class. We had a small cabin. Again, I was in the top bunk. And we had to take the elevators up to any of the public rooms, into the dining rooms and so on. The tourist class was booked almost entirely for British children, who were being sent to the United States and more so to Canada for the duration. Many people assured their children's safety by sending them to the Western Hemisphere.

Had we been attacked by a submarine, I am certain that anybody on D deck, which included ourselves, could have never made it to the upper decks at all. We did have convoy, and we made the trip safely. The ship before us, and the ship after us, were not so lucky. They were followed by German submarines, as we were as well. I don't know if they didn't have convoys with them. At any rate, we made it, and unfortunately, they didn't.

On the morning of September 10th 1940, we sailed into New York harbor. It was still a little bit dark and we saw a city lit-up and it was a sight that was unbelievable. We hadn't seen a city lit up for years. Already in the last years before the war in Germany, there were semi-blackouts. One had to have an air raid shelter in one's home, mostly in a cellar or in a basement. And a house had to have blackout facilities. And many times there were inspections and as I remember it, there was semi-blackout the last months that I lived in Germany. We came to London. Sure, it was all lit-up. It was wonderful. But when we came back from York at the end of August, the war began and again there was complete blackout. As a matter of fact, the headlights of cars had to be covered with a blue paint and when we had some really foggy, real pea soup foggy London nights, there were squads of people who were employed as guides for the busses. They walked in front of the buses with subdued flashlights so the buses could get through, because there were no street lights and it was very dark. The only light that came from the sky were the search lights that were constantly strafing the skies every night. It was a kind of ghostly atmosphere. And to see a city like New York with the lights on was like getting to Oz, I suppose. Maybe that's a good comparison.

And so we sailed into New York harbor, past the Statue of Liberty. And finally, finally, we were really in America. My concept of America, I think, had been fed by,

perhaps by movies, and I thought that everywhere would be skyscrapers and cowboys would be running around the streets. And so I was in for a brand new adventure of exploring my new country and my new surroundings.

Our relatives, who had furnished our affidavit, were at the pier to pick us up and took us immediately to Philadelphia. The first few days we stayed with them. They had a house in Oak Lane. They had two little boys. One was two at the time and one was six. And I was to stay with them for a while, until my parents could settle down and manage to have a home. In the beginning that wasn't really possible because, of course, my father had to find something to do. He obviously couldn't practice law. And my mother, who had not been a working woman in Germany and had herself two servants at home, had not much of a choice as to what kind of work she could do. As I mentioned before, I think in 1939, in 1940, the country was just getting over the Depression. And for refugees who did not have too many skills, there wasn't a whole big choice of jobs available. So she began at first to be a domestic help in the household. Her first position didn't last very long. But then she found a place, in a house in Elkins Park, where she was to cook and to mind a baby and where my father could live with her. There was an apartment on the top floor of the house and my parents could live there. My father could have his meals there. And in the meantime he was looking for something to do. And he began by peddling European homemade candy from door to door. He had found another refugee who was making European type candy, chocolates, and in knocking on doorbells and then being referred to other people, he made a lot of contacts. Eventually, my father found a job with a German newspaper, which was being published, in those days, on a daily basis. It was called *The Philadelphia Gazette Demokrat*. The last word *Demokrat* was spelled D-E-M-O-K-R-A-T. This German newspaper was published daily, all through WWI, all through WWII, until, in the 1950's, it merged with the New York German language newspaper which was called the New York *Staatszeitung*. And that's spelled S-T-A-A-T-S, and the second word is Z-E-I-T-U-N-G. Eventually these papers became weekly and then eventually ceased to publish because there was obviously not a public for, for a German newspaper any more. But at any rate, it was what was considered then a well-paying job, from papers I found among my mother's things. There was an income tax return and it seemed that my father was earning $22 a week. And that was considered a very good salary at the time.

My mother had meanwhile graduated from domestic to factory worker, to a clerk in a jewelry store, and she enjoyed that job very much. And they were able to rent an apartment. And I was, finally, after three years able to move back to my parents. I think that first year in the United States, besides being interesting for me, interesting because the school system was so different--it seemed very easy to me--but at the same time it was also painful because I would visit my parents on Friday evenings. I would take the subway and visit them. They lived further into the city around Erie Avenue and 19th Street, at the time. And on Sunday nights, I had to say good-bye, and take the subway

back to Oak Lane, to the suburbs, and stay with the family that was giving me a home. And, of course, I appreciated their hospitality. They were very kind to me. I loved the two little boys. And I also enjoyed the friends I had made in the school that I was attending. But nevertheless, it was hard for me every Sunday to say good-bye. My father would walk me to the subway, and I wouldn't see him again until the next weekend. I often think back on that, and in remembering that, sometimes tears come to my eyes. It's funny, there were a lot of other experiences that you might think would draw tears, but it was just a child's yearning to be back with her parents and to have a real home together. And I was so happy when that finally became a reality.

We moved into a third-floor apartment in a neighborhood, which at that time had these beautiful old row house, brownstone rowhouses with porches three and four stories high. And it was near the synagogue that we were attending. And many of our neighbors were also refugees. As a matter of fact it had the nickname of being the Fourth *Reich*. It is, Germany was the Third *Reich* and they called Park Avenue at the time the Fourth *Reich*. And *Reich* is spelled R-E-I-C-H.

So there were also children of refugees in that block, or in those two blocks where so many of us lived. Quite a lot of Jewish people lived there. It was near the original building of *Adath Jeshurun* on Broad and Susquehanna and also near Gratz College, near Dropsie College, and the rabbis of these institutions lived on our block. And it was comfortable to live there. I attended the Clymer Public School at 12th and Cambria, which was kind of a blue collar neighborhood, closer to Lehigh Avenue, not in our immediate neighborhood. And I did like going to school there very much, because the teachers were much more progressive, much younger than they had been in the school that I attended in the suburbs. And even though some of the student body was a rather tough student population, I was kind of a novelty to them and I made friends and I was happy there.

I graduated from the Clymer School in eighth grade and received the American Legion Award, which was a source of great pride to my parents. From that school, I enrolled and attended the Philadelphia High School for Girls, and for me that was one of the happiest times in my life. Four years I attended the school at 17th and Spring Gardens (Street) [author]. It was a college preparatory school, only offering the academic course. I majored in languages and art. And I found that American schools could really be fun. You could choose some of your subjects. And after school there were so many things to do that were fun. German and English schools, just simply, weren't like that at all. In England, we had a sports day on Wednesday afternoons, but to be able to choose some of your subjects, and to have clubs, and all kinds of fun things to do after classes, that was not in the picture in European schools. And I had the time of my life there.

Besides that, though, I also found myself an after school job as soon as I was old enough to work. And Wednesday afternoons and Saturdays I worked in a department store and except for $2.00 I gave my mother my earnings because she needed it. Unfortunately, my father did not live too long once we came to this country. He lived

only another five years and then he passed away. I was only 17 years old. I was a junior in high school and I had to help my mother as much as I could. I would have liked to go to college, but it was not possible for my mother to support me, even though I had a scholarship opportunity.

And eventually, after I graduated, I married almost immediately after I graduated high school. I had met my husband, who was a GI and had been in the Army/Air Force during the war. And I met him in a place called the Central Club. The Central Club of Philadelphia was a club that was formed for refugees from Central Europe and they had a youth group. They had a building, which was right close by to where I lived at the time. There was a restaurant.

Tape three, side two:

LL: (When the boys--) [author]--came home from the war, in 1945, the boys who had been members of the Central Club certainly came back to socialize. We had dances and it was the opportunity where I met my husband on a hike.

The end of the war, in the summer of 1945, had also brought some very sad news to my family. My father found out that his sister and one of her sons had been murdered in the concentration camps, and that her other son had survived and had returned to Belgium at the time. He immediately had gotten in touch with, us upon his liberation, and eventually he had written his memoirs and sent them to us and thought that we could translate these memoirs and have them published here. We could not believe what we were reading. It was so painful to my family. I think it helped my father along when he was feeling ill, to read such astounding, such an astounding document of brutality. It, I think it, gave him the rest of the shock that sent him to his grave in November of 1945. My mother also found out that her family from Berlin, her sister and husband and child and her mother, had been deported as early as October 1941 from Berlin to the ghetto of Lodz and from there, were deported to parts unknown. One could only conjecture what their end was. My mother's older sister, who had emigrated to Holland with her husband, had been sent to Sobibor and I never really discussed these matters with my mother or told her what I had read about these places because I just didn't want to cause her any more pain.

There was not a family among our friends, who were all Europeans, and immigrants into this country, not one family who did not lose loved ones to the crematoria of the concentration camps. And it was a hard [thing] (author), not to swallow, I suppose. It was something that stayed with us all and it was also a common experience among the friends because we all had loved ones who perished.

After I graduated in January of 1947, I married my husband that following June and we were married, happily, for 40 years. We had two children--Joanie and Joel, a girl and a boy, and we built a new life in our adopted country. Our children were American-born, and I have become, I think, 100 per cent American through the years. I feel at home here, and even though this country, at one time, did not welcome us, eventually we were able to come. We were able to create a new life for ourselves and that I am grateful for. I suppose the experiences that I have survived in my lifetime have made me feel that it is my responsibility to speak about it. I am an eye witness. After my generation dies out, there will be no one else to tell all the stories. It is important that there be a record of these eye witness experiences and so I do devote a great deal of my time in this endeavor. I am 70 years old at this time. I have four grandchildren that are the sunshine of my life. And I am very content in my lifestyle.

A few footnotes, if you will. I have in my possession a letter from a Cuban government official who through the auspices of our Cuban friends had written a permit

for the Joseph family to leave the ship and to debark in Havana. The letter is in Spanish on official letterhead paper. And I had it translated into English, recently, by a Spanish-speaking friend. My father would not leave the ship because as the Chairman of the committee he felt responsible not to abandon this position of trust that had elected him to be the Chairman, and so we never took advantage of that letter.

Another item. In the papers of my mother, who passed away at the age of 92, I found a stack of letters that were sent to my father, in response, to an ad that he had placed in a German language weekly that is still being published. This newspaper is called the *Aufbau*, A-U-F, like Fred. B-A-U. It means "reconstruction." And this newspaper is distributed worldwide. It's published in New York, but it is distributed worldwide. In November of 1941, my father had placed an ad in the *Aufbau* asking former *St. Louis* passengers if they would like him to try and retrieve the monies that they spent on these illegal immigration permits. And he had a whole stack of letters with replies. Some of them even included a three cent stamp postage for his efforts. In these letters, the people said they bought their permits from Mr. Goldsmith or Mr. Schwartz or Mr. Goldstein or Brownstein or obviously all Jewish names, and they paid so much money for these permits. The prices that were paid for these permits all differed, from which I can surmise that Mr. Gonzales sold these permits to middle men, who would then sell them to people who wanted to emigrate out of Germany, who had contacts, who had more contacts, personal contacts, with the people wanting to emigrate in a hurry. And these middle men then charged prices, whatever they could get, from the poor victims who needed these permits. And it's kind of a little bit of a sad statement to see that Jews were plying on the needs of other Jews and making a profit from it. It was bad enough that Mr. Gonzales was making a profit from an, actually illegal document. Apparently my father was not able to accomplish anything, because I would imagine, otherwise, I would have found other correspondence.

Finally, after meeting the Troper family on that day that we reached Europe again, I stayed in touch with Mr. and Mrs. Troper until they died, and the communications were always very, very cordial and very loving in nature, actually. Mrs. Troper had taken a shiner to me and actually had asked my mother if she could take me back to the States with her, to assure my safety. But my father and mother insisted that we are all going to stay together, no matter what comes.

To emphasize one more point. At the time that the *St. Louis* reached Europe again, no one went back to Germany. It has been printed in various publications and books that some people went back to Germany. No, they did not. Nobody who got off the *St. Louis* in Antwerp on June 17th, 1939; nobody went back to Germany at that time. However, the people who went to France, Holland and Belgium, and who did not manage to leave Europe before the outbreak of WWII, due to their quota numbers coming up, and people who did not manage to escape to a neutral country such as Portugal and make their way from there to the States or to other countries outside of Europe, those people,

unfortunately, were overrun by the Nazis when they invaded these countries and were deported to the extermination camps. And sadly enough, at the end of the war, I think that most of the survivors were the ones who went to England. Approximately 250 people survived WWII. Some people stayed in England. Eventually, they were able to work and made new lives for themselves in England and had children and grandchildren born there. And some people came to the States and so on. But unfortunately, the survivor group, by now, is down to a very minimal number.

In 1989 we had a 50th anniversary reunion in Florida, at which time 29 original *St. Louis* survivors came. Most of them, including myself, were children on board, although the older generation was represented by perhaps three or four people. By this time, as we face the 60th anniversary of the ship, naturally, the number of survivors decreases by each year. I don't have any statistics, but it stands to reason that that would be the case.

Captain Schroeder was caught in the beginning of the war with the ship still in this hemisphere. He had to bring the ship back to Germany and managed to do so by January of 1940 by way of Murmansk. Because of his sympathy toward the Jews--he was not--his services as a Captain, were not required. They gave him a desk job. I suppose they didn't have time to give him a trial. And at the end of the war, he was quite destitute, since he also had no pension of any kind. Many of the passengers, the former passengers of the *St. Louis*, helped him after the war, sent him money and sent him food. He also wrote a small book about the *St. Louis* trip in German, which he called *Homeless on High Seas*. In it he also divulges his feelings of sympathy toward his passengers and at one point he quotes that he felt that we were all on another planet, as we were sailing back and forth on the ocean, and not really having a goal or a destination.

When we had our reunion in Florida, we brought over the only living survivor of the Captain's family, his nephew, and he told us many stories about his uncle, the Captain. And eventually, the Captain has been made a Righteous among the Nations at *Yad Vashem* in Yerushalayim, in Israel.

I think these are all the footnotes I can think of, and hope that you find the *St. Louis* story, one of, in a small way, giving a grasp of the Holocaust. Here were less than 1,000 people and a handful survived, as compared to six million, and a comparative handful survived.