Tape two, side one:

NP: Today, this is Natalie Packel, continuing the interview with Hanna Silver, on Tuesday May the 9th, 1995, at Gratz College. Hanna, where did we leave off?

HS: Well, after I had shown you the photographs of the total destruction of my neighborhood, which happened to be the center of Berlin, you asked me, "Where did you live? How did you live? I don't see any buildings standing." So, I want to answer this question. Immediately after the air raid people could not go back to their homes or basements. It took days for the houses to burn out completely, and then many collapsed; at least all the floors and roofs collapsed. The basements had been storage areas. Many people had stored coal in there, so this caught fire. And the basements were smoldering for weeks. There was no water. There was no electricity. So, what people did, they went to a nearby subway station. Being underground it provided at least a roof, if nothing else. So many thousands were sitting on the platforms with their suitcase--the one I described before, the one they always...

NP: The one that you constantly had packed in case you had...

HS: You had with you wherever you went, because it might be that this was all you have. And now it turned out that this suitcase had become the only possession that people had. The subway didn't run for months and months.

NP: Excuse me, Hanna, but you did not have a suitcase, did you?

HS: No, I...

NP: Because you...

HS: Had only a tiny little clutch pocketbook.

NP: As you returned home from work...

HS: Yeah.

NP: You found the building...

HS: Yeah, yeah.

NP: Had been burned.

HS: I had nothing and my mother had taken my little tote bag down to the basement and

take it up. And as you read in that one page I gave you from the Nelson book...

NP: Yes.

HS: It describes how she jumped from the window. So she certainly didn't take anything with her. So people were sitting by the thousands on the platforms of the subways. And I learned later that Goebbels had given orders to flood the subways. I don't know when it was done but there were people floating in the water. Because next to the subway was a canal, or maybe it was a river. And when they opened the flood gates, and people were floating--months later there were still people floating in there. So I do not know exactly what happened because I was not there. So I just kept on walking. And so when I realized that there was no transportation possible--the streets were full of craters from the holes, tank obstacles and fallen debris--so you just kept on walking and walking. And everything was so far away. So I walked to my Aunt Resl, which was my mother's sister. She had moved with her family years ago to a new section at the edge of Berlin, a young community, very young families. And after 1933 as I mentioned to you before, it turned out that many of the young ones were at least Nazi sympathizers if not active Nazis. From each window, whenever there was a celebration, hung a Nazi flag, in contrast to our building. There was not a single one. And one day, a huge *Magen David*...

NP: *Magen David* being the Jewish Star.

HS: The Jewish Star, was painted on the sidewalk, with red paint, real big. And my uncle got a letter which said that they could not expect Germans to live under one roof with the Jewish and would they please move out. And so they found an apartment in the western part of the city, a not-so-new house, but very solid, and mostly middle-aged neighbors who were not active Nazis at all and where their sympathies were lying we don't know. You couldn't look into people's minds. So in 1942 the husband died. Oh, I forgot to mention that her husband had not been Jewish, and there were two children, my two cousins. So her husband died which made her a full Jewess. And they, actually it was not a bomb that hit the house. It was a motor that fell from an airplane, an American plane...

NP: American...

HS: Was shot down and the engine went through the whole house and destroyed all the

apartments there. So my aunt with my cousins are standing in the street and didn't know what to do, where to go. So a middle-aged couple came over to her and then said, "Oh, Mrs. Wagner, you know we have our den; we really don't need it so badly. If you would want to stay with us until you find something else you would be welcome."

NP: Wagner was the name?

HS: Yeah.

NP: W-A-G-N-E-R.

HS: -N-E-R. So, and a Mr. Seidel, S-E-I-D-E-L, he offered them to move in. And they stayed just a couple of weeks or so. But at the moment the difference between standing in the street--and it was November--and having one room, it was a big difference.

NP: It was a blessing, yes.

HS: Yes. So then a woman, we thought of her as a Nazi woman, she was a warden who was in charge of distributing ration cards. She had been bringing the ration cards to my aunt's family--full, regular, normal ration cards, though she knew my aunt was Jewish. She had them been bringing. So now it was only my aunt and my cousins, and she came to her and said, "I have an apartment across the street which takes you out of my district. I could get you that apartment. It is damaged. The woman who owns it is a teacher and is in Bavaria somewhere and she doesn't come back. It doesn't have walls on the inside. They're blown out from the bombs. But I could give it to you." And of course my aunt grabbed it. It was shelter and it had a front door. So she had an apartment and the living room and the bedroom and the kitchen was all one large room, but still it was a place.

NP: And when you went to look for her, Hanna, was she there?

HS: Yes.

NP: Well then you did find her.

HS: Yeah. Well that's where I was heading. It took an hour, an hour-and-a-half. It was...

NP: On foot?

HS: Well there was nothing else. Feet was all you had. And...

NP: And did you have shoes that...

HS: Well they were all one big hole because from walking in the hot ashes and embers. They, the soles were eaten up and...

NP: It burnt them...

HS: Of course the...

NP: Bottom of your soles.

HS: Yeah, yeah, but they were uppers. And there was little there. So to finish the story of my aunt, this woman, whom everybody thought she was a good Nazi, kept on bringing my aunt and cousin full, regular ration cards, without the "J," and that meant she could shop at all times, that she got vegetables and things that--some meat, that the Jews were denied. So this woman of whom everyone thought she was such a good Nazi, kept on keeping my aunt and my cousin and gave them shelter and gave them food. So I set out towards my aunt. And after I got there she wouldn't let me go. She says, "You stay here. I am now your mother and I'll take care of you." So, together--this was now February--until May, we lived together and we held together and we gave each other strength and hope and all. We did not know how close the end really was. And when it was there we didn't know what to make of it. So, this was the story of the friendly Nazi woman who kept them alive.

NP: Her name was?

HS: Ludtke, L-U-D-T-K-E, Mrs. Ludtke. So I moved in with my aunt and cousins. So the nights we spent in the basement, in her basement, and the days I was at work. And then came the...

NP: You were still able to go to work? The work continued...

HS: Well...

NP: The manufacturing was...

HS: The moment you wouldn't go to work you would not get paid and you would not get ration cards and you wouldn't, so everybody tried. We didn't do much work because every little while there was an air raid. But you had to show up and it was quite a distance so you came late and you left early, and you didn't do much, but you could say you were working. And I was glad that I had a job to go to. So then came April 20, which happened to be the Führer's...

NP: 19-...

HS: The Führer's...

NP: '4-...

HS: '45.

NP: Five.

HS: Which happened to be the Führer's birthday. And on that day there were always big parades and a lot to do. And the flags were out. And here, this was the day where all normal life the way we knew it, stopped. Everybody stayed where he happened to be--mostly in their basements. But mothers with children were entitled to go to a fortified bunker. They went there every night and they went home in the morning. So they didn't even hear bombs or--so we go to the basement. Nobody went anywhere. You couldn't go to work and there were no shops open. It was just nothing. This nothingness is impossible to describe to somebody who has no idea.

NP: Total devastation.

HS: So we sat, and we waited. The light bombing that came from the Russians had stopped before we had the heavy bombing which was by the Allies, the American and the English, one by night and one by day. And the Russians had small bombs and they didn't do much damage. But they were falling. You heard it. And so all of a sudden the bombing stopped and it was quiet, so quiet, not one sound, nothing. It was eerie after all the noise that was before. You heard in the distance a few shots, but just here and there. And you sit and you wait, and you don't know for what you wait. Nobody had ever experienced to be a civilian in the middle of a war. And waiting for liberation or revenge or for what? So I was so numb. I couldn't think because I didn't know what to think. So you sit and wait and don't know for what you wait. And nobody knew what was going on a block or two or three away. And you couldn't contact anybody. The people next door, they sent word of mouth but this was the only communication.

NP: And your food supply?

HS: Well so don't call it a supply. So a friend of mine, who worked around the corner where a school had been transformed into a hospital, and he was a salesman for Johnson and Johnson and made himself into a medic; he didn't want to go into the war so he became a medic

and worked there in that hospital. He appointed himself. And he came the day before and he had brought us a small bag about a pound of rice. And this was very good. So how do you transform rice into a meal? So this friend of the family said to me, "Hanna, would you want to go with me upstairs? We have a stove where you can put things in and burn. All the other people had modern appliances, electric stove, gas stove, and this was one where you could put coal and whatever in. And I did have courage, and we went up to the second floor to the neighbor's apartment. And this old style stove was our lifesaver. So we looked for a chair.

NP: There was one.

HS: But, he said, "It is a beautiful chair, isn't it?" I said, "Yes, it is. But a bowl of rice would be even more beautiful." So he broke up the chair into small pieces and then we looked for books. And here I said, "Choose the one you like the least." So he took a couple of books and we burned the chair with the books. And eventually the water came to a boil and we combined the boiling water with the rice and we had a meal.

NP: There still was running water?

HS: No. It wasn't running but he happened to have a tea kettle full with water standing there. And so we had, and we took it down to the basement and this neighbor and my aunt and cousin and I, we had a very nice meal. So if you ask me, "How did we live?" I just don't know. We survived. That's a fact. But how, it's hard to say. Now, we had no water. About a five minute walk away was this hospital I mentioned before and they had a very, very old-fashioned pump. You know the ones where you...

NP: With the handle and...

HS: With the handle.

NP: You push down, mmm hmm.

HS: The trouble was you had to prime it with a half a pail of water. And then you could have water for hours. So somebody had to bring a half a pail of water and then there was a long line formed and everybody got a pail of water or two. Trouble was by the time you come home half of it you had spilled already. Because to carry a heavy pail of water and walk on not-so-even surfaces... But we did have some water and that was our lifesaver. And then, yes?

NP: Did you meet anybody else that you knew in the area, anybody from your neighborhood? Anybody?

HS: Oh no. This was [tape off then on] so far away.

NP: O.K.

HS: Well, you have to imagine, Berlin was a city with four million inhabitants. And the distances were enormous. And there was no public transportation, and there was no other transportation, at least for a while. And everything was on foot. So I don't, to this day, I don't know what happened to all my neighbors. And see, this was the situation. You lost everything where you had lived all your life, your home and your things. And then all the neighbors whom you knew all your life, they were not there. They didn't live there. And so everything that was familiar to you wasn't there any more.

NP: No pictures, nothing.

HS: This was the worst. When my life started in '45, there was not one single picture, a baby picture or family picture, not one photograph. So, later on I found a few from other family members.

NP: Good, good.

HS: But I do not have what everyone else has, an album with the first half of your life. But you can do without everything, and this is one thing you learn. With all the things you had, you don't really need. And this comes out of it.

NP: In order to survive and to go on.

HS: Yes. So now came word from neighboring houses came through that the war was over, that Hitler was gone. So you asked yourself, *How is it when the war is over, from one moment to the next? First there is war and there is Hitler and there are the Russians and there are the bombs. And all of a sudden there is no more Hitler and no more war. So what is?* So you sit on the chair and you wait. And you don't know for what you wait. Your enemy Hitler is gone, but that was good. And we were there, and that was good too. So my cousin pinched me and said, "Hanna, it's over and we live." And then I said to myself, "Well that in itself is good enough for me." And another thing is, we had no more air raids and our dream was to have one

night of uninterrupted sleep. You don't know what a beautiful thing a night's sleep is unless you never have it. So for weeks we never had a night's sleep. So we had sleep. We had no Hitler. We were not happy yet because we didn't quite know where, what was going to be next. So keep on waiting and you don't show, because the next news from neighboring houses came, "Don't show. Don't go up. There is terribly raping going on." So we felt that there is security in numbers, which it wasn't, but we felt that way.

NP: Raping by the Russians?

HS: By the Russian soldiers, with guns, with a rifle, and with a knife. Many had the knife in their mouth while they raped. And so we didn't show up. We were sitting and kept on sitting. And nobody dared to go up to apartments because they were afraid if it's a one-on-one that we will lose out. So we survived that, too. And then is something that took away my fear. Somehow, we don't know why, was in front of the house a big red fire engine. And they didn't have sirens in those days. They had big brass bells which while they were on the way were ringing. So we heard the ringing of the bells and we didn't know there was a fire engine. So very carefully we peeked. There we see this big fire engine full with Russian soldiers, crawling all over, playing with the bells and with all the other ladders and all that. So I felt a little better and I thought, *anybody who can play with a fire engine couldn't be all bad.* So I don't want to get in too many details but again, it was good luck that there was a family who owned a store on the ground floor and had a basement of their own. And they invited me to come in and sit with them. And the man had been a Russian PW during World War I and knew a little Russian. And when two Russians came with the machine gun, walking through, he greeted them and said, "*Zdravstvuyte*!" [Traditional greeting, hello] Slapped his shoulder, and he sat down. So the man said, "*Matka*," [Mother] and so we were all...

NP: What does that mean? Their...

HS: Mother, father, sister. We were all one...

NP: And *Tovara*? *Tovarish*?

HS: *Tovarish* means "comrade".

NP: O.K. You said a word before *tovara*.

HS: *Zdravstvuyte*. That means hello.

NP: All right. We'll have to spell that out.

HS: No I cannot spell it.

NP: All right.

HS: But I learned it from him.

NP: Hello. O.K.

HS: So this man who owned the store, he introduced everybody as his blood relative: brother, father, mother, sister. So he talked to them a little bit and then they went away and they took everybody's watch. In Berlin after the war nobody had a watch, so some people had these old fashioned alarm clocks, these real big ones and they put a piece of string and they walked around with...

NP: With the alarm clock!

HS: These alarm clocks. Well, you had to know what time it is!

NP: Around their...

HS: Yeah.

NP: Neck?

HS: And they have a sense of humor too. So you had an alarm clock and you knew what time it was. So...

NP: Hanna, excuse me, if I may. Did you hear of Displaced Persons Camps at that point?

HS: No.

NP: Where people were regrouping...

HS: No, no. A Displaced Person was not for residents of the civilian residents of the city. Displaced Persons were started sometimes in concentration camps. My cousin was in the concentration camp Mauthausen.

NP: And then went to a Displaced...

HS: And they were kind of collection points where there was food delivered and other things, and where they were preparing for emigration and waiting. My cousin waited a whole year for emigration.

NP: While in a Displaced Persons Camp.

HS: Yes, yes.

NP: O.K., excuse me for interrupting.

HS: No, yeah, immediately, well first of all the Displaced Persons were people who had come from other countries and couldn't go back...

NP: Yes.

HS: Or didn't want to go back.

NP: All right.

HS: And here we talk about the civilian population of Berlin.

NP: Right, and their rehabilitation, once the Russians came. What happened next?

HS: Well, so to speak, nothing, absolutely nothing. The first thing that happened and it was the biggest event, the bakery opened. And they made bread and people stood in line for a long time. But everybody got four slices per day. And the smell of that fresh bread, you can never forget how wonderful that was. So we got our four slices. So everybody developed a theory of his own. So somebody sat down and ate all four slices at once and said, "At least once a day I have the feeling of being satisfied." And I was the other kind. I, first of all I found out if you toasted it fills you much more than if it's mushy. And then I made little pieces. And whenever I felt like eating, I ate just a tiny little piece, so I was eating all day a little from it at a time.

NP: Were you still with your aunt...

HS: Oh yes.

NP: And your cousins at that time?

HS: Oh yes, yes. So then the rumors came in about the...

NP: The rumors.

HS: Yes, about the raping. And they didn't mind. They went to the bunkers. And then there's another story I'll need to tell you later.

NP: Hanna, did you tell me that one of your cousins, was it your cousin that was raped?

HS: Yes, yes, yes. So, I didn't believe it because I thought this was still continued Nazi

propaganda. Because the Nazis said, "If the Russians come they will burn and they will rape and they will kill," and all that. Unfortunately it was not Nazi propaganda. It turned out to be true. So we had no contact with other people. Next door maybe one came over, sneaked over. But the advice given was, "Don't show." So we kept on sitting in the basement because you felt not safe but you felt somewhat safer. So you didn't know what was around the corner or at the other end of the city, whether they are, it turned out that in our neighborhood there were still a handful of Nazis, and some Russians had arrived and they were throwing hand grenades at each other. And we don't know what happened. So who wants to confront the Russian Army? So you keep sitting. And I don't know how long we sat because there was no communication from one house to the other. And there was none with the Russians. So when they saw anybody they said, "*Uri uri*." That means, *Ur* is a German word, so they said, "*Uri*." So that means, "Give me your watch."

NP: Oh.

HS: And most people did not put up a fight. They gave them. So when they came to our basement there was the only Nazi in the building he was sitting in a wheelchair. And the people put him there, because he spoke Russian. And he was not permitted to move from there. So whenever some Russians came down the steps, he said, he greeted them and, "*Zdravstvuyte tovarish*," and they talked to him. And, "How are you?" and all that. So right away they were not enemies. They were talking to somebody in their language. And this was the reason why we were left alone. So they gave him a wonderful big golden watch with a golden chain which they had taken from somebody else. And we awarded him for talking to them. So we were very lucky.

NP: Yes, indeed.

HS: And also the house was destroyed and there was a big pile of rubble in front of the house. So many thought that the house wasn't inhabited, and they didn't know. But some came. But we were spared, thanks to the Russian interpreter! Nobody had a radio. Nobody knew. And you cannot imagine that you sit completely isolated, don't know, the only thing is you know you sit in a basement. But nothing else you know. You don't know who's up in the street, if it's still the Nazis or other Russians already. They are shooting if--it turned out that the Germans ran

away. But some were pockets, where just a couple of, sometimes even Hitler Youth, threw panther grenades, hand grenades, at tanks, which didn't make a dent in the tank but the tank got angry and rolled over and put fire to more houses. At the end where those few houses meant so much to everyone.

NP: And bathroom facilities? What facilities? There weren't any.

HS: Well, you wouldn't call it facilities. Some-

Tape two, side two:

NP: This is side B, continuing interviewing. This is Natalie Packel continuing to interview Hanna Silver. Hanna, you were saying?

HS: I wanted to say that little by little the semblance of normal life returned, but only semblances. It took a long time--months--until it was half way normal. And it took a long time until it got real normal. So we got ration cards and you kept on getting four slices of bread. And then you got one herring per week. The herring was a meat ration. So it was September, and I remember I had met George, my future husband, when we got our first ration of fat. That was one tablespoon of oil per person.

NP: He was in the American Army?

HS: Yes, he was. He had come; he was with the fighting army and had come to Berlin upon the request of the Labor Department. And he was stationed with the military government at the Labor Division. And he stayed on for three years. So...

NP: He was part of the resettling forces?

HS: No.

NP: No.

HS: No, no. It was occupation and government.

NP: O.K., occupying troops, yeah, [unclear].

HS: So anyway we had a basic, but many people had hunger edema. So when you saw somebody...

NP: Hunger what?

HS: Edema.

NP: Oh edema.

HS: Yes.

NP: Yes.

HS: So you said, “Oh! You look...”

NP: Terribly swollen, yes.

HS: Yeah. "You look good!" Then people used to take their finger and poke in their cheek and the hole that the finger made remained. It didn't go back. That meant that they were not so good looking after all. But we had a night's sleep. Every night was a night's sleep and that was precious. And we had four pieces, slices of bread. That was precious. And now came for me the time to realize what my situation really was, under normal circumstances--nothing! The work wasn't working any more. The Russians had taken away everything everywhere. There was no business going on. There were no goods to be sold. I had a handful of coupons which were given to me the first time I was bombed out, but there were no stores. So then the swapping started. If somebody had an apron he gave this to the baker and the baker's wife gave you a half a bread for it. And so people, everything went by swapping. Of course you didn't have stores, you know. And I don't really remember how long this went. The money was without value. I even saw some money swirling around in the wind in the streets. People didn't even bother picking it up. A little later it turned out that a lot of valueless money is better than no money. So if you had enough of it you still could buy something. And then the black market started and the Russians, they didn't have anything to sell on the black market. It started actually after the Americans arrived. They had cigarettes. And that was a currency, we called it Old Gold currency.

NP: We continue.

HS: So I had one coat, which wasn't so good any more from the fire and the ashes and all that. So my cousin, my aunt and I, we all had arrived at the same weight. We all weighed 100 pounds each. My aunt was short and very chubby. She lost, my cousin was tall and slender. She lost, and I was, we were all three hundred. So we had a coat. So whoever went out got the coat. With shoes it was a little more difficult, but somehow, you know, you manage. You walk with holes in your shoes. So on May 8th, 1945 the war was over. The Russians took over Berlin, and in August the Americans arrived in Berlin. The Russians had occupied the whole city. And when the Allies arrived they took half of the city, while the three Allies together had to divide the other half. And so instead of having one city governed by all four occupation powers together, each one gradually developed a sector of his own. There was a Russian sector, 50% of the city. There was the other half of the city, divided into French sector, British sector, and American sector.

And I was lucky to be in the American sector. And I knew my English and could communicate. And I became the official photographer for the American Red Cross Club. And I worked there and I met hundreds and hundreds of GIs and they were very happy to have somebody who could talk to them in English.

NP: Yes I can imagine.

HS: And I worked very, very hard but it was the most wonderful time of my life. So, after the four occupation powers had taken over the whole city, they met under Eisenhower; just around the corner they had their headquarters. And so I had a photo shop and all the Americans came in and brought their films to develop. At, in the Red Cross Club I had the photo studio and took pictures of hundreds and hundreds of American GIs. So I had so many friends and with some, believe it or not, I still correspond and we visited. Because it was such a crazy time. Everything that was normal wasn't valid any more. The poor GI was all of a sudden so rich because he sold his cigarettes on the black market for...

NP: On the black market.

HS: Fifteen hundred *Marks*. And they could buy anything they wanted that was available, you know. It was, the Mayor of Berlin was Reuter, Ernst Reuter, and he said he was...

NP: R-O-I-T-E-R?

HS: R-E-U-, R-E-U...

NP: Oh.

HS: T-E-R. And he was elected but the Russians didn't permit him to be acting Mayor. And he said, he was a close friend of ours, and he said, "Years later when all this will be forgotten, you will say these days where we are now, they are worth being lived like no other time." That's what he said.

NP: Hanna, you went through so much and showed such bravery and such resourcefulness and always trying to be as upbeat as possible. How has this dreadful experience changed your life, or had it changed your life?

HS: Well, I wouldn't say change. You are a kind of a person. But there are certain things that come to the surface more than others. I was through circumstances brought up in a very,

very modest lifestyle and I didn't ask for anything much. And money, it really--what happened to me happened to most of the people--the inflation had wiped out everybody's money--so nobody had money. So you didn't need money for anything because you didn't get it. You didn't have it. So whenever there was something to be made I made it out of nothing, which today is recognized as something wonderful. We had to do things ourselves because we couldn't go and buy things. So...

NP: It was through necessity.

HS: Necessity. So...

NP: To instill this great...

HS: I was, I'm still...

NP: Inventiveness.

HS: I'm still very modest, and I was born with a wonderful sense of humor, which never left me. And I think that saw me through the worst of situations. Also I'm very optimistic and where there is life there is hope. And the day the war was over we found out that we were alive. So that was good news for us. And a lot of self-control, which I developed. So my cousin for instance, her mother was deported and she and I, we went to the ladies room and cried and cried. And we went out, washed our face, and went in public and smiled at everybody. And nobody had an idea that minutes ago we had cried bitterly. And also I value friendship. I had so many friends who stood by me and who helped. And to this day I value friendship so much and I am a good friend. And I have, I'm blessed, I have so many real dear friends. And I am so easily content. I don't need much. And I am happy. And a nice talk, a nice phone call. I don't ask for too much and I get much more than I expect. And that makes me a happy person. Also we learned to help. Because I'll never forget, I have a very good memory, forget how many people helped me. I don't forget that. And so wherever I can, little things that are important, because life is not all big things. You have three big things or four maybe, but, every day are some little things and if you can help somebody across the street or carry a bundle or something. And then when we came to Philadelphia in 1948, I had a chance, we moved into Strawberry Mansion which then was a hundred percent...

NP: Jewish.

HS: Jewish neighborhood. And within a very short time it turned into 99 percent black neighborhood. And there were so many little children and I had no experience. And, but somebody talked me into doing something with recreation and it ended up that I took 650 children twice a week to the Fairmount Park. There was a Smith playground. It cost nobody a penny and nobody got paid.

NP: Wow.

HS: And we got a yellow bus, a school bus, which was idle during the summer. And each block had one mother and as many children as they wanted and the bus shuttled back and forth within fifteen minutes. So I made up a schedule. So I took for ten years 650 children twice a week to the park during the months of July and August.

NP: Oh, that's extraordinary!

HS: This is my way of paying back for all the good things I have received here in America, all these good friends and good friendships and all that. And I have, since I am here I always have done one kind of volunteer work or another. And I...

NP: Did you ever, excuse me, did you ever return to Germany since the war?

HS: Yes, yes, because my two aunts came back and my cousin...

NP: Came back from?

HS: From the concentration camp. My aunt survived and lived to 91 years and lived to see...

NP: What is her name?

HS: Two great grand-, this was Aunt Paula, P-A-U-L-A.

NP: And her last name?

HS: Paula B-U-D-N-I-K, Budnik.

NP: N-I-K.

HS: Yeah.

NP: Budnik.

HS: And her daughter is married and has a son who just visited me. He is already 43 years

old.

NP: And they still live in Germany?

HS: They still live in Germany and my aunt together with her sister are buried at the Jewish cemetery. And it's a beaut-...

NP: What is the name of the Jewish cemetery? Do you remember? Or where is it?

HS: It's called, they don't, they have only one on Heer Strasse. And the old one was in Weissensee which was the Russian sector. As you know there was a wall and nobody would go from west to east...

NP: Yes, yes.

HS: Until it got a little easier to go. But then...

NP: Perhaps we'll write down how to spell those two cemeteries.

HS: Yes, yes. Well now they call it the Jewish Cemetery...

NP: The Jewish Cemetery.

HS: Because there is only one. And it's a very big one in a beautiful location near the lake with some woods around it. And...

NP: Other than family did you, were there any friends?

HS: Yes.

NP: People, friends that you knew from...

HS: Yes, yes, yes.

NP: The war years...

HS: From the, yeah...

NP: From your life before?

HS: They were very supportive and were not afraid to be friends with me and help me.

NP: These were Christians.

HS: Yes.

NP: As well as Jews.

HS: Some were atheists and some were Christians. Nobody was very reli-, I grew up at a time where nobody was religious. I went to school with twenty girls who didn't know, about five

were Jewish and the rest was Lutheran, and one or two Catholic. But nobody would come and say, "Who are you? What is your, what do you believe?" It was so democratic that, there were a lot of atheists around. Because after World War I a lot of people lost their faith and became non-religious.

NP: So you were well-integrated into the group?

HS: Yes.

NP: Accepted?

HS: Yes. Oh yes. And also with neighbors. Nobody ever made a fuss over religion or whatever. And it was a, at the time of the Weimar Republic where you could find the most democracy in Germany. And then after Hitler, after the war, people started to work at it and with some exceptions.

NP: Herta Beese...

HS: Yeah? This is the...

NP: When did you meet?

HS: Well I met her immediately after the war. She was an atheist and she was not Jewish. And she has done so much for so many and put them up while they were on the escape route to Switzerland. And she put them up in an apartment next to her which was vacant. So at 10:00 at night people came knocked at the door, and she put them up overnight. She even took a job in a grocery store so that she had access to goods that were sold without coupons that she could have something to eat for the people while they were on their escape route.

NP: How wonderful. But she, if I remember correctly, was a Social Democrat?

HS: She was a leading Social Democrat in Berlin and she was a genuine Berliner and she did a lot of good for youth and for juvenile delinquents to help them to get back into normal life. And she...

NP: Her--and how you spelled her name H-E-R-T-A?

HS: That's her first name, and her last name is B-E-E-S-E.

NP: All right, thank you.

HS: And she died.

NP: She did die.

HS: Yeah. All the people who did so many good things, they all don't live any more.

NP: That's sad in itself.

HS: Yeah.

NP: And you plug on. I see that every...

HS: Plug on and...

NP: Every week.

HS: I had one cousin and she was exactly my age. We were just four weeks apart. And we were very, very close. And I just looked at her. She wrote a card and she said, "I am on my way for going away." Nobody ever said, "I am being deported." They said, "I am going away." And so she writes a postal card, "I'm going away in an hour. And I wish you all good luck and I hope we see each other again," which we didn't. So she is dead and I am...

NP: Where was she?

HS: We were both in Berlin. And [unclear]...

NP: And she was deported to...

HS: We don't know but she is listed in the *Gedenkbuch* and it says, "Auschwitz." And so she is dead. One aunt is dead and one uncle lives, and cousins, one is dead and one: So three cousins of mine managed to get to England immediately before the war. And they enlisted in the British Army. And one was a parachutist and died in Dunkirk. And the two others were, one was an officer in Africa and in Italy. And the other one, because he was of German descent, was an interpreter in, for the English, British Army. They don't live any more either. So it's all gone.

NP: It's all gone.

HS: So now the conclusion is never ever give up hope, and always hope for the best. And you're sure the best will not happen but the worst will not happen either, so if you fall somewhere between the best and the worst, you are in good shape.

NP: Thank you, Hanna.

HS: Thank you, Natalie.

NP: Thank you, Hanna.

HS: I am so happy that I had a chance to talk to you, and of course when you start then you get the whole package. There is so many more items that I didn't mention but there is just not enough tape to tell it all. But I hope that my remarks give you a picture...

NP: Indeed they do.

HS: Of the end...

NP: Invaluable.

HS: Of the war, and the beginning of new life. As hard as it was, it was a new life. And everybody was willing to take sacrifices because they were alive.

NP: [unclear].

HS: For that you have to pay a price, and you don't have a steak or anything; you have just bread. But you had enough to just survive. And that's what matters. Bread and water--it's very good for survival.

NP: Thanks, Hanna. You're beautiful, a beautiful lady.

HS: Thank you.