HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

CAROLINE GUTMAN

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Nora Levin
Date: March 19, 1982

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CG - Caroline Gutman[1] [interviewee]
NL - Nora Levin [interviewer]
Date: March 19, 1982

Tape one, side one:

NL: This is a, an interview with Miss Caroline Gutman, March 18th, 1982. Pardon me?

CG: 19th.

NL: March 19th, thank you, 1982. This is Nora Levin interviewing. Mrs. Gutman, would you be good enough to tell us a little about your family's background, that is the background of your parents. Yes.

CG: My mother, let's see she was one of eight children. Her father was a shoemaker, he designed shoes in a small town called, I'm trying to think of the name.

NL: Or near what city?

CG: I should know. My father was born in Melitz. I know, I have it circled in my, upstairs, I'll have to get it.

NL: That's all right.

CG: I'm drawing a blank. It was a very small town. They're both from small towns.

NL: Your father was born in Melitz?

CG: My father was born in Melitz, yes.

NL: Poland?

CG: Tanovdjec [phonetic], my mother was born in Tanovdjec, Poland.

NL: Tanovdjeh?

CG: Yeah, Tanovdjec that's one I found it.

NL: Tanovdjec, and what was your father's occupation?

CG: My father owned, I think they're both tailors. They were both trained, they were apprenticed there when we were very young, my father especially.

NL: Your father and…

CG: Mother.

NL: …and mother both?

CG: They're both tailors.

NL: I see.

CG: And my father's also one of eight children. His father died when he was five. His mother was in some kind of business. They were married in June of 1939 and I think some time in 1940--the story she did tell me--apparently Hitler's troops marched into their town and somehow she got--I believe she did, they were already married and

[1]née Gersten, former first name was Kayle.

they were living in another town--and she got somebody with a horse and carriage, I don't know who she bribed but she got there and she saw them lining people up against the wall and shooting them, and she told my father she needed to leave and my father's father had died when he was five and he didn't want to leave his mother and neither did any of his brothers and sisters. [Miss Gutman was crying.]

NL: We can stop. [short pause on the tape]

CG: My grandmother baked bread. I don't know how true any of this is but this is the story that has been passed down. And they then, she said they went on a train and they were captured on the Russian border and they were told that they were spies.

NL: Captured by the Russians?

CG: Yeah, and then they were in Siberia from 1940 until after, like I would say 1945 probably.

NL: Do you know what town or city it was, or camp?

CG: Yeah, I know where I was born. I was born in Semipalatinsk.

NL: Can you spell that please?

CG: S-E-M-I-P-O-L-A-N-T-I-N-S-K [Semipalatinsk].

NL: In Siberia?

CG: Yes. It's on the map.

NL: It's on the map.

CG: I'll tell you how it's on the map. I knew it was real only for one reason. They blew off an A-bomb there about 15 years ago, it made all the headlines.

NL: I see.

CG: And I told my mother, it exists, gee. Yeah, they--my father said he worked as a lumberjack and my...

NL: And mother?

CG: She worked, too.

NL: She worked, too.

CG: Yeah, and she worked in black market and when she was seven months pregnant, she fell into a hole, selling black sho--selling shoes in the black market and I have an amblyopic eye and she's guilty as hell about it. She used to test me with matches.

NL: Were they in a camp with other Jews, or other...

CG: I think so.

NL: …or other ethnic groups?

CG: I think so but there was some, I think other Jews but there was some freedom, because from what my father tells me he was able to--somewhere he got me a cradle, for butter or something.

NL: Yes, I had read that there was a lot of bartering.

CG: And he also said that because they could sell--they, they took nightgowns and made them into dresses for, I don't know who. And that's how they got [unclear].

NL: Townspeople.

CG: He was arrested once and they were going to put him in the army. I don't know how he got out but he did. That's, that's part I don't know too much about. They were with other Jews, cause there's one in--except I had a Russian nanny, somehow. I don't know whether it was someone who was in the camp. It sounds like they had some movement.

NL: Some movement.

CG: Yeah, well they were able to go into the town. I mean there was--apparently, yeah there was a lot of bartering. My father's extremely shrewd.

NL: I think after your August, yes, after August '41 when there was an agreement between Poland and Russia many of the Jews and Poles who had been deported were allowed to move about because of this agreement.

CG: I think he always had to work in a camp. He always had a job, they both did, but somehow, yeah, they were able to either go into a town or something because he talks about it. I mean, I know I had a doll. Do I know I had a cradle? I even had a silver spoon.

NL: Now did they stay in Semipalatinsk all that time?

CG: I don't know if they stayed there the whole time. That I don't know.

NL: You don't know, and you were born when?

CG: I was born November of 1944.

NL: And the day please.

CG: November 9th.

NL: 9th, 1944.

CG: Why do you always remember [unclear], because *Kristallnacht* was November 9th 1939, on my birthday.

NL: Yes, *Kristallnacht*. And what, what are some of your memories [unclear]?

CG: I, I don't remember Russia at all. The first place that I remember is Berlin.

NL: Berlin?

CG: Yeah, and, in Berlin I remember Carter's. I have a scar.

NL: You were in a displaced person's camp in Berlin or outside the city?

CG: I think in Berlin.

NL: In Berlin.

CG: We were--my sister was born in Berlin. Now she was born in--when was she born, okay--she was born August 4th 1947, and she was born in Berlin. So we, either were right in Berlin or we were in a little town right outside, at least at the time she was born. I remember my mother telling me that there were a lot of people--[unclear] somebody, that that was one of the ways they proved how long they had been in DP camps, that they had her birth certificate. Because apparently from what he says a lot of people just came to live there on the weekends and lived other places. So that was one,

one kind of proof. I remember her, when she was born because I remember my father going to the hospital. I remember him buying a baseball bat and she was a girl. Somehow, and this still amazes me, I don't know how he did it. I was named for my father's mother. Now, don't ask me how or why or--he knew she was dead.

NL: Well...?

CG: They must have had some kind of underground.

NL: There was a network of...

CG: There must have been.

NL: ...of information, yes.

CG: There must have been.

NL: Tracing service.

CG: He knew that she was dead. He, they didn't know about anybody else, but they knew about her. The story goes that when they came into her house, she, she just died.

NL: Of shock.

CG: Yes, now I don't know how.

NL: Fear.

CG: I don't know how. I don't know about anybody else, except he did tell me two weeks ago, that two of his brothers were shot two days before the war ended. One of my, one of my, okay, one of my mother's brothers--no, one of my mother's sisters was married to one of my mother's brothers and somehow there is a picture [unclear] the Holocaust, there is a picture of him and my mother has him and his wife, which my mother got in Israel, and there's two little boys, which are blond and look like my son, which freaked the hell out of me, I can't--and there's also a picture of one of my mother's cousins has a, from his first marriage, he has a picture of a daughter who was about four when she died and children's faces--I remember those three faces. I can see them in my head.

NL: Yes, and these families came from Poland?

CG: Now, yeah well my--the two little boys would have been. I just can't remember one of the names. Oh G-d! She promised she'd tell me. The only other thing I know is one of her brothers ran a dance studio. All of my mother's friends and sisters were married. My father's were not [unclear] who apparently [unclear] closer to [unclear].

NL: Do you know if they had any contact with the family while they were in Siberia, or have they told you any stories about the attitude of the Russians toward them in Siberia?

CG: No, the only thing he ever said was--he's got a big hole dug out of his back and I don't know what happened to him. I know my mother--I don't know what kind of injury it was but apparently that helped to keep him out of the army somehow,

someway. My mother, I know she, she had typhus somewhere along the line. I don't know whether it was after I was born or not.

NL: And how was life in Berlin in the DP camp?

CG: Let's see, well...

NL: Did father work?

CG: No. Yeah, he traded on the black market.

NL: That's what lots of people did.

CG: …and I went with him and he almost got captured one day. I'll never forget that.

NL: You remembered.

CG: Oh yeah, his partner got hysterical. It was a Friday night. I remember everything. I mean my mother will say things and then she'll--I just, that's one of my survivor skills, I've decided, which sometimes gets me in trouble because when I do therapy I don't take notes sometimes. Because I'm so sure I'll remember. Yeah, she came and she told us that my father was in jail and she was hysterical and my mother, the story goes, told my father that she had two children and he just better cool it and he buried the stuff, whatever he had. He dealt in money. They think, I mean, I went around--he took me sometimes, it was the Malstrasse.

NL: Oh, that was Munich.

CG: Yeah, well that was after. Then we moved to Feldafing.[2] We were--okay, we were in Berlin, I don't remember all that much except my sister being born and my--I got hurt. I ran around the place and I got into hot water and I got burned. My leg got burned which was a major tragedy. We had it was one of my mother's cousins and she was cooking potatoes and she put it in the hallway. It must have been rooms, I don't think it was. Then we moved. Then we went on a plane. Now, I don't know whether it was the actual Berlin Airlift or not but we were lifted out in a helicopter. I remember the pilot handing me a paper bag and telling me that I could throw up if I wanted to, and I guess I was three, maybe three and a half because I remember getting on the plane, and I remember him telling me that. And then we lived in Feldafing.

NL: Do you remember anything else about the Malstrasse? You lived on it?

CG: No. I think we lived...

NL: Because that's a very famous street.

CG: …I think we lived near it.

NL: Near it, in Munich?

CG: Yeah, after, because I think Feldafing which I cannot find to save my life, I have looked, had to have been half way between Frankfort and Munich.

NL: Feldafing was a DP camp.

CG: Okay, oh, okay, that's why it's not a name--okay, it's real, that's nice.

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[2]Feldafing - 1st all Jewish DP camp, opened May 1, 1945. USHMM

NL: Oh, if you can get hold of a book called *The Redeemed*, and I'll try to think of the author after our interview, you'll find a description of life in Feldafing and Föhrenwald.[3]

CG: We were there, too.

NL: You were there, too?

CG: I knew there was another one and I couldn't remember the name of it. Okay, for me what was significant was, 1) I didn't go to school because she kept thinking we're going to move...

NL: Mother did?

CG: …yeah, 2) We lived in, I lived in constant terror that they were--she has bronchial asthma, and I lived in constant terror that, I mean, we were not going to go wherever we were supposed to go because she wasn't going to pass.

NL: The tests.

CG: Whatever tests, she was just not going to pass. Then they did another brilliant thing, really brilliant, when I was I don't know, I must have been five, maybe four, they had camps for kids. They decided we had TB.

NL: Your parents?

CG: No, some authorities.

NL: Or the authorities?

CG: G-d only knows. I was a skinny little kid. They would have left me the hell alone, I would have never had a weight problem, I keep telling them. I eat my rage. I've done this since I was six.

NL: Well, did you really have TB?

CG: I have no idea. I hear, I hear differing and conflicting reports. When I was hurt, I had something with my neck and they thought they saw a spot on my lungs. She told me that I had it. Other times she's told me that I didn't. I haven't the vaguest…

NL: So you weren't permitted to play with other children?

CG: Oh no, it wasn't that, they took you away from your parents.

NL: And where did they put you

CG: Oh in some kind of a junky, I don't--they put you in a country because you were gonna, I mean...

NL: You had to be in isolation?

CG: I don't know if it was a question of them wanting to kind of fatten us up. You could play with kids, that wasn't the problem. You were away from your parent. And all you had was your parent. I mean, you had nothing else. That was...

NL: That must have been very traumatic for you.

CG: I remember talking to the doctor and I remember taking thermometers out of my mouth and throwing them on the stone floor and I remember having a brilliant

[3]Föhrenwald - Major DP camp in American Zone in S.W. Munich, established June, 1945. USHMM

conversation with him, I had to be four, maybe five, about how come if my girlfriend could go home, why couldn't I? After all, if she was sick and I must--and she got better then how come I wasn't better?

NL: How often were you permitted to see your parents?

CG: My father came, I don't know how long we were gone. My mother said she sent packages that I never saw.

NL: Was this camp run by American authorities do you suppose, UNRRA maybe?

CG: My, I don't know, my guess is it was.

NL: And you don't know how long you were there?

CG: No, it felt like forever. I'm sure it wasn't.

NL: Yes, for a child it would.

CG: I don't know if they ever told me how long. He came once a week. I don't think my mother ever came, I know my father did.

NL: And then you eventually reunited...

CG: Yeah, they let me go home.

NL: ...with them?

CG: I mean I really…

NL: …your sister and you?

CG: No, she didn't go.

NL: Oh, just you?

CG: Yeah.

NL: So you were all alone?

CG: Well, I had friends, sort of. Yeh.

NL: But...

CG: And then I wandered out at some point. I don't know if that happened before or after, but at some point, I remember getting milk in a milk can and spilling it and having cats come. They were telling me I better not do that again. I guess I was four or five and then one other time, I wand--I must have wandered out of the confines of the camp because I went under a bridge. I remember that, I was playing by myself and I was chased by two, by four dogs and two men in uniforms.

NL: Good heavens.

CG: And I ran home, I don't know how I got home, but I got home.

NL: To your parents or to the camp?

CG: Probably to my parents. I couldn't have been too far out because I was little and I was by myself.

NL: How frightening.

CG: I was terrified. I mean for years I would be afraid. I was afraid of animals for years and I didn't know why. I was afraid of loud noises for years and I didn't know why. I'd go nuts when I'd see a cop and I didn't know why. I had more permits in the

state of Pennsylvania till I finally learned how to drive, I was terrified. It was just, I don't--you know, I remember it happening; I don't know what I did. I'm sure I couldn't have done anything terrible. The other thing I remember, we had a coal stove and we used to cook potatoes on the stove. We went to the country a lot. Her name was Mrs. Cooklin and she would give us fresh eggs and poultry and I loved it, a lot. I just loved it. That was my fi--if my father would buy me flowers I would eat, that he tells me and we used to buy flowers a lot and he would take me for bicycle rides through the country.

NL: I was in Föhrenwald...

CG: Oh...

NL: …1963 and I passed Feldafing so I know it exists.

CG: It exists, I'm glad.

NL: And it's very close to Munich, a very short train ride.

CG: Yeah we went into Munich once, I think at Christmastime and it must have been--I remember my father went to see the [unclear]. My mother didn't want to go with him, and I remember him talking about it.

NL: Do you have any memories of Föhrenwald?

CG: I've not--you know the two are con--are just intertwined, I know we moved once. I wasn't sure when.

NL: Do you remember getting enough food?

CG: I was skinny as hell. I mean I...

NL: Well, do you remember feeling hungry?

CG: No, I remember my father driving me nuts.

NL: To eat?

CG: Oh G-d, he bribed me, he'd kill me. He used to run around the yard with pudding. I mean it was like, he once told me he'd beat me because he went and got this lousy chicken and my mother made chicken soup and it was like this tremendous production and I didn't eat it, rotten me. I subsisted on black coffee, potatoes and sour pickles.

NL: Hardly a nutritious diet.

CG: Well, I don't know. It was, I was--that's what I ate.

NL: That's what you ate?

CG: They didn't like it, but that's what I ate.

NL: Did you go to school?

CG: No.

NL: ...in any of these places?

CG: Never.

NL: And did you learn to read by yourself?

CG: Never.

NL: No.

CG: I learned how to read here. I learned how to read, write and talk English in three months. Real fast.

NL: And so you came--you stayed in Germany until what year then?

CG: Well I remember the day we went to, we went to Bremerhaven and I don't know when we left but there was ice on the ground and it was pitch dark and I remember my father carried me and my mother carried my sister. And I don't know where we walked to, we must have walked to a train, I don't remember that at all. Somehow we got there and then we waited for days and days and days and days.

NL: In a hotel?

CG: In a room, somewhere...

NL: In a room...

CG: I don't know where.

NL: …in Bremerhaven.

CG: Yeah, we just waited and waited and waited.

NL: I guess waiting for the papers.

CG: No, we had the papers. We got, we finally got two sets of papers. We got a set from California which came three days after the set came from someone that my father knew in Philadelphia, that they had gotten someone who was a citizen to sign. It wasn't the papers. I think it was the boat.

NL: The boat.

CG: Because I think we had the papers before we ever left either Föhrenwald or Feldafing one of them, so we had that.

NL: And this was '48 or somewhere?

CG: No, I didn't come here till 1952.

NL: So you lived at Föhrenwald and Feldafing?

CG: Forever. I don't know which one. I remember they closed one.

NL: Yes.

CG: And they moved us out.

NL: I think Föhrenwald was the last one of any of the camps.

CG: Okay, then that's where we were, because apparently we were one of the last to leave, from what I hear. I don't know that much and we don't talk about it, G-d forbid. We don't talk about anything, G-d forbid. So I'm trying to--yeah, we came here...

NL: '52.

CG: ...came here in January 11th 1952, we came on the General Moore, which was a *farshtunken* [stinky] tube ship. I threw up the entire trip. There was a lady who came on the boat, old lady [unclear]. We had a kosher kitchen. We had hard boiled eggs, herring and black bread. I remember going towards the gangplank. I remember cooking with my father. They had men and women separate and they had a horrible--they must have had some kind of storm at sea because somebody--it must have been

Catholic, bless her little soul, they put life jackets on us I think, and we were all out on the deck. And she was hysterical. She was just laying there on the gangplank with a cross, hysterical.

NL: Do you, do you have any other memories of Föhrenwald and what other Jews were doing? What, what children were doing? Did you play out in the countryside?

CG: Yeah, I know we had dresses made in the country, to order, custom. There was a friend of ours who, they now live in Florida, and they had--they sewed, they had a shop there, somewhere.

NL: Were there any classes or structured activities for children?

CG: If there were, I wasn't in them.

NL: You weren't?

CG: I doubt it. There might have been. I think there was some kind of school. If there were, she wouldn't let me go.

NL: Mother didn't.

CG: I don't know. I never went.

NL: Mother wanted to keep you by her...

CG: I have no idea. I mean I don't know if they had schools and she didn't send me because I'm older, you know than, I mean most people were my sister's age.

NL: Well, you were eight or nine during this time and...

CG: No, I was seven when I came here. So I was five or six.

NL: Five or six.

CG: Four, five and six. The only other thing that I did, was that I somehow managed to have an appendicitis attack.

NL: In Germany?

CG: Yes, that was very exciting.

NL: My dear...

CG: They took me on a--I have perverse luck; I wind up okay in the end, somehow. I don't know, ill-fated star or good-fated star. It was right before we were scheduled to leave, and did not tell your mother you have pain. I mean, I knew better. I didn't tell my mother anything. If I was sick, forget about it. I didn't cause her any pain, because even then I knew that she had suffered enough and I wasn't giving her any grief. I was so good, it was sickening.

NL: You already were aware of this...

CG: Oh G-d, I was aware. I didn't do anything wrong ever. I mean, I was a good little girl. I just did everything by the book. I wasn't about to, I mean...

NL: But, but you had to eventually tell her that you were hurting.

CG: Well I didn't tell her. Yeah, I rolled over is what I did, and she of course in her usual inimitable style, told me that I was going for a ride in a wagon. [unclear] and I said, "What?" and she couldn't understand why I was hysterical. [unclear] and they

rushed me, and they gassed me. And then I remember me being in the hospital, and I remember them taking the stitches out. I remember her lighting candles on Friday night.

NL: At Föhrenwald?

CG: No in the hospital.

NL: In the hospital?

CG: Yeah. And I also remember, I don't know where this was, somewhere. It had to have been one of the holidays, I think it was on Yom Kippur. No, I'm sorry I mistook it, somewhere there was an all glass something that was still left and people got together and made a *sukkah*[4] and we ate in the *sukkah*. I mean they took me to the movies. I saw, what did I see? I saw "*My Yiddishe Mama,"* [unclear] what an [unclear] movie! My father took me to that. He took me to a fair; my mother won me a doll. My sister won a doll, too. She wrecked it when we came here. It was my one and only toy, ever and I kept it on top of the refrigerator until my sister got to it. Her's, she ruined in Germany. We had birthday parties because I can remember birthday parties, getting tiny little bits of kinds of toys.

NL: Oh that's interesting.

CG: And I don't know, like for a playhouse. I don't know who got that together or why. We still keep in touch with--let's see--okay there's somebody in Israel that she writes to, who left before we did, one from Russia, yeah, one from Germany, there's somebody in Chicago, and Germany, and somebody who now is in Israel but they lived in Canada, who were [unclear] they--she, one of them took care of me when we went into the hospital that I remember. And I've seen her. I don't know what I did every day.

NL: Well no, you couldn't, you couldn't be expected to remember...

CG: I do remember the country. I do remember him taking me to it. Oh there was--I think she was the German lady in one of the buildings and she took me to the seashore. I don't know where we were and my mother let me go, which was a big deal. And I think, I'm trying to remember what else. [unclear] thinking of. I know we had a maid, my mother got rid of her real fast. She left [unclear].

NL: In Föhrenwald?

CG: Everybody had maids except my mother.

NL: That's interesting. Germans or…?

CG: I don't know. But they knitted sweaters...

NL: …or Jewish women.

CG: No, no, no, I think they were German. They knitted Jewish sweaters, Jewish sweaters, oh that was good, they knitted sweaters. I know my mother kept hers a half day. She fired her.

NL: Oh, then you must have had a little apartment?

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[4]*Sukkah* - booth that Jews make to dwell in during the holiday of *Sukkot* (in the autumn).

CG: No, we had two rooms.

NL: Two rooms?

CG: Yeah, we had a back room and we had a--in one of them we had two rooms, because it was a really big room as opposed to other people's and the stove was in the hallway and we had glass dishes, some of which we trekked to here.

NL: Did you?

CG: One of which broke. They said they were unbreakable, I tried it. It broke. And we had, I'm trying to [unclear]...

NL: Well you had a lot of recall for that early age.

CG: For my age.

NL: Yes.

CG: Yeah, I can't remember...

NL: Were you impressed with the large numbers of people there? Did there seem to be lots and lots of people?

CG: I didn't know any different.

NL: But I mean...

CG: No, because I don't think, I mean I think that during...

NL: You weren't aware that there were large numbers of people there?

CG: I didn't know that you lived any other way.

NL: That was your first home.

CG: I mean, it was like, I don't think that I knew that you were supposed to have a house. And even when we came here, we moved to Strawberry Mansion and we had like a tiny apartment. So I don't really--I didn't feel different till I got here.

NL: Have you made con--have you made contact with other children of survivors?

CG: I just started to.

NL: Here in Richboro?

CG: Well, I took to [unclear] Sons and Daughters of the Holocaust they organized. They tried during the years. There was like off and on. My parents belong to Jewish [unclear].

NL: So they're in touch with people with similar experiences?

CG: Yeah, they have--they, well that's all they are in touch with. They are extremely isolated.

NL: They do?

CG: They're just not in touch with anybody else.

NL: Did, did father get work soon after he came here?

CG: About two days after.

NL: As a tailor.

CG: Yeah, in a factory.

NL: And it's been very painful for them, obviously, just to live?

CG: I don't know, they say not; I say yes.

NL: Is mother occupied? Does she have some outside interest?

CG: She works.

NL: Oh she worked.

CG: She worked from the time I was 11 until--[unclear]. I don't know that--what I see is blighted lives. I mean I see--you know, I, I mean I feel like I've jumped up a lot of 37 years in a lot of ways. It's a legacy of guilt, you don't deserve to live. You have to be perfect.

NL: You feel the guilt, too?

CG: Oh G-d, do I feel the guilt. I sure as hell better be perfect in everything I do all the time. I better never ever make a mistake, G-d help me and I better hide in the corner if anybody knows I'm around because they're going to come and get me for sure. We had--my husband just had an antisemitic incident at work and my father told me to run away and I just [made a noise], that's the part. It's scary.

NL: I haven't...

CG: It's the terror.

NL: …known children of survivors who feel that kind of guilt.

CG: Oh G-d, it's the terror, it's my mother, that may be why, I mean. I told Josey Fisher just for a couple minutes on the phone, I remember a lot. I mean my sister was four when she came here.

NL: So you were actually born in Europe, of course?

CG: Yeah…

NL: …you have that legacy.

CG: …well she was too, but she was born in Germany. Most of the ki--most of the people that [unclear] they're--most of them, not too many people had children during the war that are survivors, they had them after. So it's like you're unique, but you don't know why you are unique and you don't know what you're supposed to do with it. And there are all these people that died and it's like, why you?

NL: There's no answer to that question.

CG: I mean, you just, you know you walk around and not only that, you feel like you're chicken, you know. I mean, here you are; who do you look like? Who do you belong to? Where did you come from? You have all these talents. You have no idea where they're from. I mean you sit there sometimes and you wonder. It's like do I look my grandmother? Was my, was my grandfather really that talented? Is that where I get my artistic--G-d only knows.

NL: And your parents are loath to talk about this?

CG: Well, let's see, she would talk about her mother occasionally then she would get hysterical. She's idolized it, okay. It's, it's, her mother was perfect. She may have very well have been, but my father talks about it in terms of defamation. I mean he

didn't have shoes and he had to work hard and--but me, I mean, what did I have to, to complain about or to feel odd about or different about? I mean my G-d I better shut up.

NL: But you have to talk about it.

CG: And look at all these perfect, you know, life that they have mentioned. When they organized Sons and Daughters, apparently they had lunch and my mother couldn't... [tape one, side one ended]

Tape one, side two:

CG: She...

NL: Has it been helpful to you to talk with the other children and survivors?

CG: I haven't seen them yet.

NL: Oh you haven't...

CG: See I grew up--unfortunately my sister wrecked havoc on me, and my mother let her, because it was easier. My sister wanted to be the all American child and she was, and I wasn't. So I grew up thinking I was very crazy. Until I read *Children of the Holocaust*, I mean, I didn't believe that any of that really happened. I mean, I always knew something was wrong. I mean, not everybody grew up that way, and I'm not putting them down, I think they're marvelous, they're adaptive. They're great in a lot of ways, but it's different and they're crazy things, you know, they overreact. One of the worst things is not knowing what's important and what's not. In the little bit of stuff that I've read, what I see is they took--one of the articles said they didn't have any values, and I think that's very wrong. I think they do have values.

NL: That is the children of survivors?

CG: No, the survivors themselves.

NL: Oh the survivors.

CG: I think the problem was...?

NL: Who says they have no values?

CG: There was an article in *Time Magazine*. And I really got upset with that because I don't think it's that, I think it's more...

NL: Oh my, that's very upsetting.

CG: Yeah, I was. It's like the world's--there were no rules to follow. You know the conclusion that I've come to is that there were no rules to follow and they can't believe in Camus' theory of the world. I can't either, that things just happen by happenstance, so...

NL: It's especially hard for a Jew.

CG: Yeah, and what happens is--I think that what they did was, they then made everything important. Everything was a crisis. I mean a hangnail is a crisis.

NL: Everything is...

CG: So, it's just you…

NL: …distorted.

CG: …you can't, you know, you don't know when you should get hysterical and when you shouldn't. Because everything is just this major disaster because anything could have been the reason you lived or you died. You know, it's like--as you can tell, I've done a lot of thinking. It makes sense though…

NL: It's very logical…

CG: …in that context.

NL: …it's very logical, it surely is.

CG: It's just, it's just, it makes sense to me; it started to make sense to me. But when you grow up like that you don't know what's important, because you can't tell. You get hysterical over buying a paper. It's like with the security [unclear], you get hysterical buying the paper on a Sunday, as you do spending a $1,000. I mean it's all by a contin--you know there's no continuum.

NL: You don't know what the framework is.

CG: There isn't any, because I, I don't know that they were able to construct any. You know, I don't know that you can come out of that. I mean, if you really dig, you die. You just, you know, you just get muddled, and I think that that's one...

NL: But therapists have helped survivors.

CG: Oh sure.

NL: So that, in talking to a skilled person isn't it possible for survivors to develop their own scheme of values?

CG: I don't think they don't have values and I think they can get better...

NL: But then...

CG: ...but I think...

NL: …to develop them in a way that will give them some philosophy of life or some orientation.

CG: I don't know that that's not, [short pause] I, yeah, but you still...

NL: You still feel different...

CG: …you're still left with that.

NL: Of course, you're always left with that.

CG: And you know it's there and no matter what you do, it's there. And I don't know that until recently there's been recognition that it's there.

NL: Well, I think therapists have tried to put the Holocaust syndrome into a category that they're familiar with and make it of another pattern whereas--I'm just a layperson, but it seems to me, it's a, it's an utterly unique experience.

CG: Besides--yeah, but it is and it isn't. It's unique but it's also, it's an exacer--it's an exacerbation.

NL: Of?

CG: Of crazies, of craziness. Okay, it's not that different. It's different in, how do I say it--it's different in degree.

NL: The people who suffer from...

CG: But it's not different. That's one of the nice things that has been happening to me lately. I can see a lot of patterns. What I'm saying is I can pick up a common thread. Yes it's unique, but yes, it's also the same. And that's comforting.

NL: But there are very, very few people who are patients who lived without a past or a family.

CG: That's what I'm saying, so what it is, it's an exacerbation of what you find in family.

NL: That is a titanic...

CG: Yeah, but...

NL: ...lack...

CG: Yeah, but it's there. It was never acknowledged. I've been in therapy. It's was never acknowledged. I always knew that somewhere somehow along the line, there had to be a relation, you know, a correlation but I was never told that there was. I mean I went through three, well two or three, I had a horren--I always knew separation was a problem and when I moved in here and I purposely separated when I moved in here because I had lived in Neshaminy where my sister had lived. I went spacey and it wasn't until, yeah, I think it was I read in the Time Magazine article, one of them, that I recog--that I realized that. That, you know, that, that I thought my G-d, they talked about you know, when you go away to college, I mean if you don't call, my G-d you're dead. It must mean you're dead. What else could it mean? Some terrible, terrible tragedy has--don't drive, don't learn how. Don't skate; don't swim, because you'll drown. Don't skate because you'll fall and you'll hit your head on the cement and then you'll be gone. I mean there's a list of constrictions and...

NL: Life is so precious.

CG: ...and fears, yeah, that you know. And the horrible part is, I don't know that my mother ever realized--I don't know, that when you don't test yourself, that when you constantly reach too low, that you wind up wasting it, that it's crap. That it--my fath--my parents could not underst--I've done a lot of horrendous things, I'm really hurt. I want you to know. I said I was a good little girl, I'm a brat. I was one of the first people to get divorced. Don't ask. Don't ask. Ohhh, please, how could I do this? How could I do this to her?

NL: How could you do that to her.

CG: I was very good. I was 16. I started to date someone because that was what I was supposed to do and I went and I got married like a good little girl. And I--it was horrible, and on top of that, I didn't go to college which was ridiculous. I graduated Magna Cum Laude.

NL: But your sister went to college.

CG: Of course, my sister went to college, but I went too and what happened was...

NL: These impossible standards are thrust upon the children...

CG: Well it wasn't even that, it was terrible. I mean, it was like--I don't know that--it has to do with being female, too. It's not where--especially, I figure that they're about one generation back. The values that let's say my parents hold and the way they think is like people's grandparents around here think. Europe for some reason, there's a disjuncture.

NL: It's the *shtetl* world.

CG: Yeah, oh G-d and there's, there's just I think it's about one generation back.

NL: Yes, I think you put your finger on it but there is a disjuncture.

CG: I really feel that you know, that that was a part of it. And they just ran again, Time magazine, it's the only thing I have been reading lately. They have--somebody is starting ethnic therapy kind of thing. One of the things she talks about is synagogues. That was the other thing, my parents had tremendous pride. Synagogues were extremely expensive. My father asked me when I was 11 years old, did I want to go to Hebrew school. I said, "No," so he didn't send me, brilliant, brilliant. I mean, what kid--I mean, if my kid will tell me, parentification I did everything, I ran them. When my uncle came here I was 16 years old. I took all the papers to the HIAS; I made all the phone calls; I arranged all the moving because I [unclear], I did everything. I mean, I made every little phone call. I don't anymore, I try not to. I made every little phone call.

NL: But they're able to cope actually aren't they?

CG: Oh sure they are. I mean I wouldn't have turned out the way I did if they hadn't. But, there's a lot of garbage that floats.

NL: Do you have children of your own?

CG: Yeah, I have two.

NL: Two. Do they know something about your experiences?

CG: They know a little bit. They know that, that *bubbe* and *zayde*'s--everybody died. I mean that there was a rotten man named Hitler. I don't want them to feel the pain. It's, it's a fine line. I want them to know, but one of the things that I was talking about, pride. My parents were not affiliated with a synagogue which I feel was a big mistake.

NL: Was it too expensive?

CG: I, I, they'll, they'll never admit it to me, okay? But, yes. And my father is very, very--I mean he really was poor. I believe him and the Holocaust, the whole experience didn't do anything to make it better, and it's been exasperate--exacerbated and he--I think that part of it, he's paranoid with it. I had to fill out my forms for college to get my scholarship, he covered up the bottom line so I wouldn't see. Nuts! I mean what am I going--just very, a lot of paranoia.

NL: What, what about this pride that you were speaking about?

CG: I think that...

NL: Pride as a Jew?

CG: I think, I don't know if pride as a Jew but I think just pride and I think, and you know my--she--they're very proud that they did not take a penny from the Jewish agency.

NL: I see.

CG: And one of the only, one in one of the only things she has ever told me is that the very first day, now I don't know if it's true or not, but she doesn't lie, so maybe it is, a real classy [unclear] they I guess, they talked to her about birth control which really thrilled her. That was one and only last time she ever went near there. They have never taken a penny from anybody. She went to work when I was 11. She worked in a lousy, crummy factory. I had to talk her into switching to a place that was air-conditioned. She did me a gigantic favor. Risk taking, that's the other thing, risk-taking is not, I'm sure one of the better known things that most Holocaust--some do I think, some do. Because you, it's like you just, I don't know. I think part of it is you're just scared and you take the sure bet.

NL: If you're, if you feel secure in your little niche.

CG: And you don't realize how that wrecks your life in the end and my father could not understand why I worked at Frankford Hospital. Why on earth when I had my own desk and telephone I could not stand this job. He just couldn't understand how I could give up this wonderful job and go to school. I mean, it drove him bananas. He also, you can't have it too good; you'll give yourself a *kineahora* [Phrase uttered to ward off evil eye]. He was not going to come to my graduation.

NL: Why?

CG: Because I don't think he could stand the *nachas* [pleasure] in part.

NL: Is that so? So excruciating.

CG: It dawned on me afterwards because he came up with some cockamamie story about how--my first graduation--he came up with some cockamamie story about how it was going to be too hot in there and he had to go back to his lousy factory. And I just looked at him and finally he did me the grand favor of coming, and afterwards--I also graduated first in my class in Social Welfare. And afterwards he said to me, "Not to many people stood up," he said, "with honors." See he, there's--he--it's not, I mean, he doesn't know what Magna Cum Laude means. Right. He just doesn't know, it's not his fault. No.

NL: But he knew what first meant?

CG: Well not even that, but he--well, Temple has enormous graduations. Okay. And when there's a handful of people that stand up, it hit him that maybe...

NL: So he knows.

CG: …it meant something special. So then he finally...

NL: Maybe it, it's the negative feeling that I can't, couldn't have produced such a wonderful child.

CG: I'm not sure; I don't know what it is.

NL: Kind of inverse.

CG: Yeah, with my mother it has been. What I finally had figured out after much travail is that I am very much like her, even though she told me that I am very

much like him. Ain't true. And one of the things that she has always been terrified of is that I'll be disappointed the way she is.

NL: In life?

CG: Well just generally, that you know, that I won't get what I want. So her way to handle it is not to try. And she doesn't see that as a--it's her way of protecting me, and she doesn't see that that's hurting me.

NL: Stifling you.

CG: Yeah, she's never, I mean it's, it's, it, you know it really is her way of protecting.

NL: Surely, it's all protective. It's all protective.

CG: Yeah, it's her way, you know she doesn't want to see me hurt and she doesn't see the reverse, that you're hurt when you don't.

NL: Do you think the Association is helping in your general adjustment?

CG: I think it's given me friends.

NL: Given you some...

CG: I think it's given me, you know, some kind of social life.

NL: …social life.

CG: I don't know how much, well I don't know. I don't know what she would have done. I understand she wrote a lot. She is beginning to read now. She, she's, she's--well my father only went to third grade, so for third grade he's pretty shrewd. He's a shrewd man, pain in the neck but shrewd. She's very bright. Now, I don't know if he could have been or not--he's very good in math. He used to…

NL: He survived, that's some achievement.

CG: Let me tell you something, he could have been the comptroller. He worked for Gaswick brothers. He used to come home with papers every day. He knew every single collar that went through, he sewed collars on coats. He knew every single collar in that factory, every single day. He knew the price of every single piece of merchandise. He--I'm sure he could have been the comptroller, I'm positive. I mean he had reams and reams of paper that he would figure out, and you know, if anything that's kind of what I see. As, as, you know, the sad part, aside from the people that died, you know, I mean I see what they could have been.

NL: Did--do you have any words for young people who will be listening to stories such as yours, youth, American youth, especially.

CG: One of the things that one of my friends pointed out to me, which I never thought about, was that she didn't realize she thought that, you know, once the war was over that they put me on a 747 and I hightailed it over here, okay? And I must admit, I don't know if this is very nice, but I will say it anyway. I have a lot of feelings about what they are doing for the Russian Jews, good and bad. Part of me is very happy, part of me would like to...

NL: You think they're getting too much?

CG: Well, I had somebody here who worked with my husband and she thought it was terrible to live in my mother's neighborhood. Okay my parents live in Oxford Circle.

NL: And where does this person live?

CG: Well they now live further up, you know, in Summerton.

NL: The great northeast?

CG: Yeah, and I've heard a lot of talk about, you know, I don't mind, how do I say this? People who really deserve it, getting--but when I see people looking gorgeous and dressing like G-d knows what, it breaks me because, I mean, we really did have nothing. We had absolutely zip and they worked very hard.

NL: Yes, the social benefits weren't there.

CG: I don't know that my parents would have taken it, okay. You know…

NL: That's the other side.

CG: I imagine they went there. I don't know if they would have taken it. The other thing that's changed which I think is nice, too, which hit me when I read a story about Russia. I think that that's just the tenor of the country in general. My name never should have been changed. I mean, that was the one lousy thing I had.

NL: What was your name?

CG: Kayle.

NL: Kayle.

CG: I mean that, that disappeared the day I went to Stockley [phonetic] Elementary School.

NL: The school did that?

CG: Well, the principal sat me down. I was seven years old and in my brilliant knowledge he said to me, do you want your name to be Caroline or Claire? And I decided it shouldn't be Claire because my name was Clara in Russian. I thought that brilliant thinking over here--logic. And I just think that's very sad. I think about it...

NL: You can have it changed back.

CG: Oh I know, my husband thinks I'm nuts [unclear].

NL: But if you do feel strongly about it.

CG: I don't know that I do, but I think at the time, it would have been ni--I mean I guess it would have made me feel even more different, but it was my name.

NL: It was yours.

CG: It was like it was the only thing that I had. I think that it...

NL: Your parents had no pictures?

CG: No, they destroyed everything because according to what my mother--okay they destroyed everything on the way there because they didn't want anybody to know who they were on the train.

NL: Your parents destroyed everything?

CG: My mother told me that, yeah. On the way out of Russia...

NL: They were afraid of being identified as Polish Jews?

CG: Yeah, and on the way out of Russia--okay, we smuggled our way out, oh I didn't tell you that. We smuggled our way out, my mother has this brilliant story, oh my G-d...

NL: This is in '45...

CG: Yeah, she's the heroine on the ship, as the story goes. I cried, I was all of 18 months old and I was this terrible, terrible person who cried and they wanted to throw me out of the wagon, which she didn't want.

NL: How did they smuggle themselves out?

CG: G-d only knows, in back of a wagon, they bribed officials [unclear].

NL: They bribed...?

CG: Yeah, they went--my father went back to--this is after the war. He went back to Poland.

NL: He did?

CG: Yeah, she went to--where did she tell me she stayed? She didn't go to the town, he did.

NL: Where they had lived?

CG: Yeah, and he found out everybody was dead and he also found out that his property was gone because one of his cousins had taken it. That's one of things that gets me.

NL: Not the Polish government?

CG: No they stole from each other.

NL: One of his relatives?

CG: Yes, and one of his partners cheated him, too, in Germany. It gets me. I guess I should expect it but it gets me.

NL: Of course, of course.

CG: And then because we--my parents sent some stuff to Israel which apparently somebody kept because there was an iffy…

NL: And relatives in Israel have no photographs?

CG: Yes, they have--there is a photograph--okay, there is a photograph of one of my mother's brothers, Abish [phonetic], very handsome. There is a photograph of one of my mother's sisters with one of my father's brothers. As far as I know, that is the only photograph of any member of my father's family, period, amen. Okay, these people did not take pictures I'm told because they were afraid of the image thing. They still believe that.

NL: Very observant folks.

CG: The only reason there is a picture of, let me see, who is there a picture of, okay, there is a picture of my grandmother and grand--my maternal grandmother and grandfather with the oldest--would she be niece--my mother's niece, because my, one of my uncle's went to Israel in 1939, or maybe not, no, early 30's. He was part of the

Zionist movement and he wrote his parents and asked them to please take a pic--in other words, get dispensation from the pope, okay and please take a picture. There is that picture. That's it! There are no other pictures.

NL: Well you could get copies of those for your children, of course.

CG: Oh yeah, that's it. There are no, there--I'm trying to think, that's it. Now she just told me, this week, that one of her--one of these days, I'm going to go around, my father did have an uncle who lived here who has three children, and they're around, at that point I knew he was famous. His name is Bernard First, and he used to be Joseph Paps under whatever he was and he did the Show of Shows. I figure I got my theatrical bent from there somehow I don't know.

NL: So you haven't met him yet?

CG: No.

NL: Well that's a thread.

CG: I've met two of them.

NL: You can…

CG: Now, why I've--okay now there's another cousin in Detroit who was in Israel before. There's also my cousin Harry who came to Germany. He came here before we did and he came back and he used to take me to jeep rides. He was in the American army. That was my fun times in Germany. He, now he took me for jeep rides and he gave me chocolate. That I remember well.

NL: That's nice.

CG: I remember that well, yes.

NL: Yes.

CG: And he is here and let's see who else. Okay, one of my father's aunt was here before I don't know why, this person did not only meet my father, she told my uncle not to tell, well great-uncle he would be, not to tell my father about him and my mother has several cousins in New York. But I've never talked to them without her being around, so I don't know what they would tell me, except one of them swears that I look like my mother's sister and not like my father like everybody says, okay, so that part, what they were like, you know, my uncle is here now.

NL: Well maybe there will come a time when your mother and father will be willing to talk about it.

CG: Well they're starting to.

NL: And I think that, that would be very helpful all the way around.

CG: I don't know what--you know, it's like, I don't know how you say yeah, but...

NL: It does give you a tiny thread back.

CG: Yeah, well, I know he was--I mean I know my father was--my grandfather was a tailor, not a tailor a shoemaker and they had--and one of my uncles, all of them went to school--okay my mother's family apparently was very big on learning, because

even though my mother was a girl and she was the 7th of 8 children, she went all the way through.

NL: Well that's very important.

CG: She, she finished, she went, yeah, she learned everything, whatever, she, he sent her to Hebrew school and he sent her to...

NL: She must have been exceedingly bright.

CG: I'm sure she was.

NL: Because this was not customary for...

CG: Oh really?

NL: …for parents to do in an observant family, not at all. She must have been quite extraordinary.

CG: Well, here I am. Yeah, she...

NL: Well, it's something to prize.

CG: …she probably was. I get that impression. She has a friend, who lives on the Lower East Side--see I have to go talk to these people when my mother is not around. And that's a problem because not only were they not objective when she's around--yes, she had to have been something else. She had a boyfriend, she had a boyfriend visit her here. She, she was probably, quite, yes--she also got married young--late, which was also unusual for then. She didn't get married until she was in her 20's and I think my grandmother got married when she was 14 or something. Yeah I, I, ...

NL: Well maybe slowly and bit by bit, you'll hear more about her...

CG: …well, I once told my mother something.

NL: …her own youth.

CG: Yeah, I once told my mother something. That she was used up before I knew her.

NL: Maybe she'll relate better to your children?

CG: And I think that's true. Oh she relates great to them.

NL: I mean about her own past.

CG: Well the only thing that she's done is, when I told her the other day was that if she doesn't tell me the names, I'll never know and nobody will know, and it's very important to me that their names are put down somewhere just to record the fact that they lived.

NL: Absolutely.

CG: She does not remember birthdays.

NL: Well, but that's less important.

CG: She does remember the names. She's going to tell me the names of the 12 kids. What else did she tell me the other day?

NL: Well that's very good.

CG: Yeah, she also told me that, which I never knew, one of her aunts--I don't know if somebody is still alive. My father does have a cousin on I don't know which

side in California who's very old and we've written to her a few times. But see, what they don't do and I don't know why, they don't track down. There's a certain amount of, it's almost a shame...

NL: It's an ambivalent feeling, they don't want to know and they do want to know.

CG: Well I don't know on whose part it is. Okay, for instance, my cousin he sent--now we used to visit my great uncle when he was still alive. Now he's, now I know my cousin sent a birth announcement to my parents which my mother never followed up on. And yet my mother will say they don't want to be friends. See, it gets nuts. I think...

NL: It's all twisted.

CG: Well, I think, well I know she's furious of whoever and they live in Detroit the descendant of this aunt because she feels like she, somehow they were afraid they would want money, that's her fear, I don't know.

NL: Suspicious.

CG: I guess, I don't know. I mean, she had to be--I think, she was just plain crazy, period, is what the lady was, she had to be. I mean, what on earth, but I, what I told her was which she didn't like. I think it was guilt on their part too.

NL: They don't want to know.

CG: Well, the fact that they were here. And my father was remarkable. Oh G-d it was like seeing a mirror. He looked so much like this uncle. I met [unclear] but I, I mean you would just stand there with your mouth open...

NL: Extraordinary.

CG: And I just, you know, they were definitely related. He looks--he just very much looked like him. Now my father, who's he like, he's got some cousins, that's about it. There's some family I think, some of them may have died, I'm not sure, in Israel. And even with them, it's a funny thing, she never, she never really encouraged it. We wrote his kids but that was it.

NL: Well maybe bit by bit mother and father will start talking and you'll learn more.

CG: Well I know one of my cousins who's--there are four cousins in Israel, these were my uncle's children and they were born there. But, you know, when you hear, you get just such a distorted…

NL: So much is subjective.

CG: Well what she told me, what she did tell me, now he does teach, he teaches at a University. And it, it's not close, I tried to explain it to her when my uncle came here and I was 16 years old. It's like he's your uncle but he's not your uncle because, you know, family are there like when you are born, I mean they come to your birthday parties. That was tough. It was very rough on my parents when I was little and not having anybody come to graduation. That was rotten. What would I like to tell them? That I think the devastation goes beyond what happened. That it's not limited to

Jews. That I don't see us as so separate and that's what I meant about the continuum. I think you shrink your own life when you allow that kind of hate to come on and it frightens me because I see it now. And I hear Rabbis preaching from pulpits that antisemitism is down and I want to scream my head off. I don't see it down.

NL: Well, when, when children are exposed to antisemitism it's a little hard to preach love of one's neighbors, isn't it?

CG: I just...

NL: How do you reconcile those things?

CG: When you're approached--how do I?

NL: When you, when you say you don't want your children to hate, how do, how do you avoid that in a world filled with antisemitism?

CG: I don't want them to hate, what I want them to do--okay, let's see, I want them not to bow down.

NL: You want them to stand up and assert themselves.

CG: I see the horror of everything or mostly is when the guilt of having lived. It's funny, I felt it in New York. My father-in-law didn't say anything but I really, we were--they live in Brooklyn--and we were standing outside and I don't know who was there, probably some old lady from Germany, too and she asked me where I was born or something and I was not born in Philadelphia. I may have lived there most of my life but I was not born there and he was embarrassed. I could sense it.

NL: Who was?

CG: My father-in-law. It's like...

NL: You're a lesser person.

CG: No, I don--yeah, I used to feel that, but I think that's what I'm saying. This ties in with what you just asked me. I don't know, yeah, I really used to think that I was a lesser person, and that I didn't deserve to live. And I had to do everything so much better in order to prove just that it was okay for me to exist. And I see the guilt on the other side. I mean, I'm a living reminder that it happened and too bad if people are uncomfortable. I watched Skokie and I, I had, I had a rabbi in Long Island stand up on the top of--my mother, who never ever, I mean scared shit, this really got to her--said that those people were not good enough and that's the reason, they weren't smart enough. They should have seen it coming. I had the rabbi in my own synagogue tell me. I don't want to be told not to get hysterical anymore. I refuse not to be hysterical when the Holocaust is mentioned. I absolutely, positively refuse, and if people can't handle it, that's too bad. And that's very recent for me. I'm, I'm very sorry that they can't handle it but it's not my burden.

NL: It's certainly not.

CG: What I see as the horrendous [unclear] but I've carried it all of these years. What I see is the worst, worst, worst thing is that the victim becomes a victim. [tape one, side two ended, interview ended]