# HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

URSULA M. HEISMAN

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Marcia Goldberg
Date: July 1, 2003

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UH - Ursula Heisman [interviewee]
MG - Marcia Goldberg [interviewer]
Date: July 1, 2003

*Tape one, side one:*

MG: Today is July 1st 2003. I will be interviewing Ursula Heisman in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania. My name is Marcia Goldberg. Would you tell me your name and spell it for me, please?

UH: My name? Ursula Melita Heisman. It's U-R-S-U-L-A and then Melita, M-E-L-I-T-A. It's actually two T like the coffee filter, except when I used it, I just dropped the--skipped the T, so now it's only one T.

MG: And your last name?

UH: Heisman, H-E-I-S-M-A-N.

MG: And where and when were you born?

UH: I was born[1] in Mewe, Germany which is now Poland. When--?

MG: How would you spell that?

UH: M-E-W-E.[2] It now belongs to Poland.

MG: Is it the same name?

UH: I don't know. We visited Poland with my dance group, and I was trying very hard to find the name and the place, and they avoided it. I think they don't want to be reminded that it was Germany once.

MG: Mrs. Heisman, where did you grow up?

UH: I grew up in Berlin, Germany.

MG: Well, how did you get to Berlin from where you were born and why?

UH: Well, my father was stationed during the 1st World War in Mewe, which was German then, and my mother visited him and I came too early. So we went back--we lived in Berlin.

MG: What was your mother's name?

UH: Isidora Pollack**.**

MG: Could you spell her name for me, please?

UH: The first name? I-S-I-D-O-R-A, and the second name, P-O-L-L-[A]-C-K [seems to leave out the A between L and C]. Her mother lost her first husband, which was my father, my mother's father, and she married again, a person by the name of Hartman, H-A-R-T-M-A-N, and my mother used the name of Hartman as a maiden name, but it was really not her father.

MG: Where was she born?

UH: She was born in Posen, P-O-S-E-N, which also was German when she was

[1]Mrs. Heisman was born June 6, 1918 according to her personal history sheet.
[2]Mewe: Now Gniew, Poland.

born, but then it became to Polish--Poland.

MG: How did she come to live in Berlin?

UH: Because that was where the family moved, I think.

MG: Do you know how much schooling she had?

UH: How much what?

MG: Schooling she had. Did she go to high school?

UH: Yeah, she went to high school.

MG: Did she work?

UH: She worked as a secretary, not while I was born, but before she got married.

MG: How about after she was married, did she work?

UH: She didn't work.

MG: Tell me about her. What do you remember?

UH: She was a lovely person, beautiful, and nice, and my father, my father, no.

MG: I just wanted to know about your mother.

UH: Just the mother.

MG: Okay.

UH: And she was lovely, very nice person.

MG: What about her parents? Where were they born?

UH: I have no idea. As I say, her mother married twice, and she is from her first husband, and then on her second husband they had six more children, so she had five brothers and one sister from the second, and she had one sister from the first husband.

MG: Were you close to her family?

UH: So, so. Her mother was like a little strange.

MG: What about your father? What was his name?

UH: My father was a doctor, and he had one, two--two brothers, and one, two, three, four sisters.

MG: And his last name?

UH: Ummm?

MG: What was his name?

UH: Isidor.

MG: And his last name?

UH: Hirschfeld.

MG: Hirsch-feld?

UH: Hirschfeld.

MG: Could you spell that last name for me?

UH: H-I-R-S-C-H-F-E-L-D.

MG: Your mother's name was Isidora and your father's name was Isidor?

UH: Yeah, Isidor--that was coincidence, wasn't it?

MG: And where was your father born?

UH: He was born in Dirschau, D-I-R-S-C-H-A-U, which was also Germany and it became Polish…

MG: …and…

UH: …which is called now Gdingen[3].

MG: And why did he move to Berlin or when? Do you know?

UH: I don't know. I know he started in Toren[4] [phonetic], and I really don't know how he got to Berlin.

MG: So when you were born, they both lived in Berlin…?

UH: Right.

MG: …and he was practicing?

UH: Right.

MG: What type of doctor was he?

UH: General practice.

MG: And were you close to his family?

UH: Fairly--you know.

MG: Did--where were his family, his parents born?

UH: I believe in Dirschau. I'm not sure.

MG: What was your father like?

UH: Oh, he was the greatest. He was very smart, very artistic. I think that's where I got my artistic ability, and very free-thinking, and he was a great individual.

MG: Was he a successful doctor?

UH: Yeah, very.

MG: Would you say your fam--well, tell me, what was your family's economic status?

UH: According to here, we were pretty wealthy. Over there the whole economic status is very different. Like, in other words, in our circumstances you couldn't afford a car; here everybody can afford a car, you know? So we never had a car or anything like that. You couldn't afford to buy a house. Here you could afford a house, you know. Yet, we were kind of considered as wealthy.

MG: What was your home like?

UH: My home, like we lived in an apartment, and my father had his practice right in the apartment, and it was a beautiful place.

MG: Did you rent that?

UH: Yeah.

MG: And what was the neighborhood like?

UH: Ordinary neighborhood.

MG: What part of Berlin was it located in?

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[3]The Polish name for Dirschau is Tczew [pronounced chef]. Gdingen is the German name for Gdynia [Polish].

[4]There is Thorn [G]=Torun [P] in central Poland.

UH: Well, in the beginning we lived what is now considered at East Berlin, and then when the Nazis came they took everything away, like my father couldn't practice anymore so we moved to a very small apartment in the West Berlin, like two room apartment, you know.

MG: Was your father ever in the military?

UH: He came to America like way back. Did you say--ask me if he ever was an American?

MG: No, was he ever in the military, service?

UH: Oh, I'm sorry. No, only during the 1st World War.

MG: Had he been drafted?

UH: Yeah, well, he had to go as a doctor, you know.

MG: So he served as a doctor during the war?

UH: Yeah.

MG: How long was he in?

UH: Like four years, as long as the war lasted.

MG: Did he--what was his rank when he retired?

UH: I don't know. He was a doctor, I suppose, you know and I also know he got the, what they called here the Purple Heart, there it's the Iron Cross.

MG: Did--was your home, would you consider a Jewish home?

UH: No, we were--my father was very free-thinking and we had in school, we learned all the religions because he felt that it isn't fair to a child to put a religion. So we learned all religion and then we had the choice what we wanted to be.

MG: Were your parents observant at all?

UH: Not really.

MG: Did you celebrate any Jewish holidays?

UH: No, on and off like, not really, because my mother's family, my uncles were like very tuned into Jewish holidays, and they used to come over, but all in all we didn't celebrate that much.

MG: What language did you, did your family speak in the house?

UH: German.

MG: And how about outside?

UH: German.

MG: And within the families?

UH: German.

MG: Was any Yiddish spoken at the time? Did you have any religious education, Jewish religious education?

UH: Not Jewish, I had everything, like you know. So I can make my own choice, which I…

MG: Were your parents involved in any organizations?

UH: You mean religious?

MG: Well, religious or political.

UH: My father was involved in the Social Democrats. I remember we used to send out flyers, and we had to fold the flyers and bring them to the Post Office for whatever project they had.

MG: Were they involved in any charitable organizations?

UH: I don't think so.

MG: Were they interested in Israel or Palestine at this time?

UH: I don't think, we'd never discussed anything like that.

MG: Did you have any siblings?

UH: Any what?

MG: Siblings.

UH: Yeah, two brothers.

MG: Okay, who was the oldest in the family?

UH: My brother Gerhard and then a middle brother Helmut and I'm the last one.

MG: How much older was Helmu--Gerhard?

UH: He was five years older, and then my other brother was two years older.

MG: What type of education did they have?

UH: They all went to high school, college, and my oldest brother became a doctor. He practiced here, and my second brother was a chemical engineer.

MG: What college did they go to?

UH: Good question.

MG: Was it in Germany?

UH: Yeah, well they started in Germany.

MG: Were they in the military?

UH: Hmmm?

MG: Were they ever in the military service?

UH: No.

MG: Were they ever *Bar Mitzvahed*?

UH: Ever born what?

MG: *Bar Mitzvahed*?

UH: *Bar Mitzvahed*, no. They were--they like a free-thinking confirmation.

MG: And where were they born?

UH: In Berlin.

MG: Okay, were you close to your brothers while you were growing up?

UH: Yes.

MG: What was the neighborhood like, as far as the population that surrounded your area?

UH: Well, like ordinary, like here, you know?

MG: Which is what?

UH: Plain, nice neighborhood.

MG: Were there many Jewish people in the area?

UH: On and off, not, you know.

MG: What was the Jewish population, I--not in Berlin, but in your community?

UH: I have no idea.

MG: So your--your affiliation with your friends, were they Jewish and non-Jewish?

UH: Both.

MG: What did your families do for entertainment and recreation?

UH: We went, my father took us to concerts, operas--as a matter of fact, when we were very little, many times I fell asleep in the opera [chuckle, cough] and yet, you know, it still--something sank in, you know. And over in Germany, every performance, like theatre, concert, vaudeville, you have to have a doctor present. So there was one doctor who was in charge of everything and then he would give tickets to other doctors, and my father got tickets to be--in case something happens and he have to be called and then he would buy a few extra tickets for us and go and take us.

MG: And how did you spend vacations?

UH: On trips, which mostly my parents went alone, and when I was a little older they took me, they never took my brothers. I don't know why they weren't jealous and we had a little vacation home not too far from the city, which we spent weekends.

MG: And did anyone else live in the house with you and your brothers and your mother and father?

UH: Well, we had a maid, a full-time maid, who lived there.

MG: Okay, and tell me about your school.

UH: My school…

MG: Where did, where did you start school?

UH: Well, I started in Germany, grade school, and then I went to high school, and I was in the theatre since I'm little, since I'm five years old, so I managed school and the theatre, performing like professional theatre.

MG: So you went to, was it a public or private school?

UH: No, public school.

MG: An elementary school?

UH: Elementary, and then I went to high school and then I went to college.

MG: Okay, what did you study in college?

UH: Like business, because I real--business college, but I really wanted to be a dancer and an actress.

MG: Did you get a degree from college?

UH: Yeah.

MG: In Germany?

UH: In Germany.

MG: Now, was your school attended by Jewish children as well as by non-Jewish?

UH: Everything.

MG: Did you ever experience any antisemitism from the other children?

UH: Not before Hitler. After Hitler I had a girlfriend who I was friendly with since I'm in kindergarten, and then one day when Hitler came she wouldn't--we were in recess and she turned around and walked away, and, but then I found out she had to do that because she was told if she starts going to go with me and be my friend they would kill her father.

MG: She was not Jewish?

UH: No, so she turned away.

MG: And what about the teachers?

UH: The teachers were no problem.

MG: Was the--did the relationship between you and they change at all?

UH: No.

MG: …after Hitler?

UH: Uh, uh [negative].

MG: They treated you fairly? You said you were in the theatre while you went to school. Just what did you do, and what was--describe for me.

UH: Acting and dancing.

MG: Were you in any productions?

UH: In everything. You see over there theatre is a little different too. Here, you get a show together and then you rent a theatre and put the show on, but over there it's a regular repertory theatre. It belongs to one person or two persons and they put on shows every year, like fairy tales in the afternoon for children, and operettas and plays in the evening, so they needed a steady group of actors and actresses. So I did mostly the afternoon fairy tales. We did a performance every Wednesday, every Saturday, and every Sunday afternoon. And sometimes they used children for the evening whatever, you know, play. And then we couldn't do it unless we had perfect grades in school. They wouldn't allow it. And I made sure I had perfect grades. Do you want a pillow or something, maybe?

MG: Okay, did you have lead parts or just what did you do in the…?

UH: It depends what they needed, you know, mostly we did, let's say "Snow White"--I even have a picture of that--we were the dwarfs, you know, the seven dwarfs, and I don't know all kinds of things, angels and sometimes I had the lead, like "Hansel and Gretel," used to be Gretel, and you know, depends, what they had.

MG: Was it primarily acting?

UH: Acting, mostly; but also dancing.

MG: Did you take dancing lessons?

UH: Yeah, in the same theatre, and then I became prima ballerina of that

theatre.

MG: How old were you then?

UH: Sixteen.

MG: So you had the lead parts in the dancing performances? What was your goal in it--for the future?

UH: To be an actress and a dancer.

MG: Did you feel that you were on the right track, that it was leading towards that?

UH: Well, I tried. I wanted to but then, you know, as soon as Hitler came, everything changed.

MG: Were you aware of Hitler's "*Mein Kampf*"?

UH: Aware of.

MG: His writings and the "*Mein Kampf*"?

UH: Right**.**

MG: Did you know about it? Had you read it?

UH: Yes.

MG: Did you ever see him or hear him speak?

UH: Well, sure. All the time, you couldn't help it. He was there wherever.

MG: Do you remember seeing him?

UH: Yep.

MG: Tell me about that experience.

UH: It was scary. Many times I felt I didn't want to wake up in the morning. I mean it was really scary like, you know, all the things he had planned, and all the things he did, not planned. Like my father had friends and they disappeared. Like they enter a concentration camp and never be seen again. And many a times I felt scary because--even now I'm scared because I feel how come I was saved and never went to a concentration camp?

MG: Do you remember being in a situation where there was a parade and he was speaking with the crowds around you?

UH: Yeah sure, but the funny part was, they were talking so much about the Nazis, about Aryan and looks and all that, and yet when you were there, you were standing right next to them and they gave you pamphlets to give out. They didn't know my brothers and I were Jewish. "Here gives these pamphlets out against the Jews," you know, and here they think you look different. They're no different.

MG: What was the reaction of your neighbors after Hitler came to power?

UH: We didn't have really that many neighbors. In other words, it's not like close, like you are here, you know. You're more separated from people.

MG: Did your parents, that you know of, experience any antisemitism before Hitler--before 1933?

UH: I don't think so, not really.

MG: I guess your family did not belong to a synagogue? So when were you first aware that the Nazis had taken over in Germany?

UH: Well, as soon as they took over, like it was 1931 [it was 1933], you know, and in the beginning everybody said, "Oh, they're not going to do anything. They can't do anything. All the big money and department stores and everything is in Jewish hands, and if they take that away, everything is going to collapse, the whole economy," but they did it.

MG: When did you see a change?

UH: When? Well, it was 1931 it started immediately, and we in the beginning in school, we were trying--not just Jewish kids, like you know, I think there were very few Jewish kids in school, and the other kids were against it. We tried to fight it. Like when they, you had to stand up in school and say, *"Heil Hitler!"* and we just would sit there and not do it. We thought, you know, we'd fight it, but which was a little stupid.

MG: Well, what happened to you?

UH: Well, they told us, "Either you stand up and say, or you get in the concentration camp." So we stood up and did *"Heil Hitler!"*

MG: Were you ever stopped from going to school?

UH: No.

MG: Your brothers?

UH: My brothers were already out of school at this point.

MG: Do you remember any restrictions that were placed on you and your family before 1938?

UH: Well, you couldn't go certain places. You had to wear a yellow star and--you know, it said "No Jewish People." There were big signs "No Jewish People," you know, and you couldn't go in there.

MG: When did that start?

UH: I would say around 1936, something like that and then we had, you, of course, heard about Crystal Night, when they killed all the Jewish people in the stores and pulled them out and killed them and set the store afire.[5] And they had took all the books, the Jewish books, Heinrich Heine, which is one of their biggest poets in Germany, you know, but he was Jewish and they set fire to it, and I was among running around, you know, I mean how I had the nerve, I don't know.

MG: Well, what, where were you and what was happening to you at that point?

UH: To me, nothing, but all around me, you know, they were killing people.

MG: Was it near your home?

UH: Kind of.

MG: So what happened, you ran out of your house, apparently?

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[5]According to the Encyclopedia of the Holocaust (Vol. 2, pg. 837 - 838) approximately 91 Jews were murdered, over 30,000 arrested and synagogues and businesses demolished on Kristallnacht, Nov. 9 & 10, 1938. Hundreds subsequently perished in concentration camps.

UH: Yeah.

MG: You said you were on the street.

UH: Right.

MG: And where were your parents?

UH: They were home. That was already when they took the practice away from my father; he couldn't practice anymore.

MG: Okay, let's go back a moment. When did they restrict his practice? When did he have to stop working?

UH: I think it was also 1936 or 7, I'm not sure.

MG: What precipitated that?

UH: Nothing, no, just all Jewish doctors couldn't practice anymore. And I was fired from my dancing job, I couldn't, you know. All Jews were fired.

MG: Did you have any contact with the Council of German Jews or any organization, Jewish organization?

UH: Not me, my parents eventually, not me.

MG: And what about any governmental organizations, any contact with any of that?

UH: No.

MG: Okay. And how did the boycott of April 1 of 1933 affect your family? Do you remember?

UH: Not that much.

MG: Okay, between 1933 and the passage of the Nuremburg laws, how did that affect you and your family?

UH: Well, it only affects you like emotionally, you know, not--thank G-d, not physically but when we moved to a small apartment to the west when my father couldn't practice anymore, they would come and pick up most of the men and put them in the concentration camp, and one of my brothers was here already…

MG: When you say here, where?

UH: He was here in the United States, and the other brother and I, we moved with my parents, so we were afraid they would come and pick up my brother and my father, so every morning we would leave the house and just roam around and then nights come back and…

MG: What year was that, do you remember?

UH: Not so sure, must be '36 or '37, but I'm not sure. [tape one, side one ended]

*Tape one, side two:*

MG: Okay, Mrs. Heisman, I want to go back and try to pinpoint when things really changed for you. You finished high school. Now up until that time, were you restricted in any way because you were Jewish--and then when you started college?

UH: That's when things got a little rough.

MG: Okay, can you take me through this, what happened to you, and what happened to your family?

UH: Well, as I say, my father lost his practice. He had to--we had to move to a small place, and as I said before, during the day we would roam around because we were afraid people would, like the Gestapo would come and pick up my brother and my father. At nights we would come back.

MG: How many times did they pick them up?

UH: Not us, thank goodness, but around us you know, they picked up people.

MG: Did your father's patients stop coming to him…

UH: Well, we couldn't…

MG: …before they closed down?

UH: No, no, no, not before that, but they took the practice away, so…

MG: And how did your father support the family then?

UH: He had some money left, not a lot but, you know, it was rough.

MG: How was your life changed?

UH: It changed a lot because I couldn't dance anymore, and I couldn't do what I wanted, and many times we were afraid to go out, and you had to wear the yellow star, and my father was very stubborn, he wouldn't wear it. He would just go out and my mother and me would sit there and get nervous because they would kill you if you don't wear your yellow star.

MG: If they knew you were Jewish.

UH: If they--yeah, but, thank goodness, he had a name that wasn't…

MG: Did any of your neighbors or relatives experience any problems as well?

UH: My relatives left, they all left my-- five brothers, my mother's five brothers and sister, they went Nice, France, which unfortunately, eventually they got picked up and put in a concentration camp in Nice, but in the beginning they left. And be- oh, before they left, my uncle owned a big, beautiful home up in one of the vacation resorts like, you know, gardens and everything, and one night the Gestapo came and they would run out in back like they weren't there and they would smash everything, the whole house, like all the, they had beautiful--he was an interior decorator/designer and they smashed everything and left, and the irony of the whole thing was because my uncles were ready to leave to France, and they had sold the house and everything to the French consul, so now they had to pay for everything, that was the irony of it, but they smashed it all.

MG: You say they all were sent to concentration camps eventually.

UH: Well, yeah, first they went to Nice, and then when Germany invaded France, they were all put in concentration camps, and they all perished, like five uncles, no four, one left.

MG: What about your mother's family?

UH: That's my mother's…

MG: Oh, your father's family?

UH: My father's family-- one of his nieces married to Palestine, which already was way before Hitler, you know. It was like, nothing new, immigrating but she just married somebody from Palestine. So she got all her family to Palestine**,** boys I don't know.

MG: Now during this time did your parents ever think about leaving?

UH: No, my father wouldn't leave because he had money saved, you know, and if he leaves, he would have to leave all the money and they never, he wouldn't do that. Eventually, we had to do it anyway but he wouldn't think about it, and one of my brothers, the oldest one, who became a doctor, he finished his studies in Switzerland because my father had money in Switzerland and then he took his own money, like my father's money and he came over here with his own money, unless you couldn't come, unless you had money.

MG: Did he come alone?

UH: Yeah, so he was here but then he couldn't get us in because he didn't have enough money.

MG: But did you have an opportunity to leave Germany with your mother's family when they went to France?

UH: I didn't want to go to France anyway.

MG: Now when this was happening was this when you were at the university?

UH: I was already finished by all then.

MG: Were you able to work at all?

UH: To work, yeah, I worked for a while, not my favorite thing dancing I worked for a while at the new, at the Jewish newspaper. Like, here you would say the Jewish Exponent, you know, over there it was called *Gemeindeblatt* [community paper] so I worked there for a while as a secretary.

MG: Do you know how to spell that?

UH: A what? *Gemeindeblatt?* G-E-M-E-I-N-D-B-L-A-T-T.[6]

MG: And what did you do?

UH: Like secretary, was a secretary of sports, because I went to business college.

MG: But were they allowed to operate during this time?

[6]UH leaves out the E between D and B when spelling.

UH: Oh yeah, they had-- they even had-- and I danced there a little bit. The *Kultürbund* [culture club], there was a Jewish, you know as long as it was all concentrated on Jewish, like *Kultürbund*, which meant a Jewish theatre.

MG: So they allowed that to continue?

UH: Yeah, they…

MG: Until how long?

UH: When I left it was still there, but then I don't know after that.

MG: Did you have any experience with any Nazi or Nazi sympathizers?

UH: No, because as I said before, they were always emphasizing like look, "You look different, you're not an Aryan, you look different," so one time-- the last trip I did by myself in Germany was taking the boat down the Rhine, and there were all kind of Nazis on there and they elected me the Queen of the Boat.

MG: Now when was this?

UH: That was just before I left, must have been 1937. So there I was, and I couldn't tell them, "Hey wait a minute I'm Jewish," because I wouldn't have survived that trip [laughs].

MG: What possessed you to take this trip?

UH: Well that was the last time I really could see, you know, something before I left.

MG: Did your dancing activities stop completely?

UH: Except every once in a while I danced in the *Kultürbund,* but all in all it really stopped a lot.

MG: We go back to *Kristallnacht.* What was the first thing you remember? What happened?

UH: They took the Jewish merchant out and they hit him, they killed him…

MG: Was that near where you lived?

UH: Yeah, it was around, I forgot exactly where. It was in the middle of town I would say, and then they took all the merchandise and they put it in the street and they set fire to it and they took all books, Jewish books, all by Jewish authors…

MG: Were you standing there?

UH: I was standing there…

MG: You saw this?

UH: …watching, right, and they put fire to it, like a big bonfire.

MG: Did they enter your house?

UH: No.

MG: Or your apartment?

UH: No.

MG: Why do you think?

UH: Stroke of luck. It wasn't houses they were after, they were after the stores.

MG: And what happened next?

UH: Next, I decided that's it.

MG: Keep it at *Kristallnacht,* that night.

UH: That night? That's it.

MG: You said they dragged people out.

UH: They dragged people out of the stores, the stores, not the apartment and, as I say, they killed them and they set fire to all the merchandise in the stores.

MG: Did you actually see them killing people?

UH: Yeah sure.

MG: Anyone you knew?

UH: No, thank goodness.

MG: How long did this last?

UH: About a few hours.

MG: And then what did you do?

UH: What do I do?

MG: What-- did you return home?

UH: Yeah, I went home.

MG: And did your life change after that, even more?

UH: Well it changed that I left, that I had to leave because I felt that's it, I'm not going to stay.

MG: Well did your parents discuss all this with you or what were they planning?

UH: Well they felt I was doing the right thing, you know, and I, my other brother wanted to finish his studies in Switzerland and then he enrolled in the Swiss college or whatever, and he came back to get his books and then they wouldn't let him come back, they closed the borders, by then they closed the borders and everything. And so he went with me. You know my father used to sit there and listen to our-- which he's not allowed to do, foreign radios, and he used to say, "Why isn't the world doing anything?" And I have that same question, "Why wasn't the world doing something?" Nothing.

MG: Did you know what was happening in the other countries?

UH: Well…

MG: Like Austria and…

UH: The only thing from the foreign radio my father, you know, like would listen.

MG: So how did you prepare for your journey?

UH: Well first of all the only place we could go was Cuba, Havana and then you needed passport and they let you wait two weeks. I had to go to the passport office from nine o'clock in the morning till five o'clock, wait. And they'd say, "We're closed now, come back tomorrow." They let you on purpose wait, and I was very brave and I

just tell them, "You want us to leave but you don't let us leave."

MG: You said that Cuba was the only place…

UH: Was the only place you could go.

MG: What about Palestine?

UH: You couldn't get in there.

MG: And the United States?

UH: No, no way, you needed a quota, and I tried to get in, you needed money, and if you didn't have the money, you needed a quota, you had to wait, and I wanted to come visiting because my father-- you had to show that you have a lot of money, you're coming back, and my father had a lot of money, and when I tried to get a visa, they caught on to that that you go visiting, you stayed, you know, they wouldn't let you go anymore. So Cuba was the only place they let you in.

MG: What were you able to take with you?

UH: Hmmm?

MG: What were you able to take with you?

UH: Nothing, you were only able to take with you your clothes, but nothing valuable. As a matter of fact, I had a cousin--you had to declare everything which was a little bit of value--and one of my cousins and her husband left before us and they had a wedding ring, diamond, and they didn't declare it, so they got picked up and sent back to the concentration camp at the border. And when we left, my brother and I and a girlfriend decided to go with us, my brother had binoculars and when we were just ready to go into the boat, you know, all that, this big fat Nazi came, "Come with me", knowing what happened to my cousin, we were like petrified, you know. So I, my brother went and I went with him, and he said, "You didn't declare that and de, de, de, dum," and it wasn't all that valuable, you know. Anyway he gave us a hard time and next thing I know another Nazi came in and he said, "What's, what's going on," you know. And he said, "Well, you want to take the binoculars," and he said, "Oh let him go and [unclear]," so we went but it was like a very scary moment.

MG: Did you have any money with you?

UH: No, four dollars, that's all you could take with you.

MG: During this time did your family have any problems obtaining food?

UH: [unclear]

MG: To keep-- have food for themselves?

UH: Yeah, we had food.

MG: So did your-- you said your friend went with you, too?

UH: My family?

MG: Yeah, your brother went…

UH: My brother went and a girlfriend, yeah.

MG: Who was the girlfriend?

UH: Like a girlfriend of mine.

MG: What was her name?

UH: Heidenfeld, Eva Heidenfeld.

MG: What was she doing at this time?

UH: She was a secretary and she was very good in languages and she got her passport like immediately, because her father was a president at this point and then he lost a job of the German bank, even being Jewish, but then he lost it, and he had connections so they walked in and got the passport and walked out, and I had to wait two weeks to get the passport.

MG: Did your parents think of going with you?

UH: Not really. I got them out later. That's another story.

MG: Did you know anyone in Cuba?

UH: No.

MG: How long did it, did the trip take?

UH: How long? It took-- I think it took five days. We went by boat, we went like millionaires actually you know, boat, and my father, we couldn't take money so we bought the first class tickets, you know.

MG: What was the name of the ship?

UH: [unclear]. There was the ship going from Mexico, stopping-- well let's say from New York, no wait a minute that's Germany, from Hamburg, then it went to New York, then it went to Miami, and then it went to-- no that's wrong too, it went from Hamburg, it went to Lisbon, and I went to Miami, and then I went to Cuba, and then I went to Mexico. It was like a boat, like a shuttle and then came back, you know.

MG: And Havana was the only place that you could enter?

UH: Was the only place you can get in.

MG: What plans did you make for when you arrived there?

UH: What plans?

MG: Did anyone meet you when you got there?

UH: We were first put into-- we were first when we landed-- you see Havana, thank goodness, everything was very corrupt, thank goodness because it saved a lot of people. Like when we got there this one man had been given permission, one of the whatever officers, permission for people to come in and when you got there, somebody else said, "No you can't come in." So they put you into an immigration camp first, for a few days to clear, until they made up their mind, can you come in, can't you come in, and I think we were there about three or four days which was okay, it didn't make-- you know and then they finally let us come in and land.

MG: Well you didn't have that much money that you could bribe them…

UH: Like four dollars, for my brother who was here already sent us money.

MG: Did you bribe them?

UH: Hmm?

MG: Did you bribe the officials there?

UH: No, not while we were there, I mean they were bribed already before that. I will tell you later on another story how I got my parents out.

MG: What kind of papers did you have?

UH: Just a passport-- and a paper. Yeah, you needed a paper like a, what they call a letter of credit that you had so and so much money in the bank which you didn't but you had like a make believe letter, so you wouldn't be a burden to the government.

MG: But you never had to forge any papers?

UH: No.

MG: Okay. And you never had to go into hiding of any kind?

UH: Not us.

MG: Let me go back and ask you something, you said during *Kristallnacht* people were sent to concentration camps and you were worried that if your brother didn't turn in binoculars you go to concentration ca-- how did you know about the concentration camps?

UH: From my friends, and my cousin was put in the concentration camp because he had a ring who didn't declare.

MG: How did you get word of this?

UH: Well the family got word, you know. There were, they went to Belgium, they were in Belgium and…

MG: Where did they go?

UH: Belgium, Antwerp.

MG: Okay, what concentration camp were most of them sent to that were put there?

UH: I don't know which one.

MG: Did any of them come back from there?

UH: They all perished.

MG: What was the date that you arrived in Cuba?

UH: The date? It was December 1938.

MG: What happened after you were released from the immigration center?

UH: Well I went to, there were-- another girlfriend I knew and she lived like, you know, with a pension whatever they call it. You know and you move in and you get your food and you live there, and we all lived together in that place.

MG: How did you know about it?

UH: From another girlfriend who was there already.

MG: Did your brother live with you?

UH: Mmm hmm [affirmative].

MG: How long did you live there?

UH: Well I don't…

MG: In this particular boarding house?

UH: Yeah this part--I only lived there, I would say two months because I was

determined to dance or to teach or something, make money, and then one day I was walking around and I see this sign, Jewish--it said Hebrew Community--well which you know Jewish Community Center so I said to myself, "That's it. I go up there and find out." So I went up there and I spoke to the man and he said, "Well let me give you this lady's name. She helps a lot of people." Okay. So I called the lady and the maid said "I'm very sorry but Mrs. Whatever-her-name-was just died." And she said, but she said, "Let me give you another name." So I got another name, I called, and he was a piano teacher, a man who spoke German, and I didn't know to speak Spanish and I didn't know English either, I mean very little English. And so I went to see him and I told him my sob story: "I want to do something, I need money." He said, "Can you teach us?" "Sure, I can teach," never taught in my life. "Can you do this?" "Oh sure, I can do everything." So he said, "Well I have this student of mine who has a music school, children, and maybe she can put you in as a dance teacher." She was a Cuban girl. So he called her and she came and we were sitting there smiling. She didn't speak English or German whatever and of course I didn't speak Spanish, and we smiled at each other, and anyway she hired me as a dance teacher which was very complicated because how can I teach if I don't know the language? And I--before I started my so called first class I would take the dictionary and look for leg and arm and whatever I needed, you know. Of course by the time I got there and I saw these fifteen children in front of me I forgot it all. And so I put them in position like you know, in ballet the first position and I go to down the line and by the time I got to the last one the first one was [unclear] and I start all over again. So later on, I heard the mothers were, she was telling me, said I'm wonderful, I have so much patience, but it wasn't patience or do anything, I couldn't scream or anything, you know. Anyway I started to teach…

MG: Were these Jewish children?

UH: Not Jewish, she wasn't Jewish. The man I spoke was Jewish but she wasn't, she was a Catholic lady, and she had a sister and she lived with her parents and after a month of teaching they asked me to move in with them in return for giving them classes. I didn't even have to pay, giving them and a friend of theirs classes in ballet. So I moved in with them and-- which was very terrific-- and eventually we come to that she saved my parent's life and they didn't-- I mean they're not our people and, you know, they were Catholic and they were great.

MG: Were there many refugees that were in Cuba?

UH: In Havana, yeah, there were quite a lot.

MG: Did the Jewish community help?

UH: Yes, they helped.

MG: In what way? Do you know?

UH: Don't know exactly but I know they helped, like they helped me because a man sent me to the right place and eventually I performed for the Jewish community a lot. I was a star of the Jewish community .

MG: How long did you live in Havana?

UH: Like five years, five years, yeah.

MG: Did you live with these people the whole time?

UH: Mmm hmm [affirmative]. No, not-- eventually I got my parents in and then my parents took an apartment and I lived with them.

MG: What was your social life like?

UH: Not too much because I really felt I owed--there were two girls, one was my age and the other one was older, so I felt I should be with them. When they go out I should go out with them. I shouldn't go out on my own, you know, so we did-- and eventually they taught me Spanish and I learned Spanish perfect, which unfortunately now I forgot it already.

MG: What was happening to your brother?

UH: My brother stayed a while with, in that pension or whatever, and eventually he got a job on the other end of the island, Santiago, Cuba. That was during the war, they had magnesium fields, and he was like the overseer and there's a story attached to that, too. He had, one of the men was stealing magnesium and he had to report him and so in return he reported my brother as being a German spy during the war. And in Cuba it's not like here and you say you're proven guilty first and then you go to jail; there you go to jail first and then proven guilty. So they went, they took him to jail because he was supposed to be a German spy. So he stayed in jail for about four weeks, five weeks, before everything, the papers come and everything. So finally the trial comes, and I went up there, you know, and the judge said, "Are you a German spy?" And he said, "No, I'm not," and he said, "Okay, case dismissed," but in the meantime he was in jail like for four, six weeks. [tape one, side two ended]

*Tape two, side one:*

MG: Today is July 1, 2003. I am interviewing Ursula Heisman who was born in Berlin.[7] [short pause] I am interviewing Ursula Heisman. Today is July 1, 2003. [short pause] Today is July 1, 2003. I am interviewing Ursula Heisman at her home in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania. This is tape two, side one. My name is Marcia Goldberg. Mrs. Heisman, we were talking about your life in Havana, and you had gotten a position as a dance teacher. So let's go on from there. How long did you maintain this position?

UH: Well, until I left, which was in 1945, like I told you before that I moved in with a lady who ran the school, and we became very good friends and her sister…

MG: You say you became very good friends with the woman and her sister?

UH: Yes, and eventually we kind of became partners. Like, we moved to a bigger house and made it a bigger studio and we worked together, but I also danced, like in different places, like, for instance, the Jewish Community Center I used to dance. They hired me for performances, and then I danced with the Ballet Russe; they came to Havana for a short stay and I joined them and I danced at the Teatro National in Havana and I gave recitals with a singer together and I also taught near [unclear], we put performances on, like in theatres, and I got a job at an orphanage, I taught ballet, and the interesting thing was the nuns at the orphanage, was run by nuns. They thought I'm so wonderful, the only thing wrong with me, I wasn't Catholic and that was very bad.

MG: Did they try to convert you?

UH: Yeah, tried very hard to convert me and they gave me medals to wear and all that, but somehow it didn't work out.

MG: Did you have any contact with the Jewish community in Havana?

UH: Yeah, I said, I danced for them a lot, you know, Community Center, and I danced--I was, every time they had a big affair, they would call me to perform.

MG: Now what about your brother by this time?

UH: My brother got a job and, as a chemical engineer in a magnesium mine…

MG: Is he…

UH: Yeah, I said that. Shall I repeat that?

MG: But after he got out of jail?

UH: Then he went back to his job.

MG: I see.

UH: And he stayed longer than we did. He came after us.

MG: During this time did you have any communications with your parents?

UH: Yeah, we wrote to each other, and I finally wanted to get them into Havana.

MG: Did they tell you what was happening in Germany?

[7]Mrs. Heisman was born in Mewe, Germany and moved to Berlin later.

UH: Not much, you couldn't do that because everything was censored, so you couldn't really do. And I tried very hard to get them out, and I was told the Minister of whatever culture, whatever it was, is in charge. So I went up to his office and I told him my sob story, I want to get my parents in, and he looked at me and he said, "You have beautiful blue eyes," and with that he started to chase me around the desk. Which I feel I was the first victim of sexual harassment. Anyway, so that didn't work, and eventually a man came to see me and he said, "For 500 dollars I can get you a letter of credit to get your parents in." So I scraped together 500 dollars, how I did it I don't remember, but I got it, and I got this letter of credit for them to come, and everything was set and the consul in Berlin was supposed to give them the visa, and I got a telegram that he couldn't give him the vis--them the visa, because they needed to deposit 500 dollars each, which was 1,000 dollars, to the government in Havana which they get back when they leave, maybe. Anyway, so I didn't have any 1,000 dollars and anything. And my brother here--I tried to get money from him and my other brother, and they both were not very adventurous, they said, "How do you know they get passage? How do you know they really can get out? And you can't take a chance." So finally the people I lived with, they were kind of middle-class people, and the mother owned a property in Havana, and she took out a mortgage on that property, and gave me the 1,000 dollars without receipt or anything, so they could come, and they came. And they came--they were supposed to go on that boat, the St. Louis, and thank goodness they weren't on that because they didn't let them land and it was terrible, people were crying and trying to get off, and my parents came one boat after that.

MG: Did you, were you at the seaport when St. Louis…

UH: Right.

MG: …came through?

UH: Right.

MG: Tell me about that scene.

UH: It was like people were desperate, like relatives who had relatives on there and…

MG: Why were you down there?

UH: Hmmm?

MG: Why were you there?

UH: Because I wanted to see what's happening, you know. And they wouldn't let them off and they were-- it was terrible.

MG: What was happening?

UH: Like they were, you know, they wouldn't let them off, and people were crying and screaming and, you know, and no way would they let them off. Because I said that before, Havana was, thank goodness, they were all corrupt. So at this point, when the boat came, whoever let them, gave them permission to land, suddenly was disposed, and somebody else decided, no, won't let them land, and it had to go back.

MG: What about the relatives on shore? What was their reaction? Were they able to do anything?

UH: No, not really.

MG: What was the mood after the ship continued to pass through?

UH: Well, the mood with people, like, they were very upset, you know. I tell you it was very bad, because the world, as I said that before many times, didn't do anything about that situation, and I think most of these people got, probably perished after they had to go back.

MG: So getting back to your parents.

UH: So they came--after I got the 1,000 dollars, you know, I deposit, and, I tell you, these people I lived with, I mean they weren't Jewish people, they didn't know from our plight, I mean they were absolutely fabulous, there was a good side of the whole thing, you know. And they came a boat after the St. Louis, and they stayed with us, like, in the house I had together with my friend for a while. It wasn't a bought house, we rented. And then they moved to an apartment and I moved with them.

MG: Okay now, when your parents were able to come, what ship were they on? Did you know the name of that?

UH: I don't know the name, I don't remember.

MG: Okay. Did they have a problem getting out of Germany?

UH: No, they didn't have a problem once they got the visa and everything. The only--they had a, this is a funny story, they said every sad thing has a sense of some humor with it. They had to pack whatever they wanted to take. They could take stuff but not valuables, you know. And the Gestapo would come and really check, make sure they didn't take any valuables. So my father heard, being a doctor, he heard that here you get money for skeletons and skulls, you know, like a doctor, so he bought a skeleton and he bought a few skulls and packed them. So the Gestapo came and he said, "What is this?" I mean, this is the story my father told me, and he said, "Oh, it's my grandmother, I'm taking her with me."

MG: They accepted that?

UH: They accepted that. So after he came here--at first he came to Havana, the crates they're like, going separate and they stayed about three years.

MG: In Havana?

UH: In Havana, and then we all came here.

MG: Okay. Did--what did your father do?

UH: Nothing.

MG: He didn't work in Havana?

UH: No.

MG: How did he support himself for…?

UH: Like, my brother would send money.

MG: What was your brother doing in the United States?

UH: He was a doctor.

MG: So where was he practicing?

UH: He was, well he was in different places. He was in Hartford, Institute of Living, and then he went to Bangor, Maine, and then he went to Norwich, Connecticut. That's where he finally was when we came over here.

MG: Were your parents allowed to take any money with them?

UH: No.

MG: What happened to the money…

UH: The money they had…

MG: …and to his belongings in Germany?

UH: No, in order to get passage on the boat there was the organization, HIAS?

MG: HIAS.

UH: HIAS, and you had to give them all of the money you had, and they would give you passage to go. No matter how much money you had, you had to leave everything to them, and they gave you the passage.[8]

MG: Now that's a Jewish organization.

UH: Ummm?

MG: That's a Jewish organization.

UH: Yeah, right.

MG: So they had all your parents' money?

UH: Mmm hmm [affirmative].

MG: And what happened to it?

UH: I don't know, they used it for whatever. They own it. That was the deal. You got passage for the, you know, boat, but in order…

MG: But did the government have to give them the passage and take care of that? I mean you paid the government?

UH: Not the government, it was German. HIAS got the money and I don't know what they did with it.

MG: So they didn't take, bring anything with them? Okay, what did they tell you when they came here about what was happening in Germany?

UH: Well, it happen--not much more, the same thing, you know. They said you had to wear the Jewish star, and my father used to go out without it, and my mother was home, like, being a nervous wreck, you know, and thank goodness he wasn't caught.

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[8]According to the 'Holocaust Encyclopedia of the USHMM, "…the Nazis viewed the Jews' belongings and their financial capital as German property, and they had no intention of allowing refugees to take anything of material value with them. Most of those who fled had to relinquish their titles to homes and businesses, and were subject to increasingly heavy emigration taxes that reduced their assets. Furthermore, the German authorities restricted how much money could be transferred abroad from German banks, and allowed each passenger to take only ten reichmarks (about U. S. $4) out of the country. Most of the German Jews who managed to emigrate were completely impoverished by the time they were able to leave."

MG: Did they--I was going to say they weren't bothered?

UH: Not…

MG: Now, when did they arrive here--in Havana?

UH: They arrived, I think it was '39, '40; no, the war started '39, right before the war started.

MG: You came there in 19--in December.

UH: '38. No, it probably '40.

MG: That they came?

UH: Yeah.

MG: Now, how did they adjust to living there?

UH: Well, it was difficult, you know, but there's nothing you can do.

MG: Did they learn Spanish?

UH: No, I learned. I spoke it perfect, but they didn't.

MG: Why did you all decide to go to the United States?

UH: Why?

MG: Why did you decide to go to the United States?

UH: Well, I only decided because my parents wanted to go. I wanted to stay in Havana because it was absolutely beautiful, people were great, I mean now a very different story, but then, oh, it was a beautiful way of life. You didn't need much like two dresses, one for every day and one for going out. That was fine, you were dressed, and you know everything was so simple. And people were absolutely great, you know. And for a quarter you could go and have a meal then. I mean, it was just fabulous**.**

MG: Who was president? Was it Batista at that time?

UH: Yeah, and then my parents decided that I should become a Broadway star, I shouldn't waste my time, and I said, "All right, if that's what you want, I'll go."

MG: So who helped you get to the United States?

UH: Well, then your quota. You see, you have to wait for a quota, and the quota was--I had my quota already before that, but I didn't want to come. You apply, and there's so many people they leave in from so and so many countries every year.

MG: Where did you get the money to be able to go?

UH: Well, that's my brother did everything, the one who was here already.

MG: So when did you leave Havana?

UH: Then I left with my parents, and my parents went, and my brother went, who was a psychiatrist at the Norwich State Hospital, and they got a house and everything…

MG: Where was this, Norwich?

UH: Norwich, Connecticut. And they get, he got a house and my parents lived with him, and I stayed in New York.

MG: Now wait, let's go back a minute. You came here with your parents?

UH: Right.

MG: Now when was that? What was the date?

UH: Like 1945.

MG: Okay, do you know what month?

UH: No, no.

MG: Okay. So had the war ended?

UH: Not yet, but it ended right after that.

MG: So you came with them and you, to New York. What about your brother who was living in Havana?

UH: The other one, he stayed in Havana until the war ended, and then he came.

MG: Okay.

UH: I mean, not Havana. He stayed at the other end. He had a job there, Santiago de Cuba.

MG: So where--he came to the United States when the war was over?

UH: Later, mmm hmm [affirmative]

MG: So you came to New York, and your parents moved to Connecticut?

UH: Mmm hmm [afffirmative]

MG: Where did you live in New York?

UH: I lived with my girlfriend. Remember, I went with a girlfriend from Germany to Havana, and she came to New York right before me, and she got married, and I lived with her and her husband for a while.

MG: Did you learn English?

UH: Well, I knew English from school, but not really very good, but then once you live in a country, that's the only way to learn really, you know, I learned, and eventually I moved out and I started to dance. I got jobs dancing and I moved, I think it was 77th Street into an apartment hotel, and I lived in New York, and, as I said before, danced. I danced at Hunter College and a few smaller companies, and I traveled to Boston and to the Midwest to perform, and then I got married the first time, and then moved to Philadelphia.

MG: Where did you meet your husband?

UH: I don't know. I forgot.

MG: What was his name?

UH: Andrew Furlong. He was not Jewish, but that wasn't the problem…

MG: And how…

UH: And moved to Philadelphia, and then that marriage didn't work out.

MG: How long were you married?

UH: About, about a year. And then I decided to open a school, a dance school, because I was tired of traveling and performing. Once you perform, you have to travel a lot. So I opened a school in Overbrook Park, like here, and before I turned around, I had three schools, and I formed a ballet company, young people's company, because I wanted to prove that you don't have to give recitals or anything. Your children can really

perform professional. And we auditioned for the Philadelphia Orchestra, and we were accepted, and ever since we auditioned the first time, which was 1958, we danced every year with them, for 20 years.

MG: What was the name of your comp…?

UH: Ballet…

MG: …of your [unclear]

UH: Yeah, first I started out calling it "Children's Ballet Theatre of Philadelphia," and then I realized when kids became, like, 13, they resented being called children. So I changed it to *"Ballet des Jeunes"*.

MG: And you had that--where was this, in Overbrook Park?

UH: Overbrook Park.

MG: And how long did this continue?

UH: Hmmm?

MG: How long did this continue?

UH: Like 40 years.

MG: What happened?

UH: Well, we went, we traveled all over the world, we danced Philadelphia Orchestra, we danced at Lincoln Center, and we danced in--we went to Romania, we went to Russia, we went to Spain, we went to England, we really traveled.

MG: How many students did you have?

UH: Well, students, I had about a 1,000, but the ballet only was 25, picked from all these, you know; here are some of the things, if you want to read them.

MG: What about your parents? What happened to them?

UH: Well, they stayed in Connecticut, and then my father passed away, and my mother moved to New York. My other brother, in the meantime, came, and he lived in New York, so she lived with my brother for a while.

MG: During the time and before the war ended, did you know what was happening to the Jews in Europe?

UH: Did I know? Well, I was there.

MG: No, I mean after you left.

UH: Well, after we left, the war, I left and the war started, and then the thing was over**.**

MG: Did you know about the concentration camps?

UH: Of course, I mean while I was there, sure.

MG: And Auschwitz and places like that?

UH: Yeah, sure.

MG: You knew about that?

UH: Sure…

MG: Did…?

UH: …my--as I said, my cousin, and two cousins, and four of my uncles, and

my aunt perished there.

MG: Did you have any difficulties adjusting here in New York?

UH: In the beginning I had. First I had difficulties to adjust to Havana, and then I adjusted and I loved it, and then I came here, and again I had difficulties, completely different life, you know.

MG: Did you ever experience discrimination here?

UH: The what?

MG: Did you experience any discrimination, antisemitism, here in New York, Philadelphia?

UH: Not really, no.

MG: And…

UH: Like, I experienced it in the Midwest. Like, there I traveled, you know, to dance and, like, people, you know, I don't come out and say, "Hey I'm Jewish." They didn't know, so you would get in conversation with people there, and they would say, "Oh, Hitler was right," and I'd thought, "Oh yeah. Why?" And then after they went there, sorts, you know, about Jewish and all that, and I'd say, "Yeah, but I'm Jewish," and they'd say, "Oh but you're different."

MG: When did you marry your present husband?

UH: 1960.

MG: Where did you meet him?

UH: I had, one of my students, he lived with his sister-in-law, and one of the students I had, her mother, which was the sister-in-law, she said to him, "Why don't you take"--he was divorced,-- "take Miss Melita"-- that was my professional name--"out?" So, it's funny, he came, and he went back and he said to her, "This sourpuss**,** who needs her?" And at the same time a friend of mine, he played tennis in Narberth and her husband played there, and, you know, how friends look out for their girlfriends, find a man? So she said, "There's really nobody real nice, but the only one seems to be nice is Al Heisman."

MG: So how long have you been married?

UH: Like, 43 years.

MG: And you've lived here in Wynnewood?

UH: Mmm hmm. [affirmative]

MG: When did you close your school?

UH: When I closed--1968, because I had three schools, and, I don't know, Alan wanted me home, and he was retired from teaching, and things weren't the same, used to be beautiful, the kids were gorgeous, beautiful, and parents were beautiful, and then it all changed.

MG: What have you done since you've retired?

UH: Well, I've volunteered for the Opera Company, and I taught a little bit in Bucks County for my niece who is a teacher, who was a teacher, and I volunteer for the

Art Museum right now and the Kimmel Center. In other words, I enjoy myself.

MG: Do you belong to any organizations?

UH: No.

MG: Do you belong to a synagogue?

UH: No.

MG: Do you attend services, celebrate any Jewish holidays? Do your regard yourself as Jewish?

UH: Well, I celebrate the Jewish holiday with my family. Like, I have a niece in Bucks County and we go there, or we used to go, not anymore--and I, I believe in G-d but I don't believe in organized religion.

MG: What about your husband?

UH: He is the same way.

MG: What was your impression of the United States when you came here?

UH: Well, in the beginning I really didn't like it too much because I felt everything was based on money, but then, little by little, I realized the value of freedom and being able to do anything you want, and right now I love it.

MG: Did you ever return to Germany?

UH: Yes, we went, I think it was '69, '69 or '70, '68, I took Al into Berlin and it was not a good experience.

MG: Why was that?

UH: I don't know. I just broke down, and I cried and cried and cried, and he didn't know what to do with me, and the whole atmosphere, we didn't like it, we couldn't wait until…

MG: Were you in Berlin?

UH: …to get out of there--in Berlin--we didn't, couldn't wait, and then we went--that was a good experience. We went to, like, a reopened synagogue in West Berlin, and the caretaker of that synagogue, we were, like, talking and all that, and, lo and behold, he was a patient of my father, and he remembered him and all that. So that was very interesting. But otherwise somehow the whole atmosphere wasn't…

MG: How did you find the people?

UH: As I say, except that one man, we didn't have that much contact with the people.

MG: Did you go to where you had lived?

UH: Hmmm?

MG: Did you go to where you had lived?

UH: Oh, yeah. That was a strange experience, too. The first time, where we lived in the beginning, I remember a big, big plaza, place, like, with flowers and all that, and it was really tremendous, and then we took a, we lived in East Berlin first, and then we took the bus, you still had a, you know, was all closed. You only could take a bus, a sightseeing bus, so we took the bus, and there was the name, was called *Bartenplatz*

[phonetic], and it was a little flower bed like that. It wasn't what, like I remembered, it was very interesting.

MG: Did your parents or your brothers ever return to Germany?

UH: My parents didn't. My brothers didn't, either.

MG: Do you think it could happen again, the Holocaust?

UH: Yeah, I think so.

MG: Why?

UH: Because when times are bad, and that's what happened in Germany, people need an outlet. It's like in old times; remember the Romans when they didn't have anything to eat and bread. They threw the people to the lions and all that, and the entertainment. So people forgot how bad they had it, because they had it worse, and that's the same thing. Germany, times were really bad, and after the First World War, you know, it got bad and they needed an outlet, and they thought it was great. We are poor, but these people are poorer, so we are happy, and that's the same now, if times are bad, they're doing the same thing.

MG: Do you have any messages or anything you would like to give to future generations about this?

UH: Message, I don't know, not really.

MG: Is there anything you'd like to add or say, or anything at all?

UH: As I say, I said in the beginning, with all that was happening, where was the world trying to save all these people? That's the only thing I can say. The world didn't react.

MG: Well, thank you very much.

UH: You're welcome. [tape two, side one ended; interview ended]