HOLOCAUST TESTIMONY

OF

ILSE LOEB

Transcript of Audiotaped Interview

Interviewer: Bernice Zaslow
Date: April 23, 1985

This page left intentionally blank.

IL - Ilse Loeb[1] [interviewee]
BZ - Bernice Zaslow [interviewer]
Date: April 23, 1985

Tape one, side one:

BZ: This is an interview with Mrs. Ilse Loeb, a survivor of the Holocaust.

IL: I want to stop for a minute.

BZ: Mrs. Loeb, please tell me when and where you were born, and a little about your family.

IL: I was born in Vienna, Austria, and I had parents and one brother. We lived in an apartment. My parents had a printing business and I lived a very normal, healthy life. I had a happy childhood. There were some incidents with the government, when Dollfuss[2], who was the Chancellor, he was assassinated in 1933. There was in the streets and shooting. I remember that, by the Socialists. And then later it was Schuschnigg came into power. We did not, you know, pay too much attention of what was going on in Germany, until 1938. Then one day, in March in 1938, Hitler took over Austria. His...

BZ: Excuse me, yes. Before we get into this, which of course is very important, I just wanted a little more background on your family life.

IL: Okay.

BZ: Did any of your family belong to a Jewish communal organization?

IL: No, my parents were not observant Jews. We did go to the synagogue on the High Holidays.

BZ: Did you have a religious, any religious education?

IL: No.

BZ: All right, then, please go on with what you were saying about 1938.

IL: When, that day, in March 1938, then my life changed drastically. My father realized right away that it was going to be very bad for the Jews. It's not as if he tried to overlook it. I remember he told me not to get dressed up in good clothes, not to stand out from the crowd, already in that, at that time. And, there were people who did ignore the Germans, like my friend's father who still went to his store and business and one day stood up for his rights and then came home totally beaten up. And of course we tried to avoid these confrontations. At the same time my parents realized that we had to leave the country. And we had relatives in Holland and asked them if there would be a possibility of us coming to Holland. But, it was not in a matter of life or death as yet, between March and November, which was the *Kristallnacht*, Crystal Night. How shall I, you know what...

[1]née Morgenstern.
[2]Chancellor of Austria 1932 – 1934. Assassinated July, 1934.

BZ: Yes, November 9th, 1938.

IL: What the reason was for the *Kristallnacht*. Or do you want me to...

BZ: Yes, well you can say it, yes, a diplomat was killed. Why don't, yeah, why don't you elaborate.

IL: Yes.

BZ: Yes.

IL: Now, actually, before the Crystal Night, there seemed to be quite a change in the attitude towards us, from our so-called friends and neighbors. They did not want to associate with us any longer and called us "Dirty Jews." My schoolmates in school did that. They were my best friends, and suddenly overnight they called me a dirty Jew.

BZ: Up until Hitler came, did your family ever encounter any antisemitism?

IL: I don't recall it, because my father's business was in a worker's circle. That is really the working class people. And he did not look Jewish, and no one really knew he was Jewish. And I don't remember any of that.

BZ: And you certainly did not. You had Christian friends. You did not...

IL: I had Christian friends, yes.

BZ: And you never encountered antisemitism...

IL: Right.

BZ: Before.

IL: Right.

BZ: Thank you.

IL: During the spring of 1938, I had to transfer to a school 20 blocks away, which was attended by only Jewish classmates. And the reason the Germans did that, they wanted all the Jews to be concentrated in one area so that if they had some plans for us, they would have us all together. And of course there were no school buses in those days, so we had to walk there every day. My parents had a printing business, as I mentioned before, and one day an SS man, secret police, came to our store and told my father to leave immediately and that the business was now taken over by the new regime. And this all happened during the summer of 1938.

BZ: Before *Kristallnacht*.

IL: Before *Kristallnacht*.

BZ: Before *Kristallnacht*.

IL: Yes.

BZ: I see, yes, go on please.

IL: A few days later a big sign was put at the entrance of our store, with a swastika. I'll never forget the day I walked by there and saw my father standing at the opposite corner looking at the place he built up over the years, and tears were running down his cheeks. So after the fatal Crystal Night, and that was the night that a diplomat who had shot a, no, was a...

BZ: Young Jewish boy.

IL: Young Jewish boy who had shot a diplomat because they had taken his parents away and he was revolting. The Germans retaliated then by starting to pick up people, mostly young people, put them in a concentrated place like a school, lined them up, and said, "1-2, 1-2, number one can go home, number two is coming with us." There were several of my relatives who were that night picked up. My brother somehow luckily escaped that ordeal.

BZ: And how old was your brother at that time?

IL: My brother was about 25. My brother had actually already gone to Holland in the spring of 1938. And as I mentioned to my children before, this morning, I said, "We tried to get out. We all did. My parents knew what was coming. And yet we didn't suceed." My brother had gone to Holland because we had the relatives there.

BZ: Yes.

IL: But he was an alien in Holland and he was not allowed to work. The relatives were tired of supporting him. And they told him he had to leave. And the only way was there to go back to Vienna, which was a terrible thing, because he was in jail yet, at the border, for a week. He came home with a long beard. While all the Jews were standing in the railroad station where the departures were, seeing your friends and relatives go off. We were standing where arrivals were coming in and I still remember that. And he came just in time to be there for the Crystal Night.

BZ: Oh my.

IL: The only good thing was that while he had been in Holland he had met his future wife. She still lived in Germany, which gives you an idea that how it was, that in Germany things went much slower than in Austria. Between 1933 and 1938, the Jewish people still went about their business.

BZ: Yes.

IL: She worked there, in Düsseldorf, Germany, because she had -- her sisters lived in Holland and she would only go to Holland to visit them. And so she lived a fairly normal life even until the Crystal Night when they started to, you know, throw the, all her furniture out the window and so on. Then she knew she had to leave, and she went to Holland permanently too. Now let me continue about my own...

BZ: Yes.

IL: Life. Well, before the Cryst-, oh, after the Crystal Night, that evening as a matter of fact, a Nazi who lived in our building came to our apartment and told us to leave right away, and to take just a few clothes with us. Everything else we had to leave behind. We had to move in with another Jewish family two blocks away. And that was the last time that I saw the home where I grew up. Within 10 minutes' time we just had to leave there and leave everything. My parents then wrote to my cousin in Holland that it was urgent for me to leave. And he sent a telegram right away. He hadn't got, he got in touch with a Jewish committee in Holland who had heard about what was going on in Austria and Germany and they wanted the young children -- it was called the Children's

Committee -- to come, and they found foster homes for them.

BZ: How old were you at the time?

IL: 13.

BZ: 13.

IL: That's why I'm also going to be interviewed for the Child Survivors, because it's up to the age 13. So I guess I still feel, fit in that.

BZ: Yes, yes.

IL: When I actually went through the worst ordeal I was already more or less a teenager, because I went through the ordeal twice, in 1938, and then later again in 1942.

BZ: In Holland.

IL: So by that time I was already older. But when it all got started, I was 13. When I said goodbye to my parents one cold Sunday morning in November of 1938, neither of us knew then that we would never see each other again. There's a TV movie that was shown recently called *Blood and Honor*. And ironically it shows in there also a Jewish family saying goodbye to their child at the railroad station and that train had a sign also, Amsterdam. And that was, you know, the same place I was going.

BZ: Where you said goodbye.

IL: Yeah.

BZ: Your parents took you to that station too?

IL: Yes. I was a young teenager going off alone to a strange country. The train ride was very eventful, as the Germans almost didn't let me cross the border. If there's enough time I can tell you what happened at the border. All right. My father again had the insight. He told me, "Don't bring much luggage when you go." So I only had one bag with me, which was very good. Every Jewish person had a passport with a "J".

BZ: Yes.

IL: A big red "J". And also the first name was then "Sarah." My name was Sarah Ilse Morgenstern. When they checked my passport at the border, it was not just the conductor, I think it was a SS man. He had a black uniform. The minute he saw a "J" he, his face changed and I became like a nothing. He took my passport, put it in his pocket and walked away. Now I knew even as young as I was, that that passport was the most important paper that I had. We stood days in line for this passport, in Vienna. And I wasn't about to let it just go away, be taken away. But I couldn't find the man. So I took my little bag and went to the other compartment looking all over for him. And suddenly I saw him outside on the platform. So I went off the train and I said, I ran up to him, "Give me my passport back! I have someone waiting for me at the Dutch border!" This all happened at the German border.

BZ: Yes.

IL: The Dutch border was only five minutes away. And he said, "They won't let you in in Holland! No chance!" And I said, "Yes. I do have someone there." And he wouldn't let me. And then my luck, it was, I was lucky most of the time. There was

another officer standing near him, he, who happened to be his superior. And I walked up to him crying almost and saying, "Give me my pass-, he won't give me my passport back but I, I can get into Holland!" And he, he says, he said, "Eeeeyah [phonetic], give her her passport already." So he did it. He gave it to me. And at that moment I wanted to step back on the train and it was leaving. And I stood there suddenly all alone on the platform thinking, what do I do next? My cousin was waiting for me at the Dutch border. You were only allowed to take 10 mark out of the country. Ten mark would not have even been enough money to go back to Vienna, to buy a ticket to go back. But we had that figured out. My brother had gone with me to Düsseldorf, where his future wife still lived, and I, 10 mark would have been enough for me to get back to Düsseldorf. But I went into the station house, and there was a telegraph office. And I said to the man, "I would like to make a phone call to Zevenaar." That was the Dutch border. "Someone is waiting for me there." And so he asked for five mark, and my cousin was paged, and I just told him he, that I was coming with the next train. He got quite scared when he heard his name mentioned. And an hour later another train came and I was, stepped off the train in Zevenaar. And there was a woman with my cousin and she whispered into my ear, "If they ask you anything, your mother is dead, and your father was going, went to the concentration camp." But no one asked me anything. And that's how I came to Holland.

BZ: Did you live with these relatives?

IL: I arrived safely in Amsterdam, and everything worked out well for me those first few years. My cousin found a family who was taking me in, but it turned out, they were very good to me because I had nothing to wear and they were quite wealthy. They took me to the stores and bought all kinds of clothes. But I was a big disappointment to them, because they had hoped for a little child, something like her age.

BZ: They were Jewish people?

IL: And they found a big girl, yes.

BZ: Yes.

IL: Because they had just lost a child. And after two months they went to Switzerland to winter sports, and I had stayed with my cousin for those few days and they never wanted me back, which was not such a great thing for a young child, after going through so much trauma already. And as luck wanted it, my cousin went back to the Children's Committee and told them that they had to find another place. So this other family that took me in, and, of course the foster parents died a long time ago, but his children I'm still in touch with. And my foster sister has been in the United States visiting us a few times. And she told me the story. She said she always wanted her parents to take in one of these children, but her parents were really too old. They wouldn't let, they said, "You're too old to." But, when they got this phone call again that this child needs a home and she's already a little bit older, they said, "All right." And she kept going back there, insisting that they wanted to take a child. They said, "All right, we do have a child." And it turned out to be a good thing, because we became very close.

We're still in touch with each other now. My foster brother lives in South Africa and the foster sisters are in Holland. And so I came to live with that family. And everything worked out well in those first few years.

BZ: Were the children about your age?

IL: No, they were much older.

BZ: They were much older.

IL: Much older. One was married and then while I was living there, the other one was married and also while I was living there, the, my foster mother died. And I, I started to continue, I continued to run the household. And at that time I was still in touch with my parents. They had tried to come to Holland, and my father, who was a lithographer and a printer, you know, was a very talented person. He had a position secured at the Dutch mint. But they never were able to come to Holland, and I never understood why until after the war when I found out from a friend of my father's, Mr. Barr [phonetic], why the Germans would not let them leave Austria. They took my father's skill and then he had to work in a place for the Wehrmacht to make counterfeit money. And that was one of the reasons why my parents were deported much later than all the other relatives. They were taken already in 1940. My parents were still in Vienna till 1942. My parents also tried to come to United States. My brother had gone to Holland for a second time. This time he went illegally and in order for him to have a legal residence in Holland he had to go from Holland to Belgium, come back from Belgium to Holland and that made him a legal alien. Because, an illegal alien at that time was sent to a camp already in northern Holland called Westerbork. Anna Frank was there. People who were in Westerbork were the ones who, very few survived, because they had been sent to the other concentration camps much sooner. They were the first ones who were sent there, and they were in a camp for four years and so the chances of survival of course were much slimmer. And my brother went to the United States just before it was, United States came into war [December 8, 1941]. The, with the last boat he came with, was burned in the harbor after his trip. After he arrived in United States, he settled in California and had to find someone who would send an affidavit. This is something you needed to enter the United States. They were very strict about that.

BZ: To make sure that you would be...

IL: Someone who would vouch for you in case you could not work.

BZ: Yeah, yeah.

IL: But even if you had an affidavit, you had to wait for your quota. Because they only allowed so many people each year to come in from different nationalities. So my parents did get an affidavit from someone that my brother found in California. But two weeks before their visa was supposed to be issued, the United States entered the war against Germany, and the Consulate was closed.

In June, 1940, Hitler tried to conquer Holland. The Dutch people thought that they would be able to resist them because there was, they were going to flood the

grounds there. I forget what the line was called. They thought the Germans would come with their tanks. But the Germans knew about these things, so they came with their air force. And they bombed Rotterdam, a major city, all of downtown. And they said, "If you don't surrender, we will also bomb Amsterdam and The Hague." So, the Dutch people did not have much choice. And they fought courageously for five days. And after that, defeat was inevitable. After the German occupation, the fate of the Jews was doomed. The same restrictions were put in effect as I had experienced in Austria, only a few years before. Slowly but surely, they made one restriction and we thought it wouldn't get any worse. And then they made another restriction, and it did get worse. And people just couldn't believe that it's, you know, it would get, you know, that it would get so bad that there would come a time when resistance or doing something about leaving was impossible.

BZ: These were restrictions against the Jews...

IL: The Jews, yes.

BZ: Or special restrictions, yes.

IL: There were 140,000 Dutch Jews. And the Jewish committee told them to register. The reason was, the Jewish committee was informed that if you registered, you would then be able to get papers to leave. But that was not true. We were registered, and then all the names were down and then we were easy to find. There were some people who had the insight not to register, so the Germans could never prove that they were really Jewish. German and Austrian Jews were already registered, like I, and in June, 1942, the Germans confiscated those lists. When the Jews were first rounded up in Holland, all the Dutch workers staged a sympathy strike in protest. But the Gestapo issued a 24-hour ultimatum, and they broke the strike by shooting the leaders of the strike. I don't know if you have heard that story before, but...

BZ: No, but I knew that there was help but...

IL: A monument in their memory was erected after the war at the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam. I was, I came to Holland legally, but because the Germans had that list of aliens, they sent me an order. And I was one of the first ones. They first went after the aliens. They wanted me to come to the work camp in Germany. Of course that was already a concentration camp but we didn't know it. They asked me to be at the railroad station at midnight. They did these things at midnight to keep these, the transactions from the Dutch people. Later on they didn't really care anymore. But in the beginning they did care what the Dutch people would think about it. My foster parents and friends all advised me at that time to go into hiding. We had the option of letting the Germans take us away eventually, if we didn't, you know, comply with the order of going to the work camp. But to find someone who would take you into hiding, and especially if you didn't have the financial means of suppor-, of paying them for food and lodging, was very difficult.

At this point I usually mention, when I talk about my experiences, that many

people ask the question to Holocaust survivors why we let ourselves be taken away, in those terrifying nights. Why we didn't resist? And I always answer that we knew that they would put a machine gun at our heads and torture us. So there was really not much of a choice. To just disappear was something that had not been done before. But with the help of friends, everything was arranged. I was to leave for a small town near Amsterdam. At the railroad station I took off my coat with the yellow star, and the person who took me in had another coat with her and I put that coat on. Gave me a new identification, which was issued by the Dutch underground, and which had a new name on it. Well other words, I had a new identity of a young woman who was born in Holland and who was not Jewish. I lived with these people for the next three years, moving from place to place, if it became too dangerous to stay on. I don't know if you want me to go into more detail...

BZ: Yes, please do.

IL: During that time.

BZ: Yes.

IL: Well, actually, it was my cousin, the one who had brought me to Holland, who helped, helped me then. I did have another place I could have gone to, but my cousin insisted that I should go to him because, when I first had that order to go to the work camp, my foster brother went to my cousin and told him about it and asked him what to do. And my cousin had a girlfriend and she was not Jewish. He wanted to marry her, but in that time already, the Germans would not let an Austrian or German Jew marry a non-Jewish person. So they could not get married, which was later actually our salvation. Because everything was on her name. And he rented a house from people in a suburb. They were famous people. They were violinists and a pianist who themselves had to go into hiding. And he rented their house. And that's where we lived.

BZ: He rented that house under his girlfriend's name?

IL: Right.

BZ: Yes.

IL: Yes. He was a very rebellious person. He was blond. He looked just what the Germans wanted all the Aryans to look like.

BZ: Yes.

IL: And so he was still going to work while people were picked up left and right. He had papers, and he would see every day people at those railroad stations. Especially they would do that, pick up Jews. And he always somehow managed to escape them.

BZ: He didn't wear the star?

IL: No, no. At night we did worry a lot, you know, is he coming home, when he was late, you know. And then he also was still making a decent living so he was able to buy little luxuries on the black market.

[Tape one, side one ended.]

Tape one, side two:

IL: Many times I had to sleep in the outdoors, when we were warned about a raid. Sleeping in the outdoors was very dangerous too, because then I was not worried about my being Jewish, but just because I was a young girl. There were a lot of maneuvers going on in the open there, open fields. And a lot of German soldiers. And one time one German soldier wanted to take me. And who knows what he would have done with me. But I ran away from him. Only one percent of the Dutch population was Nazi-oriented.[3] But we were never sure who might be an informer. In the town where I was hidden, many artists lived. And it was known that a great number of Jews were hidden there. A new mayor, a Dutch Nazi, was determined to find them. So he went out at night with some Gestapo officers to look for them. The Dutch police wanted to warn us who, you know, were in hiding, about these raids. But they didn't know beforehand which way he was heading. So as he would turn into our driveway that particular night, three seconds before it, the police knew they were coming to us, knocked on the door, and just said, "Hide!" And it gave me enough time to go upstairs in the attic where we had a special little room, small little room, set up for a time as this. You couldn't detect there was a room behind there or a space. And I was in there while the Gestapo looked. And I had a few anxious moments, but they did not find me.

We used to listen to an English radio broadcast every night, which was our only link to freedom. The Germans were always saying they were winning the war, and that was very depressing. But the English were saying the opposite, and that gave us the courage to go on. It was a crystal radio that we used, and that's how we got the English, you know, reception. The hope that V-Day would be coming soon gave me the courage to go on. In June 1944 the American and English forces came to France and conquered, you know, France and Belgium and the south of Holland. We hoped to be liberated within hours, since Holland is a small country. But the Germans put up a fierce counterattack and stopped the Allied forces in the south of Holland. We would hear the shooting going on. That's how close it was. We would think that by tonight we will be free. But it was to be otherwise. The Dutch railroad workers went on strike, in order to prevent the Wehrmacht, the German army, from transporting their soldiers and ammunition. But the Dutch people suffered from this strike very much, because there was no way for them to transport food to the proper places. So began a winter without gas and electricity, and very little food. We had no...

BZ: And this was the winter of what year?

IL: 1944-1945. We had rations already with half a bread a week, no meat, very little milk. As I had said, my cousin luckily did buy some food on the black market

[3]A complex history examined at www.annefrank.org. Approximately one third of people in hiding were betrayed and deported. The Netherlands had the highest number of Jewish victims in Western Europe.

sometimes. But it was very little. We were forced to chop trees to have wood for warmth, and for cooking. How they expected people to cook I don't know, but we had to improvise a little stove, then cut up the wood into small pieces and put wood in the little stove and then on top of that we would put our potatoes if we had them, and cook them. We were going to farmers in the north of Holland for a few, and trade some clothing we had, for a few pounds of potatoes and grain. On one of those trips that I took on my bicycle, with, by the way, this bicycle was at that time considered like a luxury as of a big automobile. On one of those trips a German soldier stopped me. It was night time because I only travelled at night in order from anyone, you know, recognizing me. And when he stopped me I was really scared. To describe to you this feeling of being scared. I have to quote a journalist who also survived by hiding. His name is Mr. Duyung [phonetic]. Because if you haven't gone through this kind of a, being scared, you don't know what it is like. You can feel scared watching a scary movie or being locked in a dark room, but then there is the other anxiety, the kind when you feel that someone is grabbing you at your throat. You know that this is the moment that your life depends on your actions. And you call upon your last mental reserve and you suddenly stay calm. And the soldier told me he wanted my bicycle. I was actually relieved. And I let him have it. He could have asked me to come to the German headquarters or some other frightening thing. When I came back to my cousin and his fiancé and told them they took my bicycle, he was quite angry with me. Because he was more used of defying the Germans. He did that every day, and he knew this was not a usual thing. They were taking bicycles away from the Dutch people, but that was usually done like a whole bunch of German soldiers confiscating those bikes for some reason. This was just a single incident where the soldier wanted the bike, sold it, and made a little money on it. And when he told me that night that I could get my bicycle back the next day at the headquarters, my cousin's wife went there. Of course they didn't know anything about it. So, from that time on I had to do everything without a bicycle, which was very difficult. You just couldn't get around, you know?

BZ: Especially to go into the country.

IL: Yes. And you know, it was one of those things. In the meantime, it became quite dangerous to stay with him and his fiancé or wife, whatever. They did get married after the war. Because they were afraid that somebody might know that I was there and suspect I was Jewish. So they sent me to another family in the same town, where the woman had been married to a German soldier years before, but really wasn't married to him anymore. And she had two children of her own, two children of her present husband, and one Jewish child whose parents were deported. And whenever the Germans would come and investigate things, she would say, "What do you want from me? I am married to a German!" Which was not actually true then, but that was her defense. And I was to be the maid in that house for these five children, all different backgrounds. They did not know I was Jewish. They didn't know that till after the war.

And I took care of them, you know, and when I was in their house I also had to sometimes go out into the woods and sleep there because she was always warned if there was a raid and it was quite often. There were some very tragic things that went on. There was another woman living in that same complex whose husband had been in Indonesia when the war broke out and he couldn't come back. She had three little girls. And one day they moved into another apartment and someone had left some pesticide on the counter. And she didn't see it. And two of the children drank from it. The third one didn't. And the two children died. And she had to carry on during the war. She was not Jewish. With this one child, with her husband being so far away. And she was our neighbor, so I was in contact with her for quite a while. But the Dutch people were very wonderful. Their perseverance and strength helped me cope. Even though their own safety was jeopardized by helping me. Whenever they would find a Jewish person somewhere, they would take the other family, too. And they usually didn't come back. Like my uncle, he lived, he was in hiding in northern Holland with a priest. And they found my uncle, and the priest was taken away, and they all died.

BZ: Yes. Because that was a crime, considered a crime, yes.

IL: In the recently published work by Joseph Hellman, called *Avenue of the Righteous*, the author describes the selflessness of these Gentiles who at the risk of their own lives tried to help us Jews. 700 trees are planted by Yad VaShem, in Israel, in their honor and memory. The Dutch underground workers helped us a lot too. Of the 20,000 Jews who went into hiding, 8,000 survived, which is a much better percentage than that of the concentration camps.

BZ: Yes. Would you describe how the underground helped?

IL: That was quite dangerous. They really had to be more careful even than we who were in hiding, because if they would raid the German headquarters, that's where the ration cards were usually distributed from. And they had, there were quite a few, and of course when they were caught they were really tortured.

BZ: Yes.

IL: You know, because they wanted them to tell the Germans where the other underground workers were, you know.

BZ: Yes.

IL: So, that was very dangerous. They also did a lot of sabotage work. And there's a book that I highly recommend, which will tell you about this work. It's called, *The Tulips are Red*, which was a password. By Leesha Rose. After 25 years she finally wrote that book. She was a Dutch girl who went later into the underground, and what impressed me so much about her was that three times she was almost caught, only because she did what she thought was right. She didn't have to do this, and yet she did it, because she was compelled to do the right thing. And because when she was, put herself into a very dangerous situation, but she did survive. And it's a wonderful book because the way she meets her husband. It's very, very romantic actually. And it's all true. Of the

20,000 Jews who went into hiding, 8,000 survived. Yes, I said that. 105,000 Dutch Jews were killed. There are many little stories of narrow escapes I could mention, where a few seconds meant a difference between life and death. Every one of us has a story like that, and someone yesterday in one of the conferences of chi-, I think the one from child survivors, she was also into hiding. She said, "Please write to me just one outstanding story that you have." She wants to, you know, put it into a book I think. And I asked my children, "Which one shall I tell?" Because there were a few, you know?

BZ: Yes.

IL: Like the one at the railroad station, so, but this one here is the story that stands out most in my memory, and I call it the tree incident. I mentioned before that we had to chop trees at night. And we did that between 12 and 4. There was a curfew. No one could go into the street. But that's just when we had to do it because we didn't want anyone to see us do it. That particular night we had started to cut down a tree with a hand saw. It was very hard work, and the tree was supposed to fall into the woods. But instead, it was starting to fall across the street. And just at the moment that the tree was starting to fall, a German Gestapo Jeep passed by. And they were just out of sight when the tree, boom, fell right across the road. And believe me, if that tree had fallen on the Jeep, or just before the Jeep passed, I would not be here sitting now. I'm convinced.

BZ: Yes.

IL: Do you want to know anything more about my hiding, anything specific? Otherwise I will continue with the rest now.

BZ: Yes, anything you can, anything that you can tell me about, any more about false papers or the daily routine of a person in hiding. Could you go out to work when you were in hiding?

IL: No, no, no.

BZ: No, so...

IL: I just did the housework.

BZ: You did the housework.

IL: As I said before, I just took care of my cousin and his wife. And I have to mention here also that my cousin became very difficult to live with in time. His wife had a miscarriage, and I nursed her. It was difficult because they wanted to have a baby, even though they were not married yet...

BZ: Yes.

IL: Because they couldn't be, you know.

BZ: Yes.

IL: And we had so little food and so on. And he started to put me down a lot and get very upset with me. And you have to imagine, I was a young teenager being cooped up, day and night. And the only way I didn't lose my mind was an artist living in a little cottage on the same grounds who would read stories to me and she loved Tolstoy. She was a very liberated person then already. The Dutch people are very old-fashioned.

She had a boyfriend that she lived with. You know, her married name was Marian Loudy [phonetic]. As a matter of fact, I found her again. That was really unbelievable. She became a correspondent after the war. And a friend of mine remembered that I knew her during the war. And she heard a radio broadcast in Holland when they had the earthquake in Guatemala. And it said at the end, "This is Marian Loudy." And my friend in Holland remembered this and called the radio station and got her address. She lives in Mexico City. And I got in touch with her again. And she wrote me a letter back, as if she was still sitting there during the war, you know? She'd never married. And, she really kept my sanity, yes.

BZ: She really...

IL: I couldn't stay with that family with the five children any more. I don't remember now exactly what it was. I went to Amsterdam to stay with my cousin's wife's parents. They lived in an apartment. And it was extremely difficult there. Because there I really could not go out at all. When the family went out, I had to be careful not to walk around, not to flush the toilet, because the neighbors are very nosy and they would have heard something and said, "They're not home. What is this noise?" They had a daughter who was getting married in that apartment. They were having the reception. And since the groom was not to be trusted, he and the rest of the guests never knew I was in that house. For two days I was upstairs in a separate room, where no one knew there was another room. And they had a little potty and they shoved the food under the door to me. And I stayed in there till all the festivities were over. Then one day they decided it was spring, I should have a little fresh air, and go and visit their daughter in the country where they did have a yard. And I made a big mistake. I loved the sun so much. I went outside and sat in that sun for three hours. And that was very wrong. That night I became so ill. I had 104 temperature, didn't know what was wrong with me. And they had to call a doctor, which was a very hard thing to do, because he had to be trusted. Otherwise he could have informed the Germans about everybody and that would have been the end of all of us. They did find this doctor in that small town who came over. And it turned out that I had pleurisy, that is, water on the lungs, and that I had to be bedridden for quite a while. So I went back to Amsterdam and they took care of me. The problem was, I was coughing a lot. And whenever they would have people come over, I had to suppress the cough, because no one could know that I was in there. That was the worst. But a few months later, I was better again and went out to my cousin's house. And I'll give you one more incident that is very, very unusual. The people who owned the house were famous artists. I mentioned that before. Suddenly they could not stay in their hiding place anymore. And one night they came back to their home, because they didn't know...

BZ: Where to go.

IL: Anywhere else to go. They knocked on the door and asked my cousin, "Can I come, no, can we come, husband and wife, and stay here?" In the meantime we found out that the woman was pregnant. "It's only going to be one night. We will find

another place to." Their grand piano was still there, and he had his violin. And they got so excited seeing their own place and started to play, the *Kleine Nacht* music by Mozart. She played the piano and he played the violin. And it was so beautiful. And after they played, he said, "What if the neighbors would have heard this?" That was such a dangerous thing to do. And there was a neighbor who was in [unclear]. But he didn't hear it that night. He said, "Never again will we play." But he didn't think at that moment. Well, they didn't leave the next night. They left a few weeks later. And she did have a baby during her hiding time. And I found out after the war that she died very young. He later became again a member of a chamber orchestra. He was very famous. So that is the very, very sad incident that I remember.

The end of the war, when Hitler's power came in May of 1945. What we had hoped would be a question of a few weeks or a month at the most lasted almost three years. Over 1,000 days, of which each one seemed to last an eternity, especially for a teenager like me. Just before our liberation I became so ill, as I mentioned before. It was all a result of a lack of fresh air, and undernourishment. I had not been in contact with my parents for three years. I tried to get in touch with them after the war. An Austrian authority from Vienna informed me after the war that they had died in an extermination camp in northern Poland.

When the war ended I wanted to become a nurse. So, I went to a hospital in Amsterdam and they were so short of help they took me immediately without any credentials. I had not finished high school. I had no degree of any kind. And they put me in charge of a infant ward, with about 17 infants. I didn't know what to do. Upstairs they had these screaming women when they were giving birth. I had to clean up the placenta. It was an unbelievable situation. And yet, I felt very well. I worked very hard. And I realized that I wasn't really learning anything there. So I applied at a big hospital in Amsterdam. And there they gave me a very thorough examination, including an x-ray. And at the end of the examination they called me into the nurse's, head nurse's office, and I thought I was being accepted. And she says, "Sit down. I have something to tell you." I said, "What's wrong?" She says, "I am sorry, but you cannot be a nurse. You have to be nursed yourself. You have tuberculosis."

That was quite a big blow for me. There were so many people who were sick that I could not even get into a sanatorium right away. Again my cousin took me in, and my cousin's wife. They had not been married yet at that time. She had a friend who was a nurse in a sanatorium, and through her I was able to get there a little bit sooner, which was good, because that way I didn't, could be cured quicker. I was actually lucky, looking back, that they discovered it in the early stages. That way I was only bedridden a few months. There were other people in that sanatorium, they were there maybe three years. In those days, all they did was give you lots of milk, and there were no medications for tuberculosis. And, you know, good food and that's how they cured it. And bed rest. So it, I was there about 10 months. After that, I had to take stock of my life,

and I tried to get in touch with my brother. And I had his address and the address of other old friends in a little metal box with a few precious things that I still had from my parents. It was all hidden under the ground during the war, in that house that I stayed with at my cousin's. When I took that box out of the ground, the addresses were still there, except my brother's address there was a big, big blotch and, from the weather or whatever, that the humidity. And I could not read it. And it took me several weeks. Luckily, he didn't change his name, which a lot of people did when they came here. But somehow I did find him again. He lived in California. And at the time he came here, but he had moved from California to Chicago.

BZ: Oh.

IL: So I got in touch with him again. He was quite surprised. He did not expect me to be still alive. So he right away sent me papers to come to the United States. After I had left the sanatorium, I had to wait, again, for your quota.

BZ: Yes.

IL: Papers alone were not enough.

BZ: Yes.

IL: And I was at that time a displaced person, which supposedly helped with this process. I'm not sure. I didn't have any money. I didn't have any[unclear]. My parents, I found out, had died.

[Tape one, side two ended.]

Tape two, side one:

BZ: This is a continuation of the tape of Mrs. Ilse Loeb.

IL: I said that I found my brother's address again. And he sent me papers to come to United States. In the meantime I had to support myself. And that was through just doing housework since that was the only thing I knew how to do at that time. And I went to live with people and to be their maid for a few weeks. And I had to go back to the doctor to be checked out. And they told me that I was not 100 percent. I had to take it very easy. So I had these wonderful friends that I am still in contact with now who took me in and just let me recuperate there. Because I knew I would have to go for an examination for my papers when I came to the United States. But I was quite worried about it. And somehow the HIAS from the United States found out about my dilemma. And they came to me. They said, "We would like to help you." And they took me to a place they had set up in Holland, a restored castle, where people had come after the war, a lot of people from the camps who were mentally very, very unstable. Because I had a physical problem, it was quite an experience being together with these people right after the war. Two months later I was called to the Consulate and I did have an examination there and an x-ray, and it checked out all right. And so I was able to come to the United States in June of 1947. I arrived here on my birthday. My birth-...

BZ: How old were you?

IL: Um...

BZ: Still a teenager.

IL: No, I was in my early, wait, 22.

BZ: 22.

IL: My brother was always good to me. I stayed there in Chicago for a while until I met my husband, and I got married. I have four children. They are all well-educated. They are all here at the conference where I'm taping this message, which I'm very proud of. Even my son from California, and my little granddaughter. My brother died three years ago. His wife is in a nursing home in Chicago and I take care of her. I visit her periodically because [pause; weeping] he was good to me.

BZ: And you live in, you live in New York?

IL: I live north of New York with my husband, and I just want to mention in conclusion that my cousin, who helped me so much during the war, became mentally ill from all these experiences. He married his fiancé after the war when he was able to, but in 1959, from all the past experiences and strain, he committed suicide. [pause] And that's the story of my life during the Holocaust. [weeping]

[Tape two, side one ended; interview ended.]