Interview with LAURA AMALIA ROSENTHAL
Holocaust Oral History Project
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MS. RICE: Today is December 18, 1990. I am Laurie Rice interviewing Laura Rosenthal for the Holocaust Oral History Project at the Oral History Center in Northern California, San Francisco, California. Assisting with the interview today is Denise Leitzel.

Q. MRS. ROSENTHAL, HELLO. COULD YOU PLEASE BEGIN BY TELLING US YOUR MAIDEN NAME AND THE DATE OF YOUR BIRTH AND THE PLACE OF YOUR BIRTH?

A. My maiden name was Laura Amalia Stein, S-t-e-i-n, and I was born in Karlsruhe, Germany, which is not too far from the Black Forest, on April 13, 1926.

Q. WE WOULD LIKE TO BEGIN BY ASKING YOU TO TALK ABOUT YOUR LIFE BEFORE THE WAR. COULD YOU TALK ABOUT YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR COMMUNITY?

A. Certainly. Although so much time has passed, I'm not quite sure I'll remember everything, but I had a very happy childhood.

I had an older brother. He was three years older than I. We were a close-knit family, and my father was an attorney who was doing very nicely, and all I remember is that we had a comfortable life, apartment life as you did in Germany at that time anyway.

And I remember going to school. As a matter of

fact, I tried to find the school when I was back there two years ago, and I did, an elementary school, and had lots of friends, only Jewish friends I might add because this was in the
'30s.

My father was working as an attorney, even under Hitler, when other people in like positions were not allowed to work any more because he was allowed by the German government for a certain distance. In other words, they had maybe one attorney for all Jews starting from Frankfurt down to the Swiss border and stuff like that, so he was extremely well admired by Jews and non-Jews at the time, which, in a way, was bad because he felt too comfortable and they didn't think anything would happen to them. You know, similar to the film Holocaust, if you remember, that everything was going too smoothly.

But, anyhow, we went on vacations. I remember I had an aunt in Italy who invited us for summer vacations when this was still possible, and in the Tyrolean Alps, and it was just a very convenient, comfortable life.

It did change when, I remember, I went to high school, and I saw that school too. I went back in 1989 and showed the school to my daughter, and I stood in the courtyard, and I really couldn't remember a darn thing. And I must have been 12 at the time when I went there.

Anyway, there must have been a edict by Hitler that no Jewish children were allowed in public schools anymore, and there had already been a Jewish school in

Karlsruhe for all Jewish students, and I remember I went to that school for one year before I left with the children's transport for England. But I must say I did not feel Hitler as much as maybe as a child, you hear things, but they don't sink in. And I even went by train by myself to Munich, where my grandmother lived. I had a very comfortable childhood until Kristallnacht, and that's when things changed.

I don't know what else I can tell you, but I might add that my brother went to England in 1936. He was three years older. He is three years older than I am. And after his Bar Mitzvah in 1936, my parents decided that a boy should get an education. He couldn't get anything there. And they sent him through I presume it was a private means. He did get a scholarship to Birkenhead, which is a public school in England. You know, the typical public school of England. And he went there in '36.

He did come home on vacation until '38, and then, after '38, he didn't come home anymore. So --

Q. SO THE SCHOOL YOU WERE GOING TO AS A CHILD WAS --

A. I think it must have been '37 or '38 for public schools. And then, after that, I went to this Jewish school where you had quite -- I don't remember how many classes they had or anything, but it was quite a fairly good-sized school.

And there, you know, I presume they were monitored by the Germans, you know, because I know that the

headmaster was deported. I remember seeing that later on.

Q. IN YOUR COMMUNITY, WAS IT PRIMARILY A JEWISH COMMUNITY OR WAS --

A. Yes. Well, in the '30s, I don't think, although I must say my father being an attorney was -- I don't know whether you remember the publication the Sturme. The Sturme was a newspaper that -- God, I can't tell think of him.

A MAN: STREICHER?

A. Streicher. He wanted to make caricatures of German Jews, and my father was a very tall, extremely good-looking man and, as I said, well known in the community. And when he was practicing law, there were, from what I remember, some cases where he had to defend Jews, and there was an enormous photograph of him in -- you know, in Germany, you have these robes of the court and so forth, and they took a side view of him. The Sturme always wanted to make side views of noses, I'm sure you're aware of that, and they took this picture of my father and they made a caricature of him.

"There he stands. Now let him defend the Jews."

And my father was so proud of that picture because he said he's never had a free picture taken like that to publicize, you know, his fact that he was an attorney, and he cut it out, and he kept it for a long time.

But, anyhow, no, we did have mostly Jewish

friends, but we had neighbors. I mean, some neighbors, later on as I'll tell you, saved some of the things that my parents quickly gave them before they were deported that my brother, being with the British army, got after the war, and things like that.

But, in Germany, you really couldn't have non-Jewish friends. First of all, if you had them, they were very quiet. I mean, yes, we had kinder fraulein. We had a nurse or something like that who was living on a farm, and we went to see her and stuff like that, but not people that you related to at parties and stuff like that, not anything like that. You couldn't do that. And you would also put them in danger really, you know. People that did anything for you did it quietly.

My father did have non-Jewish clients, you know, in his law practice. But if I remember, he had a non-Jewish secretary that had to leave because it wasn't permitted, you know.

But I would say that 99 percent that I remember were all Jewish friends because we had different groups including bowling teams and stuff like that were all Jewish. There was no, that I can think of, there was no interrelation with non-Jewish people.

Q. WHEN DID YOU FIRST -- I REALIZE YOU WERE A CHILD AT THE TIME -- WHEN DID YOU FIRST START GETTING AN IDEA THAT SOMETHING WAS CHANGING?

A. Well, when my brother was sent to England, that made an enormous effect.

But, you know, unless you experience it yourself, you really don't realize as a child what's going on. Or maybe my life was too comfortable. I wasn't hungry. You had, in Germany, in Karlsruhe, you had a lot of family that originally came from Poland. They had a much rougher time than us because they were deported earlier. They were victimized, I think.

They also were not -- don't forget, it's the same old story, money talks. When you have enough money and you have food on your table, you know, it's a completely different story than if you're an employee and you haven't got a salary to bring home. And I think those are the hardships that other people could tell differently to mine.

But we also had relatives in Switzerland, and I'm not sure whether anything came -- I think there was a time when my father's practice was not as affluent as it could have been because, you know, you didn't have the -- you had to go from a general practice or defense. He actually was a defense lawyer, a trial lawyer I think you called it. But I think there may have been times when they sent some checks. They were very wealthy, and they were on my paternal grandmother's side, relatives that went to Switzerland in the late 19th century and a Swiss through and through.

So it's possible, but I didn't know about it. You know, I didn't know. There was never anything that I couldn't have unless it was forbidden or not allowed or

something like that. I mean, there was a time I remember when I think that you couldn't go on the trams, you know, the Jews were not allowed to go to , so I walked. You know, it was not that huge a city that you really, shall I say, found that you were at a disadvantage, you know.

But on the whole, as I said, when my brother went to England, I realized something was happening. And, of course, when I had to leave the school, that was -- but I was secure. I was with my parents, and my parents kept me because they felt a girl had to stay with her parents. You know, this is the age-old thing that it's okay for a boy to go away, but a girl, well, we better take care of her and stay with her. So I always had the security of family.

Now, after Kristallnacht, that's when I really changed, as I mentioned before.

Q. WHY DON'T YOU TELL US ABOUT KRISTALLNACHT?

A. We had heard -- no, wait a moment. I remember -- I'm not quite sure whether the burning was before the police came, but we had a warning. I think it was the Kristallnacht was -- no, the synagogues I think were burned first during the night, and -- I'm not quite sure which was first, but, anyhow, we had some -- that's when some non-Jews came running. And my father being in court had someone come over and say, "The police are taking all the Jewish men, and you better be careful."

But, anyhow, he had been wounded very badly in

World War 1. As a matter of fact, he had his -- what do you call this ball in the arm, in the right arm? -- shot out in World War 1 so that he could not lift his arm. In other words, he even got some little pin or something, and this is why he was known, because he was always, you know, Dr. Stein was always known all over. Anyhow, and because of that, he thought they would not take him and ship him to Dachau or wherever it was.

They rounded him up, and I never forget I saw my father sitting. They had open trucks like, I don't know, trucks with wooden panels on the side. I guess they had benches there, and they rounded up the men. This must have been the evening of the 9th. As I said, I'm not sure whether it was the 9th or the 10th. And they were going around the neighborhood rounding up all the Jewish men and were hitting them on the heads with the bottles and with whatever they could find, wood. And I never forget my father sitting there on this truck and saying, "Jude Stein," "Jew Stein, now you can talk," because, as I said, he was a defense lawyer and he always talked in court. "Now you can stand up and talk." In other words, hitting him. And this has had a terrific effect to this day as you can imagine now.

And then they took him only to the police station. They did not ship him right away to other camps. I also don't remember what the sequence of the thing, but at the police, they released him because of his war wounds and said, "No, we're not going to ship you. You gave --

you got hurt for Germany and we won't ship you to Dachau" or wherever. But most of the men, unless they were really special cases, were shipped to Dachau. I don't think they were shipped to Auschwitz at the time. From Karlsruhe, most of them, southern Germany, most of them were shipped to Dachau, which is outside Munich, and it's geographically easier for that.

Now, there were some that came back, but I would say my father was one of the few that came back from the Kristallnacht and immediately started working. I remember this. Many things I don't remember, but there are certain things that are very clear in my mind, and I remember him being in bed because he was bruised, you know, from the hitting and everything else. And not only that, he was very handicapped because of his injury to his shoulder. Working in bed with his secretary to try and get the release of other men that were incarcerated on November 9.

But what I also remember about Kristallnacht quite apart from the flames of the synagogue, which we were really too scared to go and see because we didn't know what would await us, you know, we had all the prayer books and everything there and so forth, but I guess my growing up started November 9, 1938.

What I remember, my mother had a gun in a closet, which was from my father from his, I guess, World War 1 experiences. And you know how you sometimes keep a gun or something.

And he said, "If the Germans find the gun in the

closet if they come, we'll be shot."

So we walked, and I lived in an area which had maybe ten blocks away some fields, and I'll never forget it, my mother had the gun under her coat, and we were just hoping that nobody would stop us, and we went to a field and just buried this gun. This was all done the same 9th, 10th of November. And we were so glad when we got rid of it because you really didn't know what was going to happen, nor did you know, you know, even if one policeman or one SS, whatever it was, I don't remember then, liked my father, there would have been another who said, "Oh, this one likes him, let's shoot him anyway."

So it was indecision and fear that you can't possibly imagine, and I think it's the fear that I remember most. And it's this fear really that has kept me very one-sided as far as Germany is concerned.

You know, there are many people that go back today, and I mentioned to you this reunion that was in '88, the 50th anniversary, and I wouldn't go back. I was back on my own, but I paid my own trip. I didn't have to say thank you, and I never want to say thank you to anything as far as Germany is concerned.

Q. SO, AFTER KRISTALLNACHT, HOW DID THAT CHANGE YOUR FAMILY LIFE?

A. Well, a lot. I really don't remember too much except, as I said, my father's work was -- well, it did change quite a lot because, first of all, the rabbi left. We had a rabbi by the name of Dr. Schiff, who was an

American. I saw him afterwards. But they were -- I can't give you figures, but it was quite a good size congregation still that was in -- a lot of people had left, but a lot of people couldn't leave because, you know, you were on a quota system.

My parents had a quota, and that was in the consulate in Stuttgart, which would have, under normal circumstances, we would have been allowed to come to America in I think it was September, 1940, depending on the numbers that were being called. So there were a lot of people left because they didn't have anyone outside or couldn't get anyone and didn't have enough pull to get someone.

You know, the people that got out were mostly people that had outside contacts, that had businesses that were able to, you know, they were import-export, something like that, and went to England and stuff like that. But it was a matter of, you know, demand and -- what do you call it?

Anyhow, after Kristallnacht, my father took over whatever was left of the German Jews in Karlsruhe and tried to get them -- well, they had certain things were saved like I guess were offices, but he sort of took charge because people were scared and they had to have a central body to come to. And there were also people that didn't have money that you needed like a soup kitchens.

And I have this album at home, which I forgot to bring, I'm sorry, that showed the soup kitchen that was

established for people that didn't have work or that couldn't or old people or something like that.

Anyhow, this was really his mainstay after November, '38.

Now, in addition to that, that's when my parents decided they had better do something as far as I'm concerned because they knew that they had to get the children out, all children out. And there was at the time this children's transport, which I'm sure you heard about. I don't know when they started the children's transports, but I presume it was done from England. There was an organization, I think it was -- I don't really know the name, but it was called Wobenhouse. Wobenhouse was where they were located, and everybody called it Wobenhouse, where families, I presume, wrote that they would take a child and, you know, be responsible for them.

And we got through an agency, and I'm sorry, I don't know who it was, but I remember getting a letter from a family in Liverpool, England, by the name of Saffer, S-a-f-f-e-r, and they wrote that they had two daughters and they would like to take on another young girl for company for their daughters. And they sent a picture on Blackpool boardwalk. I mean, certain things I remember. And she was as ugly as hell and he was very nice and the picture was absolutely true to form.

Anyhow, there was a correspondence with them. We sent a picture of myself, and I should have brought that, I have a picture of myself. And we wrote back and

forth in my parents' best English. I didn't know any English at the time at all. So then I got English lessons quickly, quick quick. And they decided they would like to take me.

And I think the kinder transport was basically arranged that way, individually through this Wobenhouse, through, I presume, was British organization like Niana or anything like that. You know, for refugees or something like that.

Anyway, I remember that my father took me. The children were all brought to Frankfurt, which was a major point of transport because trainwise, travelwise and so forth, and I remember my father took me to Frankfurt. I believe it was May 3, somewhere around then, because I remember celebrating my birthday still at home, so it must have been after April 13. I think it was early May.

And there were three other boys from Karlsruhe which were on the same train that I didn't know too well, but I knew of them, that were also in this whole group of children, and we went. It was quite a sight when I think of it now. I presume it was a carriage of children, you know, that were brought to Frankfurt, left on the train. I mean went by train. And I believe it was by Hook of Holland to London. I believe there was -- you had trains that went on the boats and then, you know, in other words, no tunnel at that time. And in London, I was met by my brother, who was at that time 15.

And he had a arranged with this family, Mr. and

Mrs. Saffer, to pick me up in London and take me from London to Liverpool, which was at that time quite a trip. I don't remember how many hours anymore, but I would say at least three hours, four hours at the time.

I think I was basically numb at that time. I was -- I often think I was just turned 13, and I think of Bas Mitzvah here today and how independent the children are today and do anything. I know my daughter traveled in Europe when she was 15, you know. But the unknown that faced me and not knowing what was ahead of me I think put me very much into a numbness.

Anyway, I got to Liverpool, and I don't remember too much of the first days because, at the time, I was a child that always wanted to please. You know, I was very -- my whole years in England were very yes matter of fact. In other words, I yesed everything, and whatever you did was fine, but I really didn't develop any identity of my own until I guess things just I had to develop an identity of my own, and that's what started in England.

Q. WERE YOU IN TOUCH WITH YOUR PARENTS AFTER YOU LEFT?

A. I wrote a couple of letters from Liverpool and I sent pictures. I remember I sent a picture of myself in an English high school dress that I still have, tiny little thing, but there wasn't -- I'm trying to think. The war started in September. I would say that, until August, from May to August, I was in correspondence with my parents.

But the years of the time with the Saffers was

very difficult. It was a horrible time. They were fine at first, but when war started, they didn't realize what would happen to me. They knew my parents were in Germany. They didn't want to be, because originally they knew that my parents were trying to get out and go to America, so it was purely for maybe a year or two that they had me.

And he was wonderful, Mr. Saffer was wonderful, but the mother was very, very tough. And I remember they took me on a vacation in England to Blackpool or somewhere, and I had brought an English dress, a long dress. They had asked my parents that I should take, a 13-year-old bring a long a dress to England, and my mother had a dress made for me for a 13-year-old, and I don't know, a party dress. And we were somewhere, and there was a young man, maybe 15 years old, I don't remember anymore, and he liked me better than the -- it was like the stepsisters, you know. And I was always very happy sort of. You know, I don't know. I was just a nice kid. And he liked me, and he asked them whether he could dance with me or something like that.

And the mother was terribly upset because the daughter, she said, Vivian, I don't remember, one daughter's name was Vivian and I don't remember the other daughter's name, and he should have asked them instead, you know. So there was always the certain jealousy, whatever there was.

And, anyway, war came, and, at that time, I still had correspondence also with friends of my parents who lived in England, you know, who got from Germany to

England, so I had a few contacts, but I was not happy there ever.

And I went to high school. I went to Ekbert's High School. I still remember it. And then war came, and the schools all were evacuated.

But before that time, I remember that the Saffers had asked me that my parents write in English. In other words, all the correspondence should be in English because they wanted to read the letters first. And that upset me terribly at the time. I mean, I was young, I was homesick to begin with. I didn't have any roots of any kind. And then my parents had to write in English.

But, in the meantime, I think that was after I came back, I'm not quite sure, the school was evacuated to a place, Hollywell in North Wales, which was not too fair from Chester. You know Chester up north? Well, it's a very pretty area of Wales.

And that part, that was very nice because we were quartered in a typical Welsh home with a family. And the wife had, I don't know, she must have been late 20s, 30s, and she liked me and I sort of had, you know, I had someone that cared about me.

And, anyhow, after a while, the school went back. I don't remember why really, but we went back to Liverpool. And at the time, I think that was maybe when they were upset that I should write -- oh, no. I'm not quite sure of that time.

Anyhow, after the war started, I had relatives

in Switzerland, and my parents would write letters to Switzerland, and they would send the letters to me. But, of course, they had to be pretty neutral letters because they couldn't find out that it came from Germany. You know, it was just saying they were fine and what they did.

And I said, you know, everything is fine, the school is well, and I didn't want them to worry anyway.

Anyhow, but that's when I think the Saffers asked me to have the letters in English, please, that all letters had to be in English.

So the Saffers had a maid or day maid. I think she came in every day. And I said, "I really don't like people reading my mail."

I still remember that. I was sleeping on the cot somewhere. I'm not kidding you, it was Cinderella.

And the maid had said, "Why don't you let your parents write to me, and I'll bring you the letters?"

Anyway, I wrote that letter to my parents, and they found it. They found the letter where I had asked them to send the letters to this woman. I don't know whether I had mailed it or I can't tell you how they found it. And that's when the Saffers said, "We don't want her in the house anymore." And this must have been 1940, sometime in 1940. And so that's when my time with the Saffers ended, period.

And there was a committee for children and for, I presume, refugees at the time, and they arranged for me to live in a house where my relatives paid a monthly fee to

this family. I presume it was quite common, too, you know, when people could do that. But, I was the ripe old age of -- I remember celebrating my 14th birthday, so it must have been before -- no, that was -- wait a minute. Let me just go. '42. No, it may have been afterwards.

I lived with a family in a small home. They had one little room there. And that's when the bombs started in Liverpool, if you remember, in 1940.

But I went to school there. I remember that. I went to high school. It wasn't the same high school anymore that I started with. Anyway, and it was fair. I mean, I was on my own. I was 14 years old, and I didn't know what was happening to me except for the fact that I had meals and went to school. I really had no contact other than my brother, who I did hear from. He was still at school in Birkenhead.

And that's when the bombs started. And Walborn Road, I suddenly remember the name, and Lorborn Road in Liverpool. And one night, this must have been late 1940, the house across the street got a direct hit, and we got a lot of damage and I was hit with flying glass. I mean, I had just rolled under the bed, and I got the flying glass anyway. And I still have a mark right here on my arm. And I was scared then. After, I immediately went out, and it was incendiary bombs. Liverpool was hit with incendiary bombs.

Anyhow, then, after that time, I didn't know what to do, and I had an uncle in London, my mother's

brother, who I was in touch with sort of, but he was a bachelor brother, and he was, what shall I tell you, he didn't -- I don't think he was really interested in his niece or anything else, but he had gone to Llandudno, which is in north Wales, I guess for a vacation and meet some friends there.

And he wrote to me, and I called him where he was, I believe. Maybe he called me first. I know there was correspondence and so forth. And when he heard that I had this real close bomb scare, I mean, you know, there were bombs every night, but this one was really -- I would say it's less than across the street here. It was a direct hit. He said, "Why don't you come to Llandudno where I am?"

And I went there purely to see what it was like, I didn't take anything with me, and to visit him. And I don't recall whether it was a weekend or what it was that I could get away from school or something, but I went there. And he had been living with an English family, a girl friend and her mother or something like that, and I guess he got them into taking me in.

So he said, "Why don't you go back and get your things?"

I'll never forget. I had a huge trunk, you know, with these trays that come out from Germany, and that and my harmonica and my bicycle were my earthly goods. And I packed up, and I guess I went then by train.

I don't remember a thing. There are many things

I don't remember because they were too -- I guess leaving a bad taste in my mouth.

Anyhow, I went to Llandudno, and lo and behold, two weeks after I'm there -- oh, no, before that, I called the committee that I was in charge with, and I don't think this was in Liverpool, I think this was in London, and I told them that I had moved to Llandudno.

And they said, "Well, we have no jurisdiction over Wales. You're now in Wales."

Apart from that, of course, they also didn't want to do it because they hadn't given their permission for me to move. But, you know, when you're a child and you want to be safe, you don't think I have to get permission or I have to get whatever. You just do it, you know, and then worry about it, especially if you have somewhere to stay. You know, had you a roof over your head.

So, anyhow, I remember that. They said, "Well, you're under the Welsh jurisdiction now, so we can't help you anymore."

So there I was in the winter, I'm trying to think whether that was '40. I guess it was maybe by that time it was '41, but it must have been spring of '41. But not only that, I was there, and two weeks after I was there, my uncle decided to go back to London and didn't come back. I knew he was going to London, but he decided to stay in London and not come back, so I was in Llandudno with nobody.

And after a while, naturally, this family, a

mother and daughter, I couldn't blame them, maybe he had a row with his girl friend, I can't remember now, I can't tell you now, but, anyway, they said, "Look, we like you very much, but we can't take care of you."

So that's when I called again the committee in London, and they said, "Well, we'll get in touch with the Welsh committee," which was, I presume, in Cardiff because that's the main section of Wales there, and after some time, I got a letter, I guess, from a hostel.

You know what a hostel is? There were lots of hostels in England where children were put that didn't have families and the community took it. In this case, the place was Newport Monmouthshire, which was about an hour away from Cardiff. They wrote me a letter saying that they had this hostel with Jewish children that were mostly -- no, they were from all over. That hostel was from all over, and they would take me in.

So I got on a bus, shipped my bicycle and my trunk. I don't know how I did it, believe me, I honestly don't remember and I guess I don't even want to know anymore. I presume I went to the railroad station and just said, "Can you ship this," and went to Newport Monmouthshire.

And I arrived in Newport, I remember it was snowing and I had chilblains, frostbite, and nobody to meet me. But I had an address and it was 92 Casenov Road.

From that time on, I remember things very well because, well, I guess I grew up and I also had some

semblence of order after that.

And, anyway, I don't remember whether I took a taxi or what because I didn't much money with me. And I arrived at this huge house, and there I was, on my own.

And there was a matron and an assistant, and I don't remember how many children, maybe ten, something like that. So I was in Newport, and I guess by that time -- no, I was 15 -- wait a minute. I remember my 15th birthday. That was what, '41. '41, so it must have been '41 because -- but it may have been that I celebrated my 15th birthday, so I must have gotten there somewhere around March.

Anyway, after a few days, I helped in the house. And after a while, the committee met. You know, it was really from the Jewish congregation in Newport, and they were wonderful people. I must say that. They were wonderful. They were warm. They made you feel a little bit like, you know, that you have to be eternally grateful, but they cared. I mean, they knew that these children needed something.

Anyhow, some of them went to school, that I remember. I remember only one girl from that area, from that time period who was a little older than me. She was 18. And, anyhow, I know there were others, too, come to think of it, that I remember. But, anyhow, some went to school, but they told me I was 15 and I had to go to work.

So -- no, I didn't have to go to work right away. I should go to -- what do you call it? -- learn shorthand and typing. So I went to Penfield College for I

guess the better part of a year. No, maybe six months. But I learned Pitman shorthand, which I still do, and typing, which I'm horrible at because the typing, they never had a typing teacher, so the kids were always supposed to look, I don't know what they had, these covers. Everybody took the covers off and typed. So, anyway, that was my terrific commercial education.

And after I got through with that, they told me, "Well, now you have to go to work." And I was 15. I remember that clearly. And I went to work for a wholesaler, who was a Jewish man from the congregation, and I managed his store. I did everything. I did the invoices, I did the stock, I did the -- I presume he was a wholesaler for dry goods or whatever you want to call it. Anyway, I felt very good at that time that I could do all of that, you know.

But there was no chance of my going back to school. I mean, I read a lot, but I had a shorthand teacher at Pagefield College who took an immense liking to me and who I was in touch with until she died, even from San Francisco, and I presume she died because her letters stopped. I just didn't hear anymore. And she took a liking to me, and she would tell me, "Come, I have" -- she gave private classes at night. She said, "Why don't you come, and you can learn something else?" You know, she made me feel that she cared about me. And she was just a lovely person, and she sort of was the one person who knew me when and was able to recognize when I did better in my

career and so forth.

But, anyhow, I worked for this -- I can't remember the name of the wholesaler by now. It may come back to me.

After a while, they had to close the hostel because the matron was getting too old and they decided to close the hostel, and all the children were going to go to a hostel in London. And we went -- this was December, '41, I guess. We went to a very orthodox hostel in Stamford Hill, which is north London, where I think we were all pretty religious, even in Newport, but not as religious. I mean, there I couldn't carry a key. I had to tie my handkerchief around my waist and all kinds of things. Now, I don't think we were all told to do that, but I saw the other children that were there doing it, and I didn't want to offend them, and that's why I did it.

In this hostel, which was much bigger, there were two huge English homes. A lot of the children were from Vienna, and this was an established house where I would say three-quarters, if not more, people of the girls worked, and it was run by a couple that was born in Vienna, I remember that. Again, the husband was very nice, his wife was a little bit of a pill, but she was all right. In the long run, you tried not to have too much to do with her because, you know, that was it.

Anyway, incidentally, I forgot one thing. In Newport, I'll never forget, I entertained the American troops. I played the accordion, you know, the piano

accordion, and this family that -- not family, this whole group of people that were, you know, responsible for the hostel in Newport Encasno Hostel, said, "Laura, you play the accordion. Why don't you come and entertain these" -- I think there were even Jewish soldiers they were entertaining.

And I'll never forget, I played -- I don't remember anymore what I played. I didn't play that well, but somebody wanted to carry my accordion. It was a big heavy Hohner accordion. And I got scared, and I said, "No, no, thank you, I'll do it myself."

That was my first meeting with American soldiers, and it was very funny because you're always taught here with the English with the American soldiers and they were always fraternizing and so forth, and I was so scared of them, I said, "No, no, I can carry this myself."

In Casenor Road, in the meantime, I had gotten older, too. I worked. I'm trying to think where I worked first. I had gotten -- I worked for this wholesaler in Newport, and I guess I got into import-export in London, and I worked for a Jewish firm, I can't tell you how I got to them, but I worked, as far as I know, that was the only firm I worked for as a traffic, as a traffic, I guess I was a traffic clerk at that time in import-export, and I worked and I paid for my room and board. That's basically what it was. You know, you paid, I think at the time it was 30 shillings or something. That was about two-thirds of your salary went for room and board at this hostel.

And then that was for quite a few years. I was there, I'm trying to think. I think I got there in '43, and I was -- I corresponded with my parents, who were deported in the meantime. I don't know whether I mentioned that. Did I mention that? I may have to backtrack a little bit.

While I was -- let me see, I guess while I was in -- they were deported I believe in October, '40, at which time I was still in Newport. I guess I got -- yes, I did get the letter in Newport that my parents, and I got this letter from Switzerland, that my parents were deported. They had been in Karlsruhe, but Germany, I don't know which department or which, whether it was the Ministry of Labor or what, had made an agreement with the French that they had a camp there in not too far from /PAORL which was called Camp de Gurs, G-u-r-s, and I have books at home that give the exact dates of the deportations exactly. All Jews in the state of Baden, that's the greater county, state where Karlsruhe was situated, were deported to this Camp de Gurs; and, in turn Germany would get French labor, which they needed for the factories during the wartime. You know, this was 1940. And they were all rounded up and had about one hour's notice.

Now, I must say that my parents had packed all their belongings in what was called a lift because, you know, a lift, a container, I guess, they had packed, they had their furniture sized down, you know, made smaller for American rooms and so forth, and I remember that my mother

writing me that, and so I don't even know what they had in their apartment. I presume they had stuff that they didn't care about and so forth or didn't want to take and so forth. I know they had their bedroom and stuff. But, anyway, in 1940, they got this notice, and all the Jews of Baden were deported to this Camp de Gurs by train.

Now, this was not as bad as Dachau or Auschwitz because it was a camp which was a holding camp, I guess you would call it. And not only that, I think they had a little bit of independence because you could still send, from what I understand, packages there.

But it so happens that I heard this just, I guess, a year ago or so. My parents did not get -- the policemen didn't ring their doorbell to say, "Be at the railroad station in a hour's time," and I understand that my father was so scared that they would shoot him on the spot that he went on his own and, you know, packed up and said, "Come on, let's go with them because I don't know what's happening." It may have been an oversight that they didn't get a policeman to tell them or SS. I have no idea whether it was the police or the SS. Most likely police because the SS wouldn't give you notice, they would just shoot.

So he quickly wrapped up -- I think they had one suitcase each. That's all they were allowed to take, one suitcase. And why I'm saying this is because my mother at the time gave handkerchiefs to a neighbor and I think she also gave some cutlery, but I think that went or something,

and the handkerchiefs my brother got after World War 2. And my daughter, who was named after my mother with the initial A, is still using them today.

My mother, I must say, had a linen fetish. Between towels and handkerchiefs and linen, I mean, there was nothing she wouldn't have as far as linen is concerned.

Anyhow, that's what I have left of what they had when they were deported, the handkerchiefs that my mother had. There must be at least still three dozen handkerchiefs that she had, and I'm still using them.

But, anyhow, they were deported to the camp, and I guess they slept in -- they had barracks in elau. I guess eleau is French for barracks. And I got this letter giving me the news, and I didn't know what to do. I mean, I couldn't do anything.

Anyhow, I was in London at the time, but the bombs followed me there. There were bombs every night at that time. And I'm trying to think of the years, because this was '43, and I got to America in '47. I presume I was in that hostel for close to until '45. I guess two, two and a half years, something like that, maybe three years.

But then a friend of my -- well, no, let me retract again because it sort of interplays.

I worked in the business district in London, you know, right near the Bank of London in that whole EC 2 form, but I was pretty content because I didn't know what else to do. You know, it was a country to some other

children who had families who took care of them and I know some that had families that took care of them for the whole duration of the war. I was shifted around constantly until London.

Anyhow, during that time, my parents were in Camp de Gurs, and my father was deported from Camp de Gurs to Marseille. There was another camp in Marseille, and I'll gladly bring pictures, if I can find it. I have a picture of him in an almost prison uniform, but I don't know. I kept it so well. It must have been in one of my drawers.

But, in Marseille, he got very sick and he almost died. He had what a German -- I don't know the sickness. I guess it was dysentery kind of sickness. He lost 60 pounds. He called it ruhr, r-u-h-r, and he almost died.

But before he went to Marseille, I have a picture of that, too, my father was a wonderful human being who was not only admired, but he did for everybody and a very funny person. He had a terrific sense of humor. I think it's the sense of humor that kept him alive really.

But in Gurs, they were allowed to, you know, make evenings or like, what do you call it, musical evenings. And he sent me a picture or maybe I got the picture after the war, I can't tell you, music might deem trotzic lacht, that is music is when you laugh in spite of yourself, of it. In other words, music is went them lacht, in other words, don't ever lose your sense of humor

basically. And he was a fantastic raconteur of jokes. Stories, not jokes. Not jokes the way you hear it here, but little tidbits. I have it today. I wish I could translate it because he had stories of operas. You know, the lyrics of operas if you changed the wording. It was, I mean, he still had everybody roaring in New York when he was the short time he was there. Anyway, I remember seeing this picture that he was the MC, I guess, and everything of a musical and entertaining evening to make people forget what they were doing.

And this has stayed with him really because, even when the bombs were raining down on London, he said, "Don't worry, nothing will happen to our children." My mother would be dying of, you know, who would be hit next, and he would say, "Don't worry, nothing will happen to our children."

Anyhow, where were we? He was in Marseille then, and my parents got out of France due to the same Swiss relatives that had paid for me for my upkeep in Liverpool, and they gave I think at that time an enormous sum of $3,000 for my parents to get out. And I presume it was a bribery. I wouldn't know what else. But the French are known for their taking money, you know, left and right. You could bribe anybody and everybody, but you did have to have papers, too.

So, anyway, my parents were fortunate and got out in a cattle boat to Oran and then to Cuba. I don't know how they got the Cuban visa and all this kind of

thing, but there were quite a lot of German Jews that got to Cuba during that time. And that must have been '43. I don't know. About '43, I guess. Maybe '42. I'm not quite sure of the time because they were deported in '40 and then '41. Maybe it was December, '42, and they got to Cuba in '43. It's possible. I'm not quite sure of the year because those years are just one big blot to me, but they they went via North Africa.

From what I understand, it was one of the last ships to leave Marseille because France, I guess, this was unoccupied France, you see, and then France was occupied later on, and I believe that this was one of the last ships to leave Marseille. I remember my parents telling me that, that they were fortunate. I presume that's why they went into the cattle hold of that.

Anyway, they got to Cuba, and then, of course, from Cuba, I could hear directly, you know, to England during the war, and we had no more Swiss in between.

But just to finish up the story of my parents in Cuba, apparently they were blacklisted somewhere in Washington and they couldn't -- usually you went to Cuba and you waited for a year or so, and then you got into the States. But my father, either because he had been permitted to practice law this last year or two was blacklisted, and my aunt could never understand why. And she went to Washington twice, and finally, in 1946, they were permitted to leave Cuba and come to New York.

And then, when they were in New York, they, you

know, requisitioned me to come as their child. So I came in February, '47.

But before I left, after the hostel, I still lived for about a year at friends of theirs from Cuba. That's what started me on the Cuba bit. Friends of theirs from Cuba had a room to rent in a house on Golden Green in northwest London. It's a Jewish area. So they said they would rent me the room. It was a tiny little room. So I left the hostel because I had enough hostel life then, too. That was in -- I guess I was about -- I came over in '47. I was 20, I guess. I guess I must have been 18, 19 at the time.

Anyway, from there, I went to London; from London, I went to New York; and I came over on a British war bride ship, I remember that, and I was sick for the whole time. I threw up the whole trip from London to New York. But the ship was -- I got the place because you couldn't get any room on these ships because they were sending all the war brides over. And because I was in shipping, somebody in the shipping office, you know, called someone, and one little thing led to the other, and I got to New York then.

But it was a long story. I left out quite a few things such as when I had a tooth pulled that I didn't have money to have, you know. I had no money. And I still have an empty spot there because I had no money to have my teeth taken care of, and the English are known for the bad teeth care to begin with.

He said "Well, I guess I'll have to pull it," and, "You pull it."

And I'll never forget, at one time there was a chance of my coming to New York. I had a girl friend here, and the parents wanted me to, you know, to sponsor me to come, but you just couldn't. You know, that was when a lot of British children came over to America. I don't know whether you heard of that. American families sponsored English children the same way that the English sponsored the German children. Quite a few American families sponsored English children to get out of the bombing and so forth. I heard of from time to time quite a few that could do it. Anyway, they thought they could do it, but they couldn't. But anyway, at the time, I didn't have any money, and I said I to have one pair of shoes that has no holes. So I had this one pair of shoes, sandals, I think, resoled for my trip to America.

Those were the times when things were rough.

Q. YOU DID MENTION THAT YOUR FATHER WAS DEPORTED TO MARSEILLE?

A. Well, from Gurs.

Q. AND YOUR MOTHER STAYED?

A. My mother was in Gurs. As a matter of fact, I have letters from them to each other during that time that I kept when my parents died. But my mother, I don't know how they managed. When they got the permit to go to Cuba, my mother left Gurs and went to Marseille. I have no idea how they traveled. I presume by train or something. I

have no idea.

They shipped -- I guess they shipped some of the men elsewhere, you know. I really don't know why they shipped the men elsewhere.

Q. AND WHEN YOUR PARENTS WERE IN THE CAMP, THEY WERE ABLE TO WRITE TO YOU DIRECTLY?

A. No, no, no, it all went via Switzerland.

Q. BUT THE CORRESPONDENCE THAT YOU RECEIVED WAS FROM YOUR PARENTS?

A. It was their handwriting, yes. Of course, at that time, and I'm not sure whether the letters that they wrote from camp were -- you know, the English censored everything, and they cut out. Have you ever seen any of those war letters? I mean, I have like little bits of pieces of paper, that's why I kept them, really, not to have my children look at them, but I felt it was important to keep these things of it, especially since my father had the most beautiful handwriting.

He got more in a postcard than most people get on a four-page letter. It's an art. I don't know why. I've never seen it. I've seen it in old German handwriting, but his wasn't really that German a handwriting, but he just wrote very small. And I thought, you know, to keep the letters just because of the beautiful handwriting.

But -- I'm sorry, I forgot what --

Q. WHEN YOU ARRIVED IN NEW YORK, YOUR PARENTS WERE THERE TO MEET YOU?

A. Meet me at the boat.

Q. CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THAT?

A. I had, you know, by that time, what was it, in February, '47, I was 20 years old, and I must tell you I had some good times, too. I mean, I had friends. There were young people. I remember, before I get to New York, getting lost in the fog, and we had a lot of fun. You know, if you get lost in the pea soup fog in England and stuff like that.

But I always was alone. I was always alone. And I shouldn't say this really because there were friends that I had who had lost their parents, you know, that the parents just weren't there. And a very close friend of mine died in London while I was there at the age of 16 of rheumatic fever. And I still think of her. I still think of her. It was misdiagnosed. The doctor said, "Oh, it's the flu." And this girl had lost her mother and another sister.

Her father got out with another sister, and I've tried to find the other sister because I know she went to Israel, but I couldn't find her. There are some people that I know I found later on in a kibbutz in Israel from that time, but most of the people I have not found.

I shouldn't say that. There was one boy that used the walk me home. I used to be very orthodox in London, as I told you, and I ate at a kosher -- I guess she had a boarding house, and she made dinner for people that worked and then came there for dinner, and I ate there

every night, I think. I don't remember exactly, but almost every night. And he used to walk me home. And Henry Steinberg, I don't know, have you taken his course yet? Henry Steinberg? No? Anyhow, he was a nice guy, and the last thing I know before I left for New York was that he was going to go to Israel because he had his father in Israel.

And lo and behold, one day one of my children is invited to a Bas Mitzvah, and our friend said -- we weren't that friendly with the parents, but the children were invited to the Bas Mitzvah, my daughter, and she said, "Oh, I'll ask a neighbor of yours to pick her up," and didn't give me a name.

And I said, "Fine. What time?"

And he comes to the house where I'm living now, and he comes up the passage way, and it's Henry Steinberg, who I knew in London in 1946, '47.

And I just saw him the other day. They live in Laguna Hilla now, and, you know, they lived right in Daly City. So we reestablished contact with him and his wife. He married also a German born girl in the midlands.

And I said, "I thought you were going to Israel." He didn't, but that was the story of that part.

But, anyway, where were we? I'm sorry.

Q. COMING TO NEW YORK.

A. Oh, yes. I had an aunt who was a miliner, and she decided that I needed to have a hat made for my arrival in New York. Of course, this was wartime, there were no

clothes, you know, coupons or anything, and somebody from America had sent me a coat. I still remember it had a velvet collar. And here I came all ferputzed with a coat and this black hat that was over the face. Ridiculous.

But, anyway, I'll never forget my mother looking at me after the tears and everything else, she said, "Laura, let me look at your face. Let's take the hat off." And that was the last thing I remember of that black hat that was supposed to go as an entrance to the United States of America. No, it was wonderful. It was wonderful.

We lived in New York in a walk-up on Broadway. It was horrible. We had a living room with a pull-out couch, this was 1947, with a pull-out couch on which my mother and I slept; and there was a small room, maybe the size of here to the wall, where there was a bed where my father slept. And we did that for a year almost. But it was heaven for my parents, you know.

My mother worked, my father worked as a translator. Never had known a word of Yiddish in his life, and he worked as a translator for Spanish and Yiddish for I think it's called Association for New Americans. At that time, all the refugees were coming in. Anyway, he said, "I have three languages. I speak Yiddish, Spanish, and with the hands." You know, with the hands with all the Jews coming in.

So, anyhow, but they had aged terribly. My parents had not a stitch, arrived in Cuba with what they

wore, and my mother had made -- somebody had sent her a ski suit, you know, skiing outfit with pants and jacket, and she had a suit made by somebody. That's how she arrived in Cuba.

I mean, when you think all these things, you sort of take it for granted, but there is a resilience, and this resilience is in the person. You know, because I had made up my mind, and I made it up later on when I was widowed, you can either go under or you can be a survivor, and I definitely have been a survivor. I mean, you know, you can't go into all the details because there are too many, you know, the anguish and the -- what do you call it? The moments that a psychiatrist most likely would love to have you as a patient, you know, because there are too many. There's just too much. I think it's what you make of life that matters, and it's a matter of looking at the good things as well as the -- you know, I have never forgotten anything. Yes, I have forgotten, I've forgotten a lot of bad things, but only in England. I had quite a continuation here, but I feel life is, you know, we all have our share, and basically that's what it's all about.

But the reunion with my parents was wonderful, also for the fact that I had my old -- not old friends even so much, but there was a solidity, there was a foundation now. You were drifting, these years in England. When I say I was in England for eight years, I really had no base. I had no foundation. I had nothing to build on. And when I arrived in New York, I really made up my mind.

I had been taken advantage of in England to a great degree, primarily because it was my doing. I didn't know which way. I wanted to be the pacifier, I wanted to be a nice guy and so forth, and I said, "From now on, no more." And that changed my character quite a bit. I became much, much stronger. I was strong before, but, you know, everything is a matter of maturing, but you try and mature. Here you have a 14-year-old and you have an 18-year-old and you have a 20-year-old.

I can only compare it to my children who have never had to go through some of the things. And once in a while I will say to my daughter what I did when, you know, but it doesn't really mean that much unless you -- today we're in such an affluent society that they can't even think of it, you know. The big problem is when you register for what pattern. That's her big problem right now.

But I think, in part, the years have been good, too, because you appreciate things so much more. I often think of my family, of my parents, and my mother in particular, that really came from a very comfortable home and, you know, there were women that scrubbed the floor and cleaned the toilets and everything else, and my parents were so happy, had to buy everything from Day 1 from Stitch 1. And I'll never forget my mother gave my father I guess money to buy a winter coat in New York. It was cold in New York, you know, the first winter. Instead, he bought a painting because he wanted to cover a wall. There was a

crack in the wall. I still remember that. I still have the painting, too. It's in the attic, but I won't give that painting away. It was a print of some kind. I think it was a Van Gogh if I'm not mistaken. But there was a crack in the wall, it was an old apartment building on Broadway, and he wanted to cover the crack. Those are the things that stay with you, you know, as a child and with starting over. I think it's important to look at the beauty of it.

Q. AND YOUR BROTHER, WHAT HAPPENED WITH YOUR BROTHER?

A. My brother had a little easier time than I did. He was at Birkenhead until he was 18, then he went into the British army, and he actually became a British citizen at that time. He was in the Pioneer Corp, which was made up primarily of Germans or refugees, whatever, non-English soldiers.

And at the time, they didn't want any, you know, in case any of these men were caught by the Germans, they didn't want them to have German names, and he had the name of Stein, not that I think Stein is so German, but it depends where you are. So he was unloading machinery made by Saunders Machine Company, and he became Peter Saunders, and he's been Peter Saunders ever since.

And my father, I'll never forget it, he always used to say, "My name is Stein. May I introduce my son, Mr. Peter Saunders." It hurt him and it hurts me now, too, because he has two sons, and the name is gone, Saunders.

But Peter, he came over in 1948, a year after I did. I must say that he got out of the British army just before I left England. I did see him on his leaves and everything all the time, but he had a good time. He was -- but I shouldn't say he had a good time. He was on D-Day in Dunkirk in France, but he wasn't wounded or anything. And he was in the King's Royal Irish Reserves, sounds very good, and he's a very, very bright man. He's my father except for my father's mannerisms because my father was one in a million. Peter is very bright and very smart and very close, but he's not my father.

Anyhow, when he came over, we moved to Long Island, to an apartment in Long Island, and that's where both my parents died and where I got married from, in Long Island City. And my brother is now retired, too, and is living in -- well, he's retired in New Jersey, but he used to live in Great Neck, Long Island.

Q. NOW, YOU HAD MENTIONED TO ME BRIEFLY BEFORE WE STARTED TODAY THAT YOU HAVE RETURNED TO EUROPE.

A. Yes.

Q. YOU DID GO BACK TO YOUR HOME TOWN?

A. Twice.

Q. CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THAT A BIT, PLEASE?

A. Well, I was never really a friend of the Germans. There are lots of people, I must tell you, there are lots of people, I mentioned the reunion in Germany in 1988, that are lots of people that went back where both parents were dead, died in, I presume, Auschwitz or similar

camps. I couldn't do that. I realize it's a different generation, but I also know there's anti-semitism, and all you have to do is put a little flame to it and it will come up all over again, which was proven.

I really didn't want to go back to Germany. I was back in Switzerland in 1960. I guess that was my first trip to Europe after I was widowed in 19 -- no, I was in Switzerland in 1961, and I couldn't go into Germany. I was in the most gorgeous places in Switzerland, in St. Moritz, and everything was wonderful, but I couldn't go over the border.

And then I married my husband in 1963, and he comes from Konstanz, which is right on the Swiss border, and, you know, that was a medieval town which wasn't touched by the war at all. They didn't bomb it or anything. And it's a beautiful city.

Anyway, we went over there, I don't remember anymore, I guess in '71. Yes, '71. '71 or '77. No, '71. We were in Israel, and we stayed at a hotel which is called the Insell Hotel in Konstanz, which was the deluxe, lux deluxe kind of place. And we stayed there because it was nice, and we went over to the Swiss border almost all the time anyway because our friends, we still have friends across the Swiss border.

And we were there over Easter, and I heard the Germans in this fancy hotel, and I got sick because you could -- you know, there is a certain, southern Germany has a certain dialect which is much looser. It's basically --

you can't really compare it to dialects in America, not southern and north, not really, but the Berlin dialect is very hocht Deutsch, very prim and proper kind of thing, and also the Rhineland, the Ruhr, where you have all the money, Darmstadt, Dortmund, Essen, you have also these nou-veau riche Germans that, incidently, I had met them in St. Moritz when I was there in 1961, and I couldn't stand it because they came with a camel coat and their -- you know, it's just a certain psst and their hats and God forbid they spoke quietly. They yelled their German in St. Moritz. Oh, I'll never forget it. I said, "I've had enough." And I really didn't want to have anything to do with them. So, anyway, we were in this Insell Hotel, I guess it was Easter Sunday, and I heard these Germans from the north speaking, and I said, "I get sick. Let's get out."

So that was my end of Germany until 1981. This was ten years later. And I must tell you that my brother won't buy a German product to this day, nor has he ever been back. He just won't have any part of it.

But we were going to Europe. I guess we love to travel and there's nothing, I can pack a suitcase right now and go somewhere. I love to travel.

Anyhow, we were in 1981, we were in -- we always celebrate birthdays, special birthdays or something like that way. It's nicer than parties. Anyhow, we had planned a trip to Scandinavia, and were coming down via Germany to Switzerland. You know, via Holland. No, we've gone to Holland quite a bit, Holland and Germany and then to

Switzerland.

And I said to my husband, "Maybe she should go back once. I would like to see my grandparents' grave if I can find it," because my father's parents are buried in Karlsruhe.

I did not touch my grandmother. I should go back to that, who was killed in Theresienstadt.

But, anyhow, so we went back, and they still had in a pencil book, in a little exercise book in pencil from 1921, they had the position of the graves. We found the grave, and not only that, this exercise book must have been rained on because there were watermarks all through the pages. I mean, it's unbelievable.

So we found the graves, and it was at that time when I saw Werner Nachmann in Karlsruhe. You know, when I went to school with him, this guy that was in charge of all the Jews of Germany; and then, all the restitution that was paid by the German government, he took into private -- did you hear about him? He is quite a guy. He took the money and put it in his own pocket, money that was supposed to go to people as restitution from the German government. Well, I guess it caught up with him because he had a heart attack in 1981, I guess. It must have been just around '81 then. I'm not sure. No, I saw him still in '81. Maybe it was later, in '84, '85. I think we were back in '84.

But, anyhow, so we went there, and we had stayed. We were by car, so we were just going to stay a night in Karlsruhe. But at that time, I still had a

distant relative of my father's. I really don't know whether it was a cousin or a cousin because the families knew each other. And she had married a German man and had been to Theresienstadt and returned.

In the meantime, she had gone blind, and she was waiting for us in an old age home. And apparently, in Germany, under the social welfare system, when your children want to go on vacation, they can put a parent for a matter of time into an old age home and then they can, you know, be taken care of, and the families can go away.

Anyway, she was during that time. I didn't see her son and daughter-in-law. She was at this old age home blind, and she was feeling me and everything. And she was commenting how much I sounded like my mother, and I know I sound very much like my mother and I also have my mother's hand movements and stuff like that.

And she said to me, "Now I can die, now I can die, I've heard you," you know.

But before she got blind, she sent me pictures of my grandparents that she had, and these are the only pictures I have of my grandparents, of my paternal grandparents, because she was on my father's side, and I have them hanging up in my house now.

So I felt good, but I couldn't wait to get out.

Now, the other time I was in Karlsruhe was in '88, when our daughter was in Strasbourg studying, and she wanted to see her roots, our roots, and she wanted to go with us. She was in Strasbourg, and we had been at the

Provence. If you're ever in France, go to the Provence, it's wonderful.

Anyway, so we picked her up by car and we drove from Strasbourg to Karlsruhe is maybe an hour and a half, you know, so we went there, and I had arranged for an interview with the mayor because, the first time I was there, I was very upset that there was nothing of the old congregation, community of Karlsruhe in this huge synagogue that they built in the form of a Mogen David. I mean Werner Nachmann must have gotten the German government to do it, but that was about the only good thing he ever did. But, anyhow, I had seen nothing except the picture of his father. And you, know, my father, I'm not even thinking so much of my father having a picture there, but the community itself should have been represented there. And I didn't even see a picture of the synagogue as it was. You know, something to say that all these people, you know.

Now, I understand, that for the 50th anniversary, that they had a museum, they had an art show. In other words, I don't know whether it's a regular thing now that they have that, you know, but they had an exhibit of either pictures that were given to them, you know, I won't part with mine because I have this album which I mentioned to you previously which is worth a million dollars to me, but they did have an exhibit for when these people came back.

But at that time in 1981, they had absolutely nothing except this big picture of Otto Nachmann, and it

just got me sick. So I wrote, being not easily swayed, you know, that was the new me, the American me as I called it, and I said I wanted to speak with them. And we were received with coffee and cookies, and it was very funny because here was my husband who absolutely never said boo about anything, I usually take care of that, and my daughter, and my daughter speaks a little German, not very much, but anyhow, I just told him what I thought.

And he said, "Oh, I hope you come back in October or November."

But having been there in May, I didn't want to come back in October. My daughter wanted to come back because she wanted to go to Strasbourg again, but I couldn't see that.

And apart from that, I still feel, if I go and pay my ticket, I can say what I want to say. I don't want to say thank you for anything to the Germans ever. They have to say thank you to me. That's a different story, but, you know, when a German -- and this is where you really find that the bottom doesn't -- you know, they're a new generation. They all tell you they were only five years old when all this happened and they're great in telling you that.

But when he said to me I'm coming back to the Heimat, you know, I don't know whether you know the word Heimat in German. Heimat is where you were born, you know, where your roots are. My Heimat isn't there. They kicked me out, right? I mean, my homeland is where I've made it.

"Don't tell me I'm coming back into to the Heimat when you've thrown me out," you know.

So I have a hard time with some of the Germans. It depends on the type. You know, it depends. I mean, when I see someone like Kohl, who I think is not that friendly to Israel or the Jews really, I often wonder what will he do if his neck is up against the wall. Will he say -- you know, it depends on the type of German that you have, it really does.

But, I mean, I also feel that they've been good to Israel, so there are two sides of it. But I personally don't ever want to say thank you to a German. That's my bottom line, I think.

I did not mention my grandmother, come to think of it, because I think I should have because she's the only one that really suffered with the Holocaust more than any of us.

My mother's father died very early in 1909, I believe. She was 12 years old. And they were just in the process of moving to Munich. My mother was born in Heidelberg, you know, the university town where my father went to the university. It's a wonderful place.

But while in Munich, I guess one of the advanced trips, my grandfather had a heart attack and died, and my grandmother was left with three children. And they moved to Munich. I guess things were going. They had a Luden factory, you know Ludencoat, the German Ludencoat. And they lived in Munich.

And I remember going there as a child for vacation. But it's strange. She was always an old lady to me then. You know, I think of myself the same age, and it's like a different world, you know, with little collars and the long dresses and so forth.

Anyhow, as a matter of fact, I even went to see the area that she lived in when I was in Munich in '88. But I couldn't wait to get out from Munich.

We went to Dachau, and have you ever been over there? My husband wanted to go to Dachau because his father was in Dachau after the Kristallnacht and came home a broken man after that time. So, anyway, we went to Dachau, and to me it's something that's built up afterwards. You know, you can't visualize the horror that was there. So I think it's a little bit of a PR job as far as I'm concerned, but I wouldn't tell him that because he feels he got something out of it.

But, anyway, my grandmother was visiting my mother in October for my mother's birthday from Munich, so apparently you could still travel, you know, from Karlsruhe to Munich, which was three hours by train or something. And this was October, 1940. And at that time, they had heard that they would be maybe -- I'm not sure. My mother always said they got the news that they were going to be deported and my mother asked my grandmother to go with them. I guess that was the same time then.

But she said, "No, no, I've got everything in Munich. I'm going back to Munich."

And she must have been maybe 69, 70 at that time, my grandmother. Wait a moment, no, she was 69.

Anyhow, and she went back to Munich. And the next thing we hear is that she was deported to Theresienstadt, Theresene.

Now, we never heard anything later, but I had an uncle here, and my mother had two brothers, one in England and one in Beverly Hills, that he found out that she died in Theresienstadt in bed. You know, Theresienstadt was still a little -- I shouldn't say luxury, but it was luxury in comparison to the others because you really don't know how the camps were. I think they were mostly big houses where they were pulled together. But the last thing we know is that she died shortly after. That's what was in the death notice, shortly after her arrival in Theresienstadt.

And she's the only one. We don't know where she's buried or anything, and this is the one that I always make an annual thing for the Holocaust because, you know, in the books with the plates and so forth, I don't know whether you're aware of them, they have these books, and I make in her memory. I think I'm the only grandchild that does, but at least one does. It only takes one to do something, right?

So that's basically a few years in a nutshell.

Q. I HAVE AT LEAST ONE QUESTION. WHEN YOU WERE LIVING IN GERMANY WITH YOUR PARENTS, WERE YOU VERY WELL ASSIMILATED? DID THEY CONSIDER THEMSELVES GERMANS FIRST

AND THEN JEWS? WERE YOU RELIGIOUS?

A. I think most of them did. We were not orthodox. See, in Germany, we were conservative, we were definitely conservative, but we had an organ in the synagogue, I remember that, but you had a lot of Jews that came from eastern Europe that were separate. There was a synagogue that was orthodox where most of the eastern Jews went. So I would say yes, we were assimilated.

Don't forget, my father had fought in World War 1. Nothing can happen to me. You know, I think what really happened is that, when, whether you're a professional or a doctor, most of my parents' friends were doctors, believe it or not. Some were businessmen, I think, but most of them were doctors. It's just funny. They're almost all dead by now, but some were business people, but they all sort of interrelated, you know. The professionals were there. Some of the children may be interrelated through school, you know.

When this reunion came, there was an article in People Magazine. Do you remember that article? Well, that article was written by a woman from Karlsruhe. You don't remember that? And I know she was supposedly the same age that I was, maybe a year younger. I have never heard of her. I never heard the family name. So you know that there was separation, almost like church and state, you know, but a lot of them also wanted it separate because they were scared, you know, they were new arrivals, and you didn't want to step on somebody's toes.

Now, I never heard of this girl. I thought the article was stupid of what she wrote, you know, that she wanted to go in the Schlossgarten on a boat, and that was all she wanted. I never even thought of the Schlossgarten. If I would go back, I would like to see people or places or something, you know.

But I would say we were always very Jewish and very proud of being Jewish. And as I said, my father was always very active in the Jewish community. You know, it wasn't assimilated that you didn't want to be a Jew, never, but I think that, if you are comfortable -- my mother was not actually. My father's family was more religious than my mother's, which happened very often in the Germany, that the man's side of the family was more religious than the wife's side. My parents on my mother's side were not religious at all.

As a matter of fact, my brother told me that, shortly before my grandmother was deported, she had a maid who was a strict ardent Catholic, Betty, I still remember her, who was -- you know, as people get older, you're more susceptible to individuals. And apparently Betty had told her she should get -- what do you call it when you become another faith?

Q. CONVERTED?

A. Converted, right, converted to Christianity. And my brother told me that, yes, she was converted, and I never knew that. I had no idea of it. So there are certain things I guess, because he was a little older, that

he knows better. Also, I have a terrible memory for some things. And, I don't know, I guess I don't want to think about it, so I forget it.

But we were assimilated, but we were never not proud of our Judaism, which I think is important, because there are two sets. There are some like the Thomas Mann, the pit inch pox, that kind of thing, where you have they're Germans only. It's just by chance that they were born Jews. And I don't think that ever came because we went to synagogue, we went to the holidays, and I think I do more than my mother did for the community, but that may be also the person or the time. I don't know. I mean, my involvement with the community now has really been because of my father, and I want to sort of follow up where somebody left off. You know, I think this is what a parent instills in a child. When I think they instilled all this before the age of 13, they did all right.

Q. WHILE YOU WERE ASSIMILATED, YOU SAID BEFORE THAT YOUR LIFE PRIMARILY WAS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF JEWS WITHIN THAT COMMUNITY.

A. On, absolutely, absolutely, but I'm not sure. You see, I was too young really to know. I'm not sure whether that was circumstances or likes, but I would imagine that it was a little bit of both because you have -- I remember, after the war, I might add that for your files, after the war, somebody came from Karlsruhe, and they wanted my father to come back to Karlsruhe to take on some high position, you know, Dr. Stein.

Just to give you an example, he was, as I said, very well known and well liked and he was always called Dr. Stein, and he always said, "It's the easiest doctor title I ever earned. I never made my doctor." But he was always Dr. Stein. "Dr. Stein, we'll give you this and we'll give you that."

And he said, "I'd rather drink water and bread here than go back to Germany."

You know, these are a few of the things that stick with you, you know. But, I mean, my parents had a wonderful circle of friends, and I remember things. Of course, a lot of them left us. Some were luckier than others.

I also know of one, he was a dentist, and nobody knew it, he left and went to stay in Staten Island, and his wife stayed behind, and she committed suicide. And afterwards, we found out he had had an affair with his nurse or whatever and married her in New York. And it's horrible. No, she committed suicide when they went to pick her up. And there are quite a few people that committed suicide when they were told to report.

To get back to the reporting part, you know, of my not wanting to go back in '88, when we were there in May, '88, I stood, because I remember my parents telling me how they stood on the train station. You know, they had a big square in front of it. Karlsruhe is quite a nice size city, but it's still pretty small in certain things. But it did have, I think it had quite a few railroad ties, you

know, coming from east, west, and so forth.

Anyhow, I stood on that square, and I saw all these Jews coming being standing there to be deported. And that really is what made me say I can't come back here. You know, when I saw them in my eye to stand there waiting, "What's going to happen to us next," you know, on this train square, because I know my parents told me they were all waiting in the square to find out what was happening, and then to go back and say thank you for inviting me doesn't fit my character.

But I know an awful lot of people did. They had 500 -- 800 people altogether. Unbelievable. It's one of the biggest reunions of returnees, you know, because Berlin does it, I think depending on your age, and Frankfurt did it certain things, but I know my husband's Konstanz did it, but they didn't pay for your trip. I said, "I'm not going back if I have to pay for my own trip."

But, you know, that's a different story. But to be deported and then to go back and say thank you, it just goes against your grain. At least it goes against my grain.

Q. WHEN YOUR PARENTS WERE IN THE CAMP, DID THEY EVER TALK TO YOU OR DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT DAILY LIFE WAS LIKE?

A. Terrible. They were hungry all the time. I have a picture that I brought in Yad Vashem, actually my husband found it for me, which shows barracks, and in the middle they have like a metal drum where they cooked, where

they burned things. And I remember my mother telling me that it was a feast when they had onions and potatoes that they could burn on the stove and eat like that.

I think they did get parcels got through, some. I don't know whether it was food or what, but some packages did get through to the Camp de Gurs, and I must say in all fairness that the Camp de Gurs cannot be compared with the other camps, but you were lined up in both. The men were separated from the women. I think there was a fence. And, if you were lucky, you could just meet once in a while. And, I mean, it was no regular life. It was just, with all these things, it's the fear of tomorrow. You don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, and there were a lot of people that died in this Camp de Gurs from malnutrition and so forth.

As I said, my father got sick, he got sick in Marseille, but he had already lost a lot of weight before. I would say my father was six foot, 200 pounds, something like that. And, you know, when you lose 60 pounds, it's 140 pounds, it's quite a bit. I mean, he was nothing but skin and bones.

But my mother somehow survived. You know, I must have her genes.

Q. IF WE COULD TALK ABOUT THE CHILDREN'S TRANSPORT.

A. Yes, sure.

Q. WHEN YOUR PARENTS WERE PREPARING TO SEND YOU TO ENGLAND, I THINK YOU SAID IT WAS WITH THE IDEA THAT THEY

WERE GOING TO TRY AND GET OUT AND GO TO --

A. America.

Q. WAS THE IDEA OF THE CHILDREN'S TRANSPORT REALLY TO GET THE CHILDREN OUT?

A. En route, right.

Q. AND WHAT WAS THE IDEA? WHAT WAS THE ANTICIPATION OF WHAT WOULD HAPPEN?

A. Well, I really don't know all of the cases because I haven't really made a study of it.

There was a reunion of the children's transport. I don't know. Have you heard about it? It just was either at Grossinger's or somewhere in the Catskills or Ellenville. And a cousin of my husband went because she was also on the children's transport.

She said she got a lot out of it, but I didn't want to go back to New York. I felt I had not kept in touch. Had I kept in touch with anybody, I think I might have gone back, but otherwise it's only a matter of adults meeting with name tags and "Who are you and who are you," and I didn't see much sense in that.

But basically the children's transports were a way of getting children out of Germany from what I can gather. Of course, everybody wanted to get out, but I'm not sure whether everybody had what they called a quota number.

I remember my parents' quota number was 14,000 or something, and that's what I said, it was supposed to be called sometime in 1940 depending on the availability of

people.

But, see, you also have people that push a little bit and shove a little bit and know somebody, but my family was somehow wasn't in that, you know. Or even if you had someone in business, my husband's parents got out in 1940, but they had someone in America that somehow gave them an affidavit and they were able to -- I don't remember, and they were also near the Swiss border. So I don't really know how they got out, whether it was the number that was called or what it was. But my parents' number never came up, and they couldn't do it.

I think, in greater part, the parents all sent the children out with the hope of seeing them again. Maybe some thought they'll never make it, but at least the children will be safe. This is what basically happened to a lot of children that I know, that the parents never made it, you know.

But I met some people here that were with one family in England the whole war, and it's really not that long when you think of it from '39 to '45, it's six years, yes, but it's six very important years. You know, the formative years really. I always say I had no youth because I really didn't. I was, what, 13, and then until I was 17, at least 17, I would say was for four years that I really never had. I did go to one dance, I remember that, but, you know, this is what wartime does to you, too.

Q. WELL, DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD OR SHARE WITH US?

A. Well, I think it's an era that shouldn't be forgotten completely, but I also feel that, as I said before, life is for the living, and you should always remember the past, but build so that, whether it's children that will learn from it or whether it's institutions that will learn from it or even organizations that will learn from it, I think the most important thing is not to put someone down.

You know, I see it now with the Russian emigres coming in, and I think the most important thing to do is to really -- what I find and we belong to Beth Shalom and there's an enormous Russian section, and I think that we really have to integrate far more than they're being. I mean, it's almost like the Vietmanese here. They speak their own language, and that's it. I think it's important, and I'm a great stickler to speak English. I mean, I get so mad, if you ever see me in a department store and I see the Chinese ganging up on me, I say, "Gee, I'm sorry nobody speaks English here." You'll hear me say that, no way.

I think it's important to learn and I think it's important that I would like the Russians to learn from it. You know, there are some that definitely will, but I just feel that nothing in life is really lost. It may be a little buried underneath, but I'm here today to tell the story, and that's all that matters.

Q. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

A. Thank you.

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