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**Interview with ESTELLE KIEFER
Holocaust Oral History Project**

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BEGIN TAPE 1

Q: WHY DON'T YOU TELL US WHY YOU DECIDED TO TELL YOUR STORY, THE ANECDOTE YOU JUST TOLD US A FEW MOMENTS AGO? AND THEN AT THAT POINT, TELL US WHERE YOU WERE BORN AND START AT THE BEGINNING.

A: I came to the United States, I think it was the end of '46 or '47. The funny thing, I didn't want to come. My sister was one of the first war brides in Germany. She married an American officer and General Eisenhower gave her away, that was in Frankfurt.

And I was living in Vienna, high on the hog, the way they say, and while in Vienna, I met an American officer. His father was at that time called the Assistant Secretary of War. (Isaac) Peterson was his name. I dated him and he said, "Don't go there, it's not for you, America is very very hard country.

Well, one day I got a telegram that I must come immediately to Frankfurt, I believe for the United States, so I figured what do I got to lose, I got nothing to lose, so I came, I came. That's the why I got here. When I got here, I was told never to talk about what has happened, nobody is interested, nobody needs to know, we are not so sure it happened. It was very, very painful.

Q: WHO TOLD YOU THAT?

A: Family. The most difficult time in all my life has not been in the ghetto or war or anything. It was being in America. The loneliness, you know when you are young and there is war, you have hope, you believe, somehow I believed I would go home again and see my parents. It was a dream to see my friends. When you are young, friends are very, very important.

Here I was very proud, instead of going to the Jewish agency and asking for help, I had to do it on my own. My sister was sick, very sick. She was so sick, she couldn't walk down the streets. Sometimes I carried her down the street, on my back. And she was extremely beautiful, and people would stop.

Well after a year or so I managed somehow, I sent her to Italy. And, it was during the war, so I would send nylon stockings every month, a little bit of

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money, whatever, and she stayed safe, nine months I think, and she came back. And I was very, very lonely; very, very unhappy here. And I was working, being always independent.

One day I wanted to go out for lunch, it was a beautiful day and I figured, "Oh, I'm going to spend a dollar for lunch". And I'll never forget, I went down into a cafeteria, and I had a tray of food and all of a sudden I see two men, and I gave one scream and I said "Mr. (Tannenbaum), Mr. Tannenbaum. And the other man said to him, "Run away, a crazy American woman, run away!" and I said "No", I dropped the tray and throw my arms around him "It's me, Estelle". He says "You're supposed to be dead" and I said, "No, I'm alive". And that's when I had my first friend. Cause he and I got together, and we talked and we talked.

But anyhow, my name is Estelle, Estella Goldberg . I think it was till the first week of September 1938, my life was quite normal. I mean Hitler was already there, but we had no financial problems at all. And I was rotten spoiled. I was oldest of three girls and I was terribly spoiled. I was my mother's favorite.

And then one morning I see my father aging in five minutes thirty years. The Gestapo was behind him, came up to the house, "Take your things, you're leaving". So we took whatever we could we took, and they put us on the train, and we went to (Spongiel). Most people don't know that. This was the year before the war started My father was stateless, my mother was from Poland. So then, they got the people together and sent them into Poland.

People don't understand that near that time there was a shortage in food in Germany. The butter and the eggs were rationed already. Hitler wanted the Jews out.

So we got on the train and something strange happened. When we got into (Bresslow), the Jewish organization already organized food and clothes for us, they knew we were coming, they came to the trains.

And I got off the train to have a glass of water, drink some water, and the train started and I started to yell and to scream. Running after the train, somebody picked me up and put me into the train but I did not understand at that time, and until many years later, that it was fate. I could have stayed in Bresslow, and I would have been sent to England.

Well, we got to the border, and there were thousands of people standing there. They were processing the people over to Poland, you know there's a border, and I was standing there with my family and many people. and an SS man came up to me, he looked at me and said, " You, what are you doing here?". And I says " I don't know". He says "You do not belong here, you

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come with me" I went out and he took me to the border and I started to cry and he said "Why are you crying, don't cry, that's only the beginning. You don't know what will happen if you go to Poland. That's only the beginning" And he said "What do you want, why do you cry?" And I said "I want my mother, my father, my two sisters."

Q: EXCUSE ME, HOW OLD WERE YOU THEN?

A: 18, 17 or 18. Well anyhow, he went back, took my family and pushed us over the border. Now we were in Poland. At this moment, maybe a few minutes later, I don't remember all the details, the border was closed. What happened was that the Polish government reacted in this way. They said we are rounding up all the Germans in Poland, there are plenty of them living there. And we will send back to Germany. So all the people who did not cross the border went home, to Berlin, to Frankfurt, to wherever they went to. Now we were here in that strange country. We had family. It was '38. And everybody that was sent ended up in a different place. I went to (Lutz) and my mother went to (Tomasoff) and my sister went to Warsaw.

So we were there for one year and my mother hated me. She cursed me. She hated me because most of the people went back home, to their homes to their businesses and they could wait for the visa to get out.

And she just cursed me. It was all my fault, all my fault. But the way life is, you know, I believe that everything in life has a reason. Sometimes we meet people, and it takes twenty years to find out why we met them. During that year, I learned about the country, I'm not very good at languages, but I learned I could write and I could write a little bit. I went to Tomasoff where my mother's family was, she had very, very wealthy friends. And I stayed there waiting for the visas.

And then, I think it was September first, early in the morning, the bombs came. I think for days we had enough food and some other man came into that house to stay there. She had a big villa. And then my sister came from Warsaw. My mother had a friend who had a big 15-16 room apartment. And one part about 10 rooms, the other part was for the servants. So she gave us a room, and there were 4 of us living in that room, that must have happened just before the war, that we got that room to be on our own, that we are all together, I think.

Now the people are running away, leaving that town. My mother said, "Everybody's running let's go, we have to run, the Germans are coming" I said "I'm not running". And a man knocks on the door. He said "You're three young girls, the Germans are coming, come with me, we're all leaving the town. I said "I'm not going, mother. I have a loaf of bread and I have a

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bed and I'm not afraid of the Germans". She says "You crazy", I said "I'm not leaving". So she said "If my daughter isn't leaving I'm not going either".

The next door neighbor came and she started to cry, grabbed her two children, she was running. The man who left lost his leg, and the other woman, a very fine mother believe me, her little boy was hit by a shrapnel, no, her oldest one, who was 6. And there's a (headline) and here's the child lying and she just run, She never could forgive herself, but that was the instinct

So we were living there in the ghetto, curfew, but you could go out and in. My mother started to get up at 4 in the morning. My father could go back to Germany in '38 to liquidate the business. He went back. He then went to Dachau.

Now the war was on, mother got up at 4 in the morning, went to the bakery and got some rolls and she would sell the rolls, and maybe have 3 or 4 left for us. And things were not good. And people had pity on us, the three girls.

Well anyhow, there was a man living down there, all the Jews lived together, his name was Friedlander, he wore riding boots. Only Germans could wear riding boots. He went out and did a lot of dealings with the Germans. One day he said to me "I will never come back, I'm going. I'll give you my connection. My connection is the Organization (Tout) was in town. The Organization Tout is the Organization who built the railway to Russia. You see they had different (glisen), the train wouldn't fit on theirs. He said "I found a man. He's a German and he handles all the money. Poland had zlotke and they had German marks and every night I see him every evening, and he gives me a few hundred marks, which he had cashed in, from the soldiers, and I give him zlotke and then he changes them into mark and makes some money, And I get the mark, and I make money. I'll give you the connection".

So I got the connection. I went out every evening, came back. And one day, he said "Why do you always go back and why do you look so worn out?", and I told him who I was, He said "I do not believe you", and I said "Okay, you come to our house". I just don't believe it. He came to our house in the evening, we had no electric light, we had a candle you know, and he met all of us, and I gave him money and he exchanged it and I wanted to get out of the ghetto, I told him.

It was springtime, and I never forget there was frost on the windows. In the winter the sunsets are beautiful. I said "I must get out, I must get out{". I had enough money. There was a Pole who was always bringing in food, and I managed to buy from him false paper. I have the papers. (They always have ???, lining up people, taking them away).

Now there was a long hallway where the servants used to live, we had a room there. There was a room here, a room here. The Gestapo came, they lined up the people, they went to every door and I swear, they ignored our door. Just, I tell you, it happens all the time, till this day, I'm lucky. They didn't open the door. Well I decided to leave and I left. I had to sleep outside the ghetto, I knew of a place where the woman was taking in people so you shared bed with two, three other people until you caught the train in the morning. I was sleeping when the police came in. But somehow, not me.

I got up early in the morning, it was dark, it was winter. I wore a blue coat which was lined with black seal. And a black hat I had, and a black scarf. I was in mourning you know to cover myself. I got to Warsaw. I took the paper. I went to different places to get a room. And people looked at me very strange, don't forget I didn't speak the language well. They wouldn't take me.

I ended up in a hotel where I stayed for one week and I met that man who gave me the papers. I went back to the ghetto, there was no way.

Meantime that German with the money went several time to visit us, I wasn't there. He said "When you come to Warsaw, you contact me, somehow I can help,". The second time I got to Warsaw, I telephoned, he had been transferred to Russia.

Here I am in Warsaw staying at the main street, I love architecture, that has been my downfall. I stayed in front of a beautiful building, a palais, and inside I think the soldiers were meeting. Then a beautiful girl came out of that building, she was extremely beautiful. She looked at me and said " You, what's the matter with you, you look so sad. Have you been crying or what?" I had a story made up already. I said "I come from that-and-that town, I'm in Warsaw, I don't know nothing, I don't know where to go. I don't know where to sleep" She said "Wait, come with me".

She took me in where the soldiers were. We went into the palais and she said " You stay here" and she went over. There was a tall man there in a black coat and a black suit and she talked with him and she said we have to wait. And he went away and he came back and said "The duchess says it is okay". And she said "I'm going home, will you sleep here?"

Here is the Organization (Tout), where I tried to get hold of that fellow. And I go upstairs, I come into a room the walls all had silk with white and pink embroidery. The bed, you go two steps up, you sleep in silk. I didn't sleep all night. Because, first of all it was winter, I was cold. And I didn't believe the whole thing, you know.

The next day, it was early in the morning. I had beautiful hair. I always took care of my hair. The girl came and says "Come with me" and we went inside

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the office. She says "We need help". She spoke German pretty well and said "You need a secretary?", and he said "Can you type?" Well, I tell you, being in the wine business, and being very busy before the holidays I had to type the bills I said "Yes" and he said "You type" And he disappeared. He came back after an hour and said " You can work here."

I didn't know that this girl, Ilina Soska, she was a movie actress. She was trained as a spy by the Poles six months before the war. The war didn't start overnight. I mean these people knew about it

[You remember the volkswagon, When I think back I didn't see any volkswagon during the war. They had already tanks built into the motor, you know what I'm talking about to be used in the tanks.]

So she was trained.

When the war started, she was in prison, three weeks or three months. She talked herself out, she knew how to talk. So I got a job there and she took me home. They were very, very poor people. She was a brilliant girl, somebody must have sponsored her when she was very young. And I stayed there and the third day I heard a tremendous argument going on, or was it the third week, and they were arguing over me. The mother said "The last time you took somebody home, she stold us blind and disappeared. She got to go!". Well, that night I cried and cried and the old lady come in and said "I've never seen or heard anyone crying like you", she said. "You can stay".

I stayed and I was working. I was translating things and doing things and they took me to conferences. I knew how to handle things, you know. So one day, there was a German officer after the beautiful girl and he touched her and I have a very bad temper and I said "(???, Deutsche shwein), Hands off, you German pig)". There were other people in the room, you could hear a pin drop. She passed out. She simply passed out. I run outside.

Now the story starts, really. I grabbed a man in ?? I didn't know and said I needed help, come with me . There lies this beautiful girl. This man looks at her and his whole life changes. He was a an SS ??.

Now what people don't understand is that there are two kinds of SS people. This were not Gestapo people. They were the ?? and they wore the green uniform, not the black.

So, I did not know who he was. He arranged that this officer be sent to Russia on the front. Let me think for a minute. You see this palais was like this, it belonged to him. He was called ???, which was actually the Duke of Poland. Like in one of the rooms you could see all the royal portraits. It was a fabulous, fabulous place. Part of it was taken over by the Germans and put

into officers. I roamed around the palace behind the staircase and found a picture of President Roosevelt. She said "drop it, don't touch it. You haven't seen it". You know, she knew a lot which I didn't know. And the Duchess remained in Poland, they had all left to Switzerland and to ??? and they went to England.

So, this man was ???, he fell madly in love with her. There was this wife, he got her papers, which said she was a ???. This was very important to have. It meant food, it meant security. And she went to different restaurants. But she said, "Stephanie", my name was Stephanie (Piyakovskal), "You know I carry a knife, the man used to shave with a knife. I carry it with me. Someday, I will cut his throat. Meantime, I going to use him." He brought food. This went on for quite a while. Yeah.

Meantime one morning a knock at that door, and we knew it wasn't a normal knock. It was very early, six o'clock. She had a sister, who opened the door and two gendarmes came in. They had sabotaged a factory of ammunition in Warsaw and the girl was ??, they had come to arrest her. I wasn't the first ??, they looked at me. I was petrified. I couldn't scream, I couldn't say a word I became a piece of stone. She came out, she said "What do you want?" And they said "The factory is blown up and you are the one". She said to her sister, "Get up. Go in the cellar. Bring out the vodka. Bring up all the liquor, make a fire, the bread. Set the table. Well, you Stephanie, get up. Wash yourself. Comb your hair. Look half decent. Stop being frightened." So we had a nice breakfast and they left.

I wrote a letter to my family. I was homesick. I wrote so that they knew where I was. I got a letter back and in the letter, they wrote Moisha So-and-So was taken away, and this one was taken away and what all happened. And that letter meant everything to me. That's all I had! I don't know what happened, one day the police or Gestapo came, I wasn't home. They found the letter. That actually happened much, much later.

I think what happened next is that the Organization went to Russia or someplace, they closed up and I looked for another job. Now I had to have, very important is an (arbeits) book, which is, how do you say it, identification of labor. That was the most important thing. I had gone to arrange the book. When you quit the job, you had to return the book. I returned the book. There were all Germans there. I was a little bit fearful of them. They were going towards Leningrad already.

There was a University in Warsaw and the Germans took the university and turned them into a (Latsarette). And I got the order to go there, they're opening up the (Latsarette) they need somebody who can speak German and Polish. But anyhow, when I got there, was ???, a general, and four officers surrounding him. I arrived to be interviewed and two other girls arrived to

be interviewed. And I stood there, they were talking to the general, completely ignoring me. I wasn't used to being ignored. I took my paper, and throw it and walked away. One officer came up to me and he said "You're hired".

I showed up for work I was supposed to work for the general. He was supposed to organize the Latsarette, the hospital nurses and everything It took a long time before it's organized because it doesn't go so fast. And I stayed with my friend. And I had a dream , I had a terrible dream, and I said " I must go home. I must go home!" And I decided to go home to forget it, the dream bothered me too much. I took some money, some liquor, some chocolate, whatever I could get and went back to Tomasoff, where the ghetto was.

Was a beautiful town, Tomasoff. I got off the train, at that time they had carriages. And I told the driver, I want to go to this-and-this address, I had been away. He looked at me and said "There is a ghetto, I cannot go there. The ghetto is closed." I said to bring me to this-and-this house. I knew there were Germans living in this house. I got my bag, I went into the house and was sitting on the stairs. I'm going home I've got to go home.

You see there in the streets, they put fences up. And there were some places where the fences were open, and they had the police staying there. They had Jewish police there. I go up there, the police, they knew me because from before. I go in and I go to see my mother and to see my sister and I looked at the people. The people looked like concentration camp people, like you have seen them afterwards. And they looked at me. I went to see my mother and my sister was deathly ill, with typhus. Well, because of the liquour and all of that, we got the medicine. I made a connection.

And I wore a brown suit with fur, it was against the law for Jews to wear fur. I told them where I was exactly, in case something happened, where to go and reach and find me. And I'm leaving that jacket. And my mother goes out with me to the ghetto, where there is an opening to go out and where the Jewish policeman is and said "Don't leave, don't leave" My mother stood here, the two policemen and I walk out. I wore riding boots and up comes the Polish police. I wasn't afraid of the German police, I was afraid of the Polish police. I swear he didn't see me, he didn't hear me. He was thinking about something and I walked out.

I went back to Warsaw. I worked and meantime I got an apartment. They had to have an apartment for their employees so there was a new building and I got a room with a little kitchen and I had to share that with a Polish girl. The girl was very jealous of me. I worked there. One night there was a air attack. You see the Russians bombarded Warsaw in '42, I think it was. And streets were destroyed and a lot of things happening.

And the next day I went into town to see what's happening, when all of a sudden a man says "Stephanie, I've looked for you all over this town. Where have you been? You disappeared" That was the Pole who had given me the papers. He said "I've got to see you, I've got to talk to you" I said come down there. So he comes there. He says, "You know what, I need to have a train of sugar." I said "What, a train of sugar? Sugar is very valuable." "You must get the connections and get me a train of sugar." I said "How can I get a train of sugar?" He said "You must make connection, I'm sure you can do it". I said "I can't get you a train of sugar!". He said "OK, let's keep in touch in case something happens".

I worked at the Latsarette and one day I was called to the front door and my sister is there, my middle sister, with a man who brought her there. I said "What do you want?". "She says she knows you and you will pay for her release. I can see she's Jewish, look how frightened she is. She's Jewish!" I said "I have no money" He said "I'll take everything to the police". My sister looks at me and I said "You know, I have one diamond ring, wait" I give him the ring and he released her. I take my handbag, I say "What am I going to do with you?". (???)

I don't know, someone come running after me and took my handbag away. Now my life was in my handbag, my papers were in my handbag. Now I'm not good at sport, but I run, I tell you, my life depended on it. I got my handbag back..

I took my sister, I'm not sure if she had a different name. I took her up to my apartment, I said " You stay here. I'll bring you food". I had to introduce her to my roommate. My roommate hated me anyhow. She was immensely jealous. She got a feeling something was not Kosher, that she spoke with a Yiddish accent. That's what she learned in Poland. So I decided before..., how did I get them out, I don't recall, but I think I took her down. There was an office you know. You could apply to be sent to Germany and work in the factories. You see, to be in Germany was not as dangerous as to be in Poland, you know about this. The Polish were the worst.

I took her down to the office and said "You go in, you tell them you want to go to Germany and work there. You like the Germans.". She filled out the paper and three days later she went to Germany.

Q: DID THEY KNOW SHE WAS JEWISH?

A: No, no. She went to Germany OK? I was home, I opened up the door, my younger sister was there. Eleven years old. All she said was "I'm hungry". I said " What am I going to do with you? I cannot take you in here. The other girl is suspicious already". "I'm hungry."

"I tell you what, you will have something to eat. They're building an apartment building across the street, there's a roof on it. The place is empty. You will sleep there. I'll get you a blanket". (??) know nothing. I said "You've got to go there. I can do nothing more today, I've got to think". She hasn't forgotten that night and that day. In the morning I took her over because the girl was going to work, and I took her to a friend's where I used to stay and I said "Look, that's my sister, can she stay a little while?"

Now they had shaven the girls' heads, the women's heads. They took off all their hair. And she wore a kerchief always. If she took off the kerchief, they would know who she was. The hair was growing in in a very strange way. She needed a haircut. And I was going to send her to Germany. She needed a haircut. There was a barber. I had a little pistol, it was like a gun. You know what it was? It was a lighter. I don't know if you've ever seen them. They had them over there. They looked like guns and you opened them up and the light came up. I went into a barbershop, I saw nobody was there and I stood against the door with that thing and said "Give her a haircut" He gave her the haircut.

After a few weeks, I don't recall, we did the same thing. I took her down and signed her up, and off she went. She went to a factory in Berlin someplace. But her drawback was her hair. So both sisters were there, and I kept on saying they knew where I was.

So time went on, time went on like this. The Warsaw ghetto, then the Warsaw ghetto happens. I was so homesick before that, you know, the ghetto was in the old part of the city and the streetcar had to go through always and they closed the gates. I was so homesick, so sick to see my people, that I would go on that streetcar. Whenever I see a church I had to do that [apparently makes a motion]. And I would look at the people and I would get sick. And the conductor said "Why are you coming here all the time? Looking at the people, that makes you sick!" I never went back.

There was a fire and smoke. I worked at the Latsarette and the general called the people and said "The ghetto is burning. Anyone of my men go over will be sent to the front. I do not permit any of my people to get near the ghetto". I said to myself I like you a lot. So all of a sudden I see so many people on the street, so many young girls you know. And they came down applying for jobs. And they had such strange names, they had names, like out of books. Not real names. I said "OK, you can work here." I didn't like their names. I knew who they were and one girl has been working there quite some time. She was a blonde, blue-eyed, but she was Jewish. And the stories from the ghetto. I was on the other side. I died. I could do nothing. But each time somebody would come, I would say "I'll get you a job". And they worked. And the ghetto quiet down.

When I first arrived to get the job, there were two girls with me. One girl was a little girl. She later on brought her sister and after the ghetto and all of that happened, she came to me and said "Stephanie, I'm going to kill myself now, I'm going under the streetcar and I'm going to kill myself I said "Why?" "You see, we are Jewish, and I think they found out and they're going to take us away. I'm going to kill myself". I said "Can't you prove you're not Jewish, you have a paper?". She said "Yes, but I have to go to my hometown and bring papers from my parents", or something like this. I said "Call you sister" and the sister said "We are not Jewish". I said "Listen, your sister told me you're Jewish". I didn't say why. "We are not Jewish, but I've got to go and get the papers and I don't know how to get there."

I called the general. I said "Listen, I tell you this story, I tell it to you because you said you will not permit any of your people to go to the ghetto". "What do I got to do with it?" "You know what, you can call the headquarter and get her permission for three days", you've got to have the travel permission to go I think it was to ?? "And you tell that she's a good employee and that you need her" "I can't do that." I said "Listen, you know if something happens to these girls, they'll be killed The war will be over and you'll go home. But you'll have to live with it for the rest of your life". He said "I'll do it". He knew that there were Jewish people working there. So they went and they came back with the papers. I don't know what happened then.

Meantime I kept that letter. That letter was at my friends house. I didn't live there anymore. The police or Gestapo came and found that letter and were looking for me and my friend told me you got to move around. Now I had taken all those girls in. And I slept a night here, a night there. If it was warm I slept in the park under a bench. So, I did not know what to do anymore. I decided to quit that job and got myself another job but I never returned that book. I was doing the payroll for 10,000 people who were building, re-building the railroad for Russia. Not the payroll, I had to add up the hours they worked.

I was called into the boss. The boss said the Department of Labor wants you to come down. They have to see you. I wasn't going to no Department of Labor. They called again. They contacted me. I said "I can't." I wasn't going to go. Then I had an idea. I called the head of the Department of Labor and I said "You want to have Stephanie Piyakovska, but you cannot have her now," that was me, it was me talking, "she does a very important job here and we cannot miss her." "It will only take an hour." I said "Not this week, not next week".

And I learned you have to confront the situations. I decided to go. I walked in. I said, that's it, something stinks. And they were asking me questions and somebody was standing by me. I didn't like it. The party went out, I grabbed the phone and called the general. I said "Listen I'm in trouble here, I don't

know what they want from me. Could you help me?" "What do you want me to do?" "I'll hang up. Call in five minutes and tell them it's important that I come" He did. I got out. And it turned out that the girl who was my roommate was the one who did it.

Things were getting too much. I had to quit the other job. I was sleeping here and sleeping there and I was terrible. I was moving around. Those girls were very nice, but they had strange names. And one day I went into the Hotel ???. It was a very fine restaurant. I walked very straight you see. I had a very fine dinner. I was not permitted to be there, you see. It was only for Germans. When I go out, somebody asked me a question. I looked like this. And I go out and the hompsschtonfurer?? says "How are you Stephanie? Did you have dinner here. I going to have dinner here and then I'm going to see Effie. Is she home?" I said "Yes, I'm going there myself".

So I took the streetcar and went there and was sitting. And I was hot property. He came in and we were all sitting there talking in the living room, a knock at the door, and I disappeared into the kitchen. At that time there was a kitchen table and under the table there was a shelf with the dishes on it and an apron around it General Marie?? comes in and he says to Effie, "We are looking for Stephanie , Stephanie Piyakovska" She said "Yeeees". "Where is she?" "I don't know where she is" And this hompsschtonfurer had seen me an hour before and said "You have to tell them where Stephanie is". She said "Robertchen you know I do not know where she is, she disappeared three weeks ago I don't know where she is--and you don;t know neither, do you Robertchen?" He says no. They left. I came out from under the table and they said, "That's it. You've got to go. You got to leave. It's finished. You must go." I must leave. I must go.

And they put me up both of them to get me out of the country.. They said listen you've got to leave, go to Germany like everybody else. There was a ghetto. People were still there, hiding, cold. I go have an interview for a certain part. That night I didn't sleep, I put no lipstick on, I cried, I didn't comb my hair. I had a very good figure, a 20 inch waist. And I go there and they interviewed me. They were looking at each other--another one from the ghetto trying to run away, another one. And behind there was a man with a golden ???, that means something and he entered and looked at me and does this. I go out. He looked at me very much. He was standing behind the desk. The interviewer could not see me. I go into the next door of the apartment building and he come up and says to me "Listen, don't you go back again". I said why not . He said "Do you know how many Jewish girls are running away? They catch them all. I told two of them not to come and they came back and were caught. You are Jewish." I said yes. "You are so young. You are so pretty. Don't go back. You know what ? In three days I am in a different section of town where we had the same office. You come there.

Maybe they will not be suspicious. Because I look at the papers and see what they write on them."

I go back a few days later, different part of town. He is there. Same interview. I go out. He says it doesn't work, it doesn't work. We go out, he takes off his golden ??? and says "Here, you take it." I say I can't carry it. He says, "When you are in a bad situation and somebody comes you tell them my father got killed and he left it to me and nobody reported him. He was not a plain Nazi, he was a big Nazi. You don't get that. And here is my phone number and private number in case of emergency. And DON'T GO BACK."

So I told it to Effie and she told it to Robert and they said that's it, that's the end. I couldn't go there anymore. And they said "Listen, you go to Germany, you go to Bresslow. We'll give you an address of somebody there who will help you. Here's papers You write yourself a reference,". And I wrote it. And we give you the SS ???Stamp. And I wrote I am very valuable to the Germans, I am German friendly and I can be trusted. I should require help.

Q: SO YOU WENT AS A POLISH PERSON?

A: I was always Polish. But I told always I was born on the German border and I was educated in Germany. I had to have a story. My mother I lost when I was young, my father was an officer in the Polish army. Never came back. So I had the paper and they got me bread, salami and all kinds of things. I got on the train and went to Litsmunschat?? where the big ghetto was. And I got to Germany, to Bresslow. That address didn't exist Nobody existed. Had to start all over again. But I had the paper from the old job, from the Organization Taut, there must be an agency here. I go there and I tell them I got engaged to a German soldier, a fiancée, and he is someplace in the hospital, in the Latsarette and I'm looking for him. I didn't know where to go. Can I stay here a few days? They had apartments. They gave me a room. It had a nice bed.

And I walked out at day, came back at night. I didn't know what to do. Then one day someone said " You know what? Would you like to have a job around here?" I said yes. There is a big estate, the ???, they make bricks there. He could use you to run the bookkeeping and all of that. He will be in town tomorrow. His wife is having a baby here in the hospital. So he met me and he said come. So he took me down and here I was on a big beautiful estate He gave me a room someplace in the attic and I was getting cold. I had a blanket, no sheets, nothing. And there were 23 girls from the Ukraine and they were making bricks. He showed me where the food and everything was And I told the Ukraine girls my story and everything went along fine. We had enough potatoes. His wife came. At that time the wife was about 35, 36 and he was in his late 60s.

One day I was called in. He was very pleased with my work. I was giving out the food. I was utterly bored. I had never been this bored in my life. I read all the books. He said I want you to know 28 Jewish men are coming from Litsmunschtat?? and these are my orders to you. So much food, so much things and that's it. I look out the window and there I see them come I just looked. I'm supposed to go downstairs and meet them. I can't meet them. I had to collect myself. And I meet them and that's that. They are coming every day for soup and I said to the girls "Let's take a little bit of food away and give them more."

And there was a foreman. He said "I don't know you are so different, you are so good, you are so nice to us." And I said "Why don't you disappear. I'm not supposed to talk to you. He said," You are so generous." One day one of them fell, was injured, the blood was gushing out. I didn't think what I was doing. I grabbed the towel and cold water and bandaged him. My boss came. "Don't you dare touch a Jew. Don't you dare touch a Jew" I had to leave. I just couldn't take it. Meantime I took a lot of food away from the Ukraines and gave it to them. I've got to leave. I go to Switzerland. Why not? Why not go to Switzerland. How do you get to Switzerland?

Q: EXCUSE ME, WHAT YEAR WAS THAT?

A: '43. I arrived in Vienna on my birthday. Most important things are papers. I need papers, papers, papers. I need good German papers. And I can't travel. to go to Switzerland I have to go to Constant first. I go to the city, to Bresslow to the Department of Labor. I want to speak to the boss. I never spoke to the tail, it was always to the head I spoke. The girl said "What do you wish?" I said I want to speak to the boss. "He isn't in". "When will he be back?" "In about two hours." I said I'll wait. I'm sitting there waiting and a man comes in and he looks at me. Very, very strange. He goes into his office and I'm being called in and he says, "I know you." I said "You don't know me". He says "Yes, I know you. I've seen you and I know you". I said that's impossible. He said "I know you from Frankfurt". And I have learned already. I said yes that could be, that could be, I said. At first I said, "You can't know me I'm Polish". He said "Yes I know you from Frankfurt". It could be. You see I went to two years of finishing school in Frankfurt. What is it I can do for him. I told him I wanted to go there and there and I needed papers to travel No problem. Got the papers.

So here I am on the train again going to Constant. I'd never been there. I'm so excited. But before I, no I didn't go there, no that's not true. I got the papers. Meantime my sisters had escaped from the factory where they were working. They slept on the cemetery and they were picked up by the police or the Gestapo nearby. One was sent to one farmer, one to the other farmer, but they knew where I was. They wrote to me, we kept in contact. But then they

didn't know anymore that I was in Bresslow. But before I go to Switzerland I'm going to see my sisters and I have to go through Frankfurt.

I come out of the Bahnhof??, it had been completely destroyed. I go in and I cried in that train. I cried so much people said "Why do you cry?" I said "I just lost my father." Well I got off the train, I got my way to one of my sisters. I found her. She was at the farmer, working. And I told her I was going to Switzerland. And she says "You know, Vienna is a good place to go" She just mentioned it. "I'm here and the police is after us all the time. We are supposed to go back to Berlin to the camp. But the farmer likes me. He says, she's so young, she's such a good worker, so I'll try to keep her."

At the post office they left a message that if any mail arrived for me, to give it over to the Gestapo. But the postmaster was a woman. She let me have the mail. I don't know if I saw my other sister or not, I don't recall. She was nearby.

Onto the train to Constance. Beautiful landscape. Trains are packed. Now I had made one mistake. I had sent my luggage on the train. When I got to Constance, no luggage, and that was terrible. Well I went downtown and found a little river. I washed myself, brushed my hair a hundred times. I had a beautiful lace dress, black and blue and yellow lace. I put on my best shoes. Ten minute to twelve you have to go to the Gestapo. It's very important. You have to have a paper to stay here. So, ten to twelve, I go up to the Gestapo and tell them I'm looking for a job here. I show them my papers. "Mmm Hmm Hmm, but you see you are not permitted to stay here, to work here." "Why not?", I says. "We are too close to the Swiss border. You have to go on the boat tomorrow morning, I'll give you one night time to go to the other place and there you can work." I said "Where is the Swiss border?" He pointed it out.

I still didn't have my papers. It came night. I left town. I went into a forest. Hide. A soldier came with a rifle. "Where are you going?" I said "My parents are in Switzerland. I want to go to Switzerland. I'm all alone." He says "Listen, the Swiss won't let you in. They shoot." Which I found out later. "You stay here. You are so young. Don't move. I'll come back at three o'clock. Somebody else catches you, you don't get any further. And I'll take you back." He took me back.

Well I was still in Constance. I wasn't supposed to be there. I have to take the next boat to go to Uberlinger?? I sit on the bench. A man sat next to me and reads the paper. He kept on looking at me, looking at me. He started a conversation. He was from Vienna. He said "You know, your eyes are so sad. Who hurt you? You remind me of a well-known movie star." I knew and respected her very much, Paula Wesley. He said "I'm a movie director. Why don't you come to Vienna?" I said "My God, Vienna! Vienna, Vienna!

Maybe I'll go to Vienna" He gave me his card. So I left, nobody should pick me up. Took a boat to Uberling, took a train to Vienna.

Now here I am in Vienna. I'm terribly excited. I walk around. I see a beautiful building and I look at that building. It was eight o'clock in the morning, maybe nine o'clock. And a man came up to me and said "Aus wise. Papers." I said "What?" He said "Aus wise. Papers." I said "What? Who are you?" He said "I am SS". I said "Anybody can say that. You show me your paper, then I'll show you mine". He took out his paper. I said "OK, now I'll show you mine, but you got to tell me one thing." "What do I got to tell you?" "Look at all the people. Why me?" He said "Look you've been standing here for ten, fifteen minutes, looking at that building." I said "But its a beautiful building". "Yes, but it's also the political ???, present for the political". I said I didn't know, that I'd just arrived here and that I didn't even have a place to sleep, nothing. What did he suggest I do? He said to go to Notvanhofen??. They give out rooms. So I went to to Notvanhofen?? to get me a room. It was a very old lady. At that time you shared beds. I shared a bed and she was a lesbian. I slept on the chair. She left. I stayed there a little while with that old lady. Became very friendly with her.

And I went down to ??? to meet the director. And he introduced me to everybody and he said "Look at that face, look at that face! Look at that expression." And he said "We'll put you in a school here" He didn't ask if I was German or not. And I met all the movie stars, Vinnie Marcus?? and I don't know. And started to take pictures and all of that. And got lessons. One day I hear all this excitement. Gerbitz?? was coming. Now Gerbitz loved young girls. He himself had a beautiful wife and his mistress was Lida Barova?? That was out of the question. You had to run for your dear life. He looks at me, he would say "Who's that?" I disappeared.

I got a job at the doctor. I was supposed to help him but they made me do the maid's work. I'm very grateful today because I learned how to keep house. I worked there. She was the biggest Nazi under the sun. I had very little time off. I had time off one evening. I went into town. I go on the streetcar I want to pay. And a young man said "I'll pay for the lady". I turned around I said "You're not paying for me. I pay for myself" Anyhow, we ended up going to a coffeehouse together. He was a Yugoslav. He was very handsome and well-dressed. We went home and we made a date for the next evening. He got fresh. I slapped his face. I run upstairs and looked into the mirror. I had turned color my eyes got this big and I was all white. Somehow, I knew I met my fate. I just knew it. That my life would change from this moment on. I went on my date the next day. He didn't come. I knew I had to find him. I looked for six weeks all over. I didn't know his name, I knew nothing.

One evening I go into the opera cafe, I'd left my coat in the garderobe, and he was sitting there with another man and two girls. I passed by. I got very

upset. I'd seen him only once. I go back to take my coat and walk out. I took my coat and somebody took hold. He came and said "I'll go with you". We dated and he asked very strange questions. Very, very strange the way he talked and all of that. I finally told him who I was. He said "You've got to prove it to me." I said "What do you mean? How can I prove it to you?" And I told him my story, where I was in the ghetto and all of that. And the next day, he came with the other man. Very short conversation and he said to him "I'm sorry I have to go because it's very important". And he said to me "He knew you. It's true what you said. He knew you from that small town you used to go visiting your grandfather when you were a young teenager. He knew you."

I still didn't know who he was and all of that. He told me strange stories. He said "I must marry you to help you. Try to get the papers and whatever we can." I needed fourteen papers. I told him about my sisters. He said "First I got to get you away from that job. They are the biggest Nazis. Then I got to marry you somehow." He said "We are getting married at the Karl Kirscher??" Now the Karl Kirscher is where the emperor gets married. "It will not be. I cannot take you to City Hall. We got to do it this way. We'll get some papers." We got down one of the priests married us. He paid him plenty. I don't know with what. Maybe he gave him gold, maybe he gave him meat, maybe he gave him...I don't know.

So here I was. He got me away from the job and he got me a room someplace. Then he told me... Before he married me he said "I want to tell you who I am to make sure what you're getting into". Then he told me a strange story. He would disappear sometimes for three days and he would say there's money and there's gold and there's this, if I don't come back. He told me he was from Belgrade and he was a law student and then he was trained by the government and they took him and told him how to become a barber. And he was sent to Vienna where he was a barber in a shop that I knew. And once in a while people would come They pretended to work with the Nazis but they worked for Tito and he was called to shave them and during that time messages were exchanged, you see. Sounded very strange to me. I really didn't know what to think of it. But I was always wondering why we had so much money and everything. It was true.

Now I talked about my sister and never stopped talking "Sisters, you have sisters? Where are they? I'm going." So he went He met my sisters. He came back and he said "We got to get them out. We've got to get the girls here." Then he came in one day and he said "Look what I have". There was a passport made out to Monique Behall?? and a picture of a girl and he said "You get ready you go and get your sister. You bring her here. Here's the passport". Now I couldn't write to her nothing. I dressed up beautifully. We had beautiful clothes. He had clothes made up for me, everything.

I go there I arrive at my younger sister place and I said "Look I have papers". I looked at the passport I said "That part is wrong". I noticed it right away. But he said the police won't notice they're too stupid. I went there and stayed with my little sister overnight and the next day I got to pick up my sister, the other one. I had no contact no nothing. I knew where she was and I went into that village, that farmer's village. There was a big tree, a big linden tree and here I was in high heels and beautiful grey suit, well groomed. I was pointed out which house she was in, everything. I was getting dark. I think she has to milk the cows, something has to happen. Three girls come up and one of them was my sister. I'll never forget that face, never. She became petrified. She said something to the girls, the girls left, they went into the house. Ten minutes later she came out with a little suitcase and excitement and I said "We go separate. You go ahead, I'll follow. You go to ??? to the train station, it's five miles. Don't look back."

When we got to the train station I said "Go into the restroom. Look at the paper. There's a note. You go in a different compartment. You do not go with me. If the police comes in trains, and they will ask you, you tell them that my brother is very sick. He lies here in the hospital. He is dying and I was notified to see him. I did not have the time to get a permit for travelling. You must say that. You do not know me whatever happens." I'm in the other compartment Sure enough the police came. Meantime, she wore all her clothing, one dress or whatever she had. They came in asked for Ausweiss??, they come up to me I take out my Ausweiss and "Cigarette?" I gave the police a cigarette. "Thank you very much" They never look at my Ausweiss but I go outside I was nervous that they're going to my sister. And I hear them talk with her. I could do nothing. I was standing and they left.

And we arrived in Munich, which was a mess at that time. She said "I told them the story". I say "What did they say?" "Well, if we take you in to the police station we have to verify your story and working time has been lost Go ahead". So we got into Vienna. I got into my apartment. We hid her for three weeks, under the bed, in the bed because I shared an apartment with somebody else, an older lady. So then we had her under the bed over the bed. By then it must have been already May. We had to get out.

We went swimming, my husband, her and me. Now listen to this story, you won't believe it. There was a group of French people sitting there and she is perfect. My husband said you go other there Tell them you arrived You are from Strasbourg and what happened and where to go next. She is not me. Her eyes are full of fear. There was a Vichy government at that time and they had the consulate in Vienna. You go there and they will help you. Well she didn't sleep all night, I did.

The next morning, she went down I stayed away Didn't come back the whole day. In the evening she comes back with a man. She says "I want you to meet

my husband." I said "Whaaat?" "You know what happened? I went to the French Consulate. There were lots of people there and I was sitting down there and I was very nervous and very upset and this man came up to me and said 'You are French?' I said 'Yes'. 'You've got to help me.' 'How can I help you?' 'Be my wife. Look I have legal papers. I run away, I'm a POW. You've got to help me.'" She said "Sure I'll help you." "Take the ring. So I went inside and she looked more intelligent than him and he tried to talk with her and she said "Do not talk with me. I have terrible stomach cramps and I have a terrible headache." And they believe her story, so she brings me the new husband. I said I can't keep him. No way. Well they kept in contact all the time.

Jobs were very important, not the jobs, but because you got a Lenschmittn?? card, which meant a card rationing food. When you had the card, it meant that you worked. That you were legal and everything fine. So I took her to the Arbeitsum?? and she got a job and she disappeared completely. I went down where she was the job, my husband went down and they said "Huh! The boss took her home" After a week she came with food, with shoes. "Where were you for heaven's sake?" She said "You know I got that job. There was the biggest butcher and sausage maker in all of Vienna and they employed a lot of girls. They were Ukraines and they were Polish. And I pretended to be French. I couldn't speak, I wasn't permitted to speak Polish. There was a piano there and she gave concert when she was a little girl, so I played the piano. And the boss said "Listen you, you come home with me. I have a daughter and you'll give her lessons." He took her home, to a fabulous, fabulous place and he had a daughter. He had a beautiful, beautiful wife. She was kept in prison there. She was never supposed to leave the house. It's a different story. And every day he took her with her to the butcher place which was a city block and she had to handle the rationing cards. That was the finest job you could get, during the war anyways. And every Sunday she would come and bring food and all of that.

Meantime the doorbell rang and the young one is here. She came to Vienna. And she said "You know something very strange happened. There is something going on" Everybody is very nervous. It was June the 6th. Something is happening, the invasion. June 6, '44. "How did you get here?" "You know what I told the people who I was. Since Hannah? disappeared the Gestapo wanted to know where she was. I had to leave. I got on the train and the soldiers put me up there were the luggage is and covered me and I got to Vienna. Here I am." So she was there and I introduced her as my sister to the landlady and so on.

Well now the name Wollenberg came up I used to work still, went shopping and they were telling there is a Swedish man who pays \$2000 for the Jews per head. From Hungary because in the building under the roof was a fabulous built-out apartment there was a Hungarian count living and the wife was

Jewish. Somehow she was protected. Meantime the streets were filling up with Hungarian women. They had to dig ditches because the Russians were already coming, already approaching. It was already beginning '45. And they would take people off the street who wouldn't have the rationing card. I got to get her a rationing card.

So I said "Listen, I'll get you down to the Gestapo I have it all made out. I take you down and you tell them that your parents got killed on a bomb in Warsaw and you were running, running, running running from one train to another. Nobody bothered me. Here I am What am I going to do?" She said "You're crazy. I'm not going to the Gestapo. I said you got to go. It's not so bad. You see, I'll be downstairs. You know where I live. You go to the bathroom, you run away." I said "But we'll go on two different streetcars. I go on the first. You go on the second. Now you listen exactly" I had gotten her some papers in Warsaw under Lisa Piyakovska?? She went up to the Gestapo. She never came down. One hour two hour. I was going crazy. When she came down, she doesn't see me, never know me I exist. Ignores me completely and drops something. I pick it up and go outside. She said "They're taking me to become a ???", which meant a nurses aide, "I'll be OK those fools believed everything. Get in touch. That was it.

Well I don't know how many days, a week later, she came and says "Look I got a rationing card, I've run away. I was put together with three other girls." So she came back and she says I was with three, four other girls, we got food and everything, we were going to become nurses' aides. Hiel Hitler in the morning, Hiel Hitler in the morning, Hiel Hitler in the morning I just got the papers and came back home.

Meantime the Russians were coming closer and closer and closer and then my husband disappeared. No more, gone! I found out one thing also. They were after him. They wanted me to help them. I was supposed to get about 4:00 or 4:30 into the streetcar and drive down to where the ammunitions factories were and listen to conversations to hear a few ???. He disappeared. Somebody came to the door and said "Listen, you are supposed to be at that and that time at that and that street at that and that telephone booth. I still laugh it isn't fair. When I got down there waited ten minutes and he came and went ahead.

So the war was almost over you know. The Russians were coming in and the Russians were coming slowly and so on. We went downstairs to the cellar occasionally. The Russians came in and they were raping the girls and all of that. My husband said " Don't you dare go out on the street". Well they were giving out food and I was going to take my sister to go on the corner, nobody would see us to go and get some food. And an officer comes up, 2 or 3 soldiers around him, and nobody seen us, we got the food and finished. Now I want to go home. Now a different part of my story starts. I want to go

home. And I decided to go to the Commandantour and to tell that I'm Jewish and everything will be fine to go there.

But meantime also you know my sister was over there and the opera was burning and I was running through the city along the fire they wouldn't let anybody to. I hit everybody to see if she was alive. Now I decided to go to the Commandantour, the Russian Commandantour. Every ?? had a Commandantour. Until I got in already, "You're next" the officer says. I spoke a little bit of Russian. And there was a room and I hear a Russian officer screaming to that woman "Why don't you go home? Why did you stay in that land? Why didn't you stay and help your people instead of coming here and working for the Germans?" He screamed and yelled and I look at him. It was that officer who was on the street. And she was a very beautiful woman. I know she went to medical school in Vienna. She lived two buildings away. And he said "Now you are next". I started to shake. He said "What do you want?" I said "I'm Jewish." He said "Yeah". I said "I'm Jewish". He said "Do you know how many people were here today telling me that?" I said "I don't know, but I'm Jewish". He said "Yeah". I said "I'll prove it to you" and I see a smile going into the corner of his eyes and he said to the adjutant "You go outside and close the door". He said "Prove it". And I said ??????. He came up and picked up my chin and he kissed me on the forehead and on each cheek. He said "I'm Jewish too. What is it I can do for you?"

I started to talk a little bit about it and I said I want an apartment from the Nazis. "No problem". He called in the adjutant. "Anything you want she gets." He came to visit us. I tried to take my sister out and my husband said "It's not your sister he wants. He wants you". He was insane with jealous and meantime I was fed up. Some other things happened in the hospital and so on. But anyhow, one day he got so insanely jealous that he took a gun and was going to kill me. My sister screams. And by coincident, that officer was just coming to visit us anyhow. I had passed out and he said to him "Look what you did to this girl. Didn't she suffer enough?" And I said "What can I do for you. You know we have ammunition and guns under the beds." "I want him to get away from you. Let me see it."

We had guns. We had big bowls of ammunitions. It's against the law. He said "You have two choices. You go to jail or you go back to Yugoslavia". I said yes, under one condition I wanted to get an annulment. So we got him out of the country, I got the annulment and he was going to marry me. I said no. Then many other things happened later on but this is not of importance. There are lots of details in between. I mean, everything is a big net in itself. How long did I sit here?

Q: EVERYTHING IS IMPORTANT. (CAMERA MAN INTERVENES TO SUGGEST BREAKING HERE AND HAVING ESTELLE AND SUE REVIEW THE VIDEO TAPES TO CLARIFY HER STORY AT A LATER DATE)

A: Oh, one thing is important. I forgot to tell you. When I lived in Vienna and wanted to get wedding bands. I went into a jewelry store and he said "Wedding bands, in the war?" He looked at me and said "You come back tomorrow". I came back the next day and he called his wife. He said "Look, Sissy is here. She wants rings." He gave me the rings.

The buses were full of people, you couldn't go in. He said "Nobody in". But he looks at me and say "Sissy, you come in". One day the doorbell rang, I wasn't home. And the man comes up with a sack of coal and says "Sissy lives here. Your sister, yes. I don't want her to be cold." Wherever I went, people would stare at me. I did not know. And then many, many years, twenty years later, in Vienna, I went to the museum and there I was hanging. I said "My God, I don't believe it. I just don't believe it. And there it is, I took it with me. Why I got away with murder in Vienna. I'll just show it to you, one second. I took it with me. I went to the safe this morning to take out the photograph And there it says "Empress Kaiser Elizabeth of Austria, Sissy" That's me. That's me. That's a portrait. I was photographed and painted many times. You see. It's just from another angle. I was stunned when I got to the museum and there I was. I understood why people called me Sissy. Everything was literally handed to me.

Q: WOULD YOU HOLD THOSE IN YOUR LAP SO I CAN GET A SHOT OF THOSE WITH THE CAMERA?

A: You see a lot of people remembered her still. She was very much loved. I mean you could get nothing. I always got it. But I had no idea. I thought....

Q: IT WAS ALSO YOUR COURAGE.

A: I had lots of guts, lots of hutzpah. Well I always feel what can I lose?

Q: YOU CAN CALL IT WHATEVER YOU WANT, I'D LIKE TO CALL IT COURAGE.

A: You know, I was trained my life to work like this, to think like this. People are glass to me today, ???, because of my training.

Q: WELL, VERY GOOD. THIS IS AN AMAZING STORY.

END TAPE 1