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INTERVIEW WITH: EVA MAIDEN by Leonore Wegelenter

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From Vienna, Austria.
Now: Palo Alto

MAIDEN: The Socialist party, yes. Hitler came to Vienna in 1938,at that time I was 3, my brother was 8, and my earliest memory was about the atmosphere of fear and terror, and I remember the day that Hitler was going to march in a parade, and everyone was to stand in front of the house or on a balcony and say heil Hitler, but the Jews were not allowed to be present, and I remember, I used to think very frequently as a child about contradictions, and I remember that I couldn't understand how it was possible that you had to be there to watch Hitler, but you also were not allowed to be there. My parents had their office on the second floor of a building in the second district in Vienna, which was a Jewish neighborhood, and it was a very large apartment which contained both of their medical ofices, as well as quarters for the family and household help. There was a

balcony, and the question was whether the family could stand out on the balcony or not.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do?

MAIDEN: I don't remember. I just remember the discussion, the contradiction, and the terror.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. At what point do you think that -- if you were about three years old, you know, you went to nursery school, you played, you did other things that a child does. At what point do you remember there was some difference in your daily life?

MAIDEN: I remember a happy period going to nursery school, which was really a Montessori day care center.

INTERVIEWER: Did this have Jewish and non-Jewish children?

MAIDEN: Right.

And then I remember that it seemed that I was no longer in school, but I was with my mother during the day on the balcony.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do?

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MAIDEN: I remember a happy period going to nursery school, which was really a Montessori day care center.

INTERVIEWER: Did this have Jewish and non-Jewish children?

MAIDEN: Right.

And then I remember that it seemed that I was no longer in school, but I was with my mother during the day going to consulates, and every day we stood on line at a different consulate. It was usually all day. And there were lines and lines of Jews trying to escape, and I think that was sometime later, already. That was toward the end.

INTERVIEWER: Where was your brother?

MAIDEN: My brother attended a Jewish Parochial school, and he, his school was occupied by Nazi stormtroopers, and the children were harrassed and over punished, and a particular incident, which is a family story, this is not one of my own memories, is that his best friend, Angelito, who was an Argentinian Jew, Angelito, was locked in a closet all day, and because of the atmosphere of terror in his classroom, which had been taken over by stormtroopers, my brother wasn't able to release him, and it was one of the most terrible

experiences of my brother's life, but many even worse experiences followed, but that was one that was talked about.

'Lito was a special friend of mine, because he had made a little choo-choo train for me, on which he had painted my name on each car--

INTERVIEWER: What did he make it out of?

MAIDEN: Out of wood. So I had a lot of nice feelings for 'Lito.

INTERVIEWER: I'm going to stop this for a minute.

What happened at the consulates? Did you know what your mother was going for?

MAIDEN: I knew that my mother was trying to get something called a visa, and that we had to go away, and I knew it was a very elusive thing. A visa was a very hard thing to find, and I had flat feet all my life, and standing more than fifteen minutes has always been torture anyway, so it was very memorable to stand on line for hours like that.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember conversations that your parents might have had, or all the tension that was suddenly new in the house that hadn't been there; being fearful of letting the kids go out and play. Did you have friends who picked on you because you were Jewish who didn't pick on you before?

MAIDEN: I never suffered individual persecution in Vienna. However, my brother was arrested by the police for walking on the grass, as a Jew. Allegedly--

INTERVIEWER: He walked on the grass before?

MAIDEN: Yes. There were secions of the park, the famous Proctor in Vienna, which had signs "No Jews and dogs allowed" and actually, he was walking in such a section, and I guess he was walking on the grass, and an Austrian policeman arrested him and as the story is told, he was kept overnight and tortured and homosexually molested, an eight year old child.

They tried to get him to give information on where the family was hiding its gold.

INTERVIEWER: Did he know?

MAIDEN: The family didn't have any gold. The background of my parents is that they each came from rather poor families in Poland, and their families had each emigrated to Vienna. In my father's case, his family emigrated when he was an infant, but in my mother's case, she was already the equivalent of a high school graduate, or nearly so, when she came from escaping the Cossack pogroms in the Jewish villages, where she and her parents and four sisters lived, so that in essence, my parents appealed and won the process in a year and was admitted under a court order.

INTERVIEWER: Is that where you get your

determination from? Did you come by it genetically? That's a wonderful laugh.

Let's get back to the hard stuff, here. That's the nice memories.

MAIDEN: That's all right. That's the nice family story.

INTERVIEWER: That is a nice one. It's a nice woman story, too.

MAIDEN: My parents met in medical school and had a long romance there.

INTERVIEWER: At what point, can you sort of go back to describing at what point you really knew everything changed? You know, because you were a child, you didn't get involved in the underground, you didn't get involved in the resistance movement. What really started to change everything? Did they round you up; did they take your parents' jobs away?

MAIDEN: My father had a city job, which was his main source of income. He worked as an examiner and coroner for the city of Vienna, and his--this is a family story, not a memory. His bureau chief was a doctor with whom he had a personal friendship, and when my brother was born, this bureau chief was invited to the briss, and because he and his wife were childless, he gave my father a watch and a beautiful chain and said it was handed down in his family from one generation to another and now he

wanted my father to have it to give to his son, because he wasn´t going to have any children.

But about two days after Hitler came to Vienna, this man appeared in an SS uniform on the job and said in a rude way, my father was present, "Is that Jew Wenkhart still working here now?" And by the end of the week, my father stopped going to his job.

The family tale is that is hair turned from blonde to white overnight during that week. It soon became clear that he was on a list for arrest. We had inside information sometimes because my parents were marvellous physicians and they always had many grateful patients who played a role in helping to keep us safe, and I don´t know how they got the information that he was likely to be arrested, but it was said that in the first roundup of Jews, well-known Socialists were arrested. I think they either had inside information or they knew he would be arrested because of political affiliations.

INTERVIEWER: What did he do?

MAIDEN: He went to the home of a doctor pal, one with whom he used to meet every afternoon at 4:00 and have a coffee or a beer at the local coffee house and play a little chess, and this close friend had a wife who was fanatically Christian and wore a very large cross, and my father was hidden in a closet in their apartment, and the wife came to the door when the Nazis were going

on a door to door search for Jews, and she fingered her cross and said some religious words to the effect of, you know, there aren't any Jews here and I'm busy at prayer right now, and they didn't search the house.

He stayed there for quite some time.

INTERVIEWER: Did your mother know where he was?

MAIDEN: Oh, yes. And there was always communication, but it was not safe for him to be out on the street, and he stopped being on the street and negotiating with the outside world quite early.

The facts of how the Nazis took over, well, of course, there was the famous parade on the day of the Anchlitz, where it seemed like all of Vienna turned out and heiled Hitler and gave a tremendous welcome without any visible resistance. I've seen the newsreel, in fact, we bought the newsreel and saw it together as a family a number of times, when we were settled in America and had a movie projector. The horror and awe that this could be possible after years of idealism and my parents working together with Socialist comrades for a better society, to have such a seemingly unanimous welcome was part of the extreme shock in the lives of the Austrian Jews.

INTERVIEWER: When your father was in hiding, did the family as a unit, what was left, with the communication with your father, try to think of escaping?

MAIDEN: Oh, we thought about escaping all the

time. I guess my mother was working on it. She was working on escape routes and it was very difficult to consider leaving because of the question of relatives to be left behind. My mother had three living sisters, and two nieces of a deceased sister, all of whom she financially supported and felt personally responsible for. So there were five other female relatives to consider.

INTERVIEWER: What did happen? Did your father stay in hiding? The direction I want to go at this point, if you could just describe the next phase. Jews were being rounded up. What happened to your family; what happened to you and your father?

MAIDEN: They never found my father. I think there were times the situation appeared to cool off a little bit and he was home again, and times it appeared he had to be in hiding. In the meantime, there was an intensification of harrassment and terror. One day there was an announcement that all Jews were to report to the street, and my mother and the aunt who lived with us and did all the child care and household management, Aunt Bally, went down to the street, and they were told they were to perform slave labor on street repair, repairing the cobblestones on the street. The point really was for humiliation and terror.

As they worked, a woman whose family had been

patients of my mother´s started to scream and say, My God, it´s the Frau Doctor. This is out of the question, and she came up to my mother and grabbed her away, threw away the cobblestones and grabbed her and pulled her into her house. And the Nazi officers who were standing over the people doing this slave labor were too shocked, stunned, to do anything about it.

INTERVIEWER: Where were the two of you? You and your brother?

MAIDEN: I think that we had a nanny who was in the house with us and did not betray us.

INTERVIEWER: She was not Jewish?

MAIDEN: No, she wasn´t Jewish and she continued to take care of us.

INTERVIEWER: Did you stop going out to play; you just played in the house at that point?

MAIDEN: Yes. Our existence was more and more confined. There was also a day that my mother was arrested on the street and she was put into a wagon, which for reasons which she didn´t understand, was leaving the city. This was before the days of the death camps.

INTERVIEWER: That was going to be my question.

MAIDEN: So to speak. And as the wagon left the city and was stopped, the guard said to the driver, "Who´s that good looking woman in back?" and he said, "I

don´t know, some Jew," and the guard said, "She looks pretty good. Let her go." And by this fluke chance, she was thrown off the truck and she walked and took the streetcar home and was saved, and we don´t know what happened. Things went like that every day, before it was systematic. The Austrian personality is not of compulsive organization and efficiency like the Germans. There´s a sloppiness for which the Viennese dialect work is "schlomperi".

INTERVIEWER: That´s a good one.

MAIDEN: (Unintelligible.) And because of schlomperi, the Viennese did not make as good Nazis as they perhaps tried to be.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Do you remember what year this was?

MAIDEN: All 1938.

INTERVIEWER: Can we go out to ´40 and ´41 when the war had really intensified? Where was your family and all of you? Any time you want to take a break, by the way--

MAIDEN: What finally happened was that my mother was able to obtain visas to the German part of Switzerland.

INTERVIEWER: For all of you?

MAIDEN: For all four of us. At this time, my father had an acute appendicitis. By now, there was a

law, as there were laws increasingly harrassing and taking away the civil rights of Jews little by little and there was a law that no one could operate on a Jew, so my father had an acute appendicitis at the time of our escape, and it was a very deeply depressing time for my mother, because of leaving behind the beloved sister who lived in the apartment with us, and with whom she had lived her entire life, and a sister who was retarded who ws in an institution for the retarded. And a sister who was a seamstress, and then the two little nieces.

However, around the same time, the two nieces, both teenagers, received a lucky break, and they each were able to obtain a visa. My cousin, Yanka, who was 15, obtained a visa to be a servant in Scotland, and emigrated to a community where she had no relatives, no common language, no Jews that she knew, no ties, went alone to a new world at 15 as a servant. My cousin Blanca was going around with a young man who had a visa for Palestine, Alia, and they were able to arrange that she would join him and marry him in Palestine, and so those two girls escaped.

Aunt Bally stayed behind in the double office apartment. Aunt Bally had the idea that the war would blow over. She was a very optimistic person, and she felt that she should stay and mind the office, that she wasn't such a hut, a suspect to be arrested. She would keep

things cool and be cool, and nothing would happen to her.

Every week, well, we communicated with the two sisters let behind, Aunt Bally and Aunt Edie, from Switzerland when we arrived. Back to the day of the escape. We--

INTERVIEWER: Well, you had visas. It was still considered escape?

MAIDEN: It was difficult to get a visa. One had to lie a bit. One could be stopped, your passport is not in order. The women's passports all bore the name Farrah, because every Jew is a Farrah. But then there could be a whimsical refusal at any time, a change of the rules, just as another harrassment, an opportunity to throw someone else in jail, or whatever. So it was never quite certain. There was--this is all when the border was open, not closed, you understand. But there was a Nazi rule about the size of the box which each departing Jew might carry, and we called it the matzo box, it was approximately the size of a large matzo box in which one's persnal possessions could be taken. He was not permitted to take cash, he was not permitted to take jewelry, and all property which was left behind belonged to the third reich.

So, my mother took her jewelry and put it on me, and she dressed me, first in my summer dress, then a bunch on jewelry. On top of that was my all dress, and a

bunch of jewelry. On top of that was my winter dress, and tucked into my pocket, some more jewels. And I remember I understood that if the Nazis found the jewelry on me that I would be killed, and I understood what that meant. This is at age 3. We do know what we need to know. Right.

However, they didn´t discover the jewelry. And so we all left on the plane.

INTERVIEWER: That was quite a thing for your mother to do.

MAIDEN: And when we got to Switzerland, my father was taken of the plane in a stretcher and brought to the hospital for an appendectomy, where he had peritonitis and severe complications and was, then went to convalescent hospital for about six months. We were received by a very anti-Semetic woman, who had a little room for my mother and me and my brother, and made it clear that she was doing it for the money, but we really weren´t welcome, and we were pitiful,disgusting refugees, and she hoped we would get out soon and go back where we came from.

She didn´t feed the family, and I remember I was very hungry, and I was a cute child, very cute, and I began to prąctice cuteness, because it was necessary to attract attention in a positive way, in order to have someone want to give me food. And that lasted for a long time in our Swiss experiences, because there was no

income, although my mother had a lot of dignity and she never said it in so many words, we were beggars, or certainly I was a beggar, because I was the youngest. The others went hungry more quietly. But I learned winsome ways to get food from sympathetic people, or even unsympathetic people.

There was a cousin of ours, who was the chief rabbi of Tsuri, and I think it was one of the reason why my mother was so anxious to get us to Tsuri in particular. However, this cousin had the idea that his congregation could be flooded by goodness knows how many Jewish refugees. It certainly was a favorite relocation spot, because the language was the same, the proximity to Vienna was there, and Switzerland had a reputation for being a peaceful country, and it was not thought that that would be Hitler´s next target. He felt he should show no favoritism, and so once a week he had soup kitchen for the refugees, and my mother stood on line, although they were first cousins, my mother stood on line with the rest of them. We were not invited for dinner during the rest of the week by the chief rabbi.

Food was so scarce that my mother decided that it was best to put my brother in an orphanage. She felt that that way, there would be enough for him to eat. And so for some months, my brother was in an orphanage, my father in a convalescent hospital, and my mother and I

moved into a room with a friendly and sympathetic Jewish family who was doing this as a community service. I then went again to another very lovely day care center, and I was always very happy in nursery school, school situations, because there was less fear, there was less crime, there was usually a better atmosphere for me, and I wanted to get away from the family, too.

And so I began to have some normalizing experiences. I remember that every time that I saw a man in a black uniform, I went into extreme terror and panic. For example, the men who ran the streetcars. I had a number of phobias relating to the fear experiences that we had gone through. In time, my family was reunited and we then continue to live for what was to be a total of two years in a small room in a small, Swiss apartment. Throughout this time, my mother had to report every week to the alien police, and they harrassed her every week and said, "What, Frau Doctor, still here? No initiative? Can't get you out of here? When are you going to do the right thing and get the hell out?" My mother was not permitted to work or study. She asked permission of the university to audit classes so that she could keep up on her medical knowledge and they turned her down. There were no work permits issued to Jews. There was also no national relief, although there was Jewish welfare.

INTERVIEWER: Was your father able to work?

MAIDEN: My father was to sick to work, but his situation was the same.

INTERVIEWER: You stayed two years or so. By that time you were five and a half?

MAIDEN: Right.

INTERVIEWER: Where did you go from there?

MAIDEN: Well, I need to explain what happened back in Gaina. My parents tried in every possible way to continue communications. My father with his two brothers and their families, and his mother back in Gaina, and my mother with her two sisters, and Bally, who was in the apartment reported that a Nazi woman doctor who had been unsuccessful in her work in Germany had come and taken over the office and both practices. Of course, there was no financial compensation to my family for this, and she made Bally a slave laborer as a receptionist secretary and so forth, which gave Aunt Bally protection for a time. But after about nine months or so, there was a roundup, there were increasing roundups of Jews and other undesireables, and there was a roundup of the gypsies and in the roundup of the gypsies, they picked up Aunt Bally and threw her in a big tank with a tribe of gypsies. Aunt Bally, as I say, was an optimistic person, and she felt, well, this week I'm a gypsy, they're so confused, I'll be getting out soon. And in her interview with a Nazi officer, she started to talk back to him, and he said,

"Shut up, or we´ll send you to the camps." And being an optimistic person, she thought, well, camps. I know there´s some kind of labor camps, but that´s just men. They don´t send women to those, this is malarky.

There were rumors. There were beginning to be rumors coming back to Vienna about labor camps and concentration camps. Mysteriously, and again, as so many things happened in those days, inexplicably, Aunt Bally and a bunch of gypsies were released. Once she got out, the anxious surviving friends who met her urged her, pushed her, to be realistic and understand that she must leave now. And as a single lady, she was able to get a visa for America. In 1939 she went to America, and an American family had vouched for her as a nanny for their children, a German speaking family. And there she learned a little English, and their pediatrician was Dr. Benjamin Spock. And he noticed that she was wonderful with children, which she was. She was my true mother, so I know. And he gave her recommendations and passed her along from one to another family when new babies were born as a baby nurse, and every penny that she earned, she saved for us.

One day a week she had a day off, and every time she had a day off, she had made he rounds of American Jewish families and agencies talking about the two doctor family that was stuck in Switzerland with the

two little children, and how she needed to get her sister out of Switzerland. Eventually, she found a man who was perhaps very distantly related to us and probably related to the Haas-Lilianthal family. This Mr. Haas took an interest in us in paying our passage and vouching for us, and it began to look as if it would be possible for her to bring us over.

In the meantime, my mother was trying every effort to get my Aunt Ida out of Vienna, but she had lost communication and didn't know where Ida was. My Aunt Otelia who was in the institution for the retarded, it looked hopeless, there was no way to save her.

Much later, in 1949 when my brother returned to the house in Vienna, there were two letters waiting. They were written to my mother, and at the early stages of the concentration camps, when a Jew died, they would send regret letters, and so one letter said we regret to inform you that your sister, Ida Taub, has perished at Dachau, and the other one was my aunt Otelia. But that was not our first confirmation, we already new in 1945 from the American Red Cross that the two aunts had perished.

Well, finally the day came that we had the tickets, the precious tickets for America. This is in May, 1940, and we were to go on the SS Rex, a great Italian ship, and sail for America, and we were on top of

the world. But before talking about leaving Europe, I just want to say that it's impossible to convey in words the atmosphere of terror that was in fact whipped up by propoganda, and it was a manipulated terror of the increasing restrictions, confinement, threats, arrests, torture and loss of human rights and loss of human dignity that occurred in Vienna little by little and step by step.

INTERVIEWER: I'm going to turn this off.

Eva, at this point, the thing that I sense is important to you, and from the little that we talked off the tape is that the family was able to leave Europe and come to America.

MAIDEN: It was what we always looked forward to, because my parents were determined to practice their profession again, no matter what.

INTERVIEWER: But the impact of the war, as I have said, I don't think the suffering took place just inside the concentration camps. It had its impacts, it had its effects, everything, and you as a psychologist are fully aware that from a practical sense, from a learning, academic sense, and the emotional sense, because you lived it, I think the thing that's important to share at this point is what you remember, what you felt, and the effect you think this whole thing had on what was once a happy unit, a family, that had all the

expectations and functions as a family. Even though you came to America, that's your story, and that makes you a survivor.

MAIDEN: What happened to our family is that my father couldn't find a way to recover his sense of pride in himself, and feelings of adequacy as a whole person. He had struggled very, very hard as a very poor youth to go to medical school and see medicine as a personal way up out of poverty and feelings of apriority. He had seen socialism as a way to improve society and the way of all people. His medical knowledge didn't save him, his professional status was degraded and thrown out, his social acceptance as a Viennese person, since he had integrated himself well into Viennese society, his social acceptance had disappeared, and some of the same Nazis who were harrassing him were former socialist comrades, and other socialist comrades stood by helplessly, also terrified, and didn't lend a hand in those crucial days. And so there was a kind of personal depression compounded by always the feelings, the fears, and loving concerns and guilt about people who were left behind.

Fortunately, his two brothers did survive, and the last one to get a visa was my one livig grandparent, my father's mother, who in 1939 as a widow about 70, went alone to Italy and she had a visa at the very last minute, and there lived in poverty through the help of

the Jewish community. We were able to visit her in Genoa. We took the train from Tsuri to Genoa to meet our ship. I remember the sight of the Italian fascists and how it brought to be flashbacks of the scene when I was three, and the Nazis marching.

INTERVIEWER: At this point you're what, about six?

MAIDEN: At this point I'm a little under six, and the Italian soldiers and fascist sympathizers were all over the place, and I remember how frail and small my grandmother looked and the two little old ladies that lived with her.

We learned later that in 1943 or 4, there were roundups of Jews, and my grandmother and her two friend hired a guide to take them across the alps, and walked out to Switzerland.

INTERVIEWER: My God.

MAIDEN: When they arrived in Switzerland, they were arrested, because they had no papers, and they were put in a Red Cross detention camp, where they lived safely through the rest of the war. And after the war, the three brothers chipped in together and sent for her. When the American immigration quotas again eased up a little bit, they were able to get her out of the camp.

But one of my most painful memories is waving goodbye to my grandmother, because again, despite being

five years old, it was perfectly clear to me that they might kill her and they probably would, if she stayed.

INTERVIEWER: A sort of a side question, in a way. Do you think it's the fact that you were able to comprehend and understand this, because you were such a bright kid, or was there just a level of knowing (untelligible.)

MAIDEN: There were several things that made me have outstandingly vivid memories, and I remember, I can picture whole streets in Switzerland, I can picture my nursery school class, the individual faces, personalities of the children. (END SIDE 1)

(SIDE 2) --English, and that English was beautiful, they would be working, and hoped that there would be less sadness, and so it was a very good feeling. It was on the ship to America that I remeber that my brother beat me very severely for the first time, and I remember understanding that it would never be all right again between him and me. He was very anxious as a ten year old about making this tremendous change, and he had already been through many bad experiences, and probably was able to anticipate that there were some more bad experiences facing us and scary changes. And throughout the years that I was growing up, he would take these kinds of stresses out on me by beating me, and I remember the ocean voyage was a turning point for that.

INTERVIEWER: Who did you take it out on?

MAIDEN: I, I never allowed myself to take out bad feelings on others. I just talked to my dolls and my stuffed animals, told them my feelings.

I think that we refugee children had such intensely preoccupied parents, that there was never, never really, it never even occurred to us to bring our problems to them. There wasn't any spare beyond survival kind of energy. It took everything.

INTERVIEWER: How long did the voyage take, do you remember?

MAIDEN: Ten days.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have enough to eat?

MAIDEN: Oh, yes, it was magnificent, wonderful. The food was fantastic.

Then when we got to New York, I remember passing the Statue of Liberty and how thrilling it was, and I, I remember Ellis Island where we were detained, and then I began to wonder if I was going to experience the feelings of inadequacy and shame and not being the right kind of person with the right kind of papers because of Ellis Island. It put a big dent in my euphoria when we waited again on line.

INTERVIEWER: How were you treated there?

MAIDEN: I don't think that we were persecuted there, it just had, it brought back some memory flashes,

but it was a relatively neutral bureaucratic situation, with a tinge of negativity.

INTERVIEWER: Did somebody meet you after you got through all the hassle, the paperwork and the bureaucracy?

MAIDEN: Aunt Bally met us, and since she was the person who I experienced as my real mother, it was a wonderful, wonderful happy reunion, and to know that she was alive and well, and she brought Coca-Cola and white bread to show us the wonderful things that one could have in America. And of course we were enormously thrilled with Coca-Cola and white bread. We couldn´t have enough.

INTERVIEWER: This is America.

MAIDEN: Even on the way to the boarding house where we were to have a room for the four of us, we were stuffing ourselves with Coca-Cola and white bread.

INTERVIEWER: Did your mother use--I gather your mother was the mainstay. She was the force that kept you together, kept it going.

MAIDEN: That´s right.

INTERVIEWER: And it was the jewelry that saved you, financially.

MAIDEN: We had a number of good meals off of hocking that jewelry in Switzerland.

INTERVIEWER: Did they have any money left or jewelry left after you came here?

MAIDEN: No. Very little.

INTERVIEWER: So you basically arrived with nothing.

MAIDEN: We arrived with nothing. Nothing.

INTERVIEWER: All right, you went to this boarding house in Brooklyn, did you say?

MAIDEN: On the upper west side, there was a neighborhood, Washington Heights--

INTERVIEWER: It's still there.

MAIDEN: Where the German speaking Jews settled. Some of Harlem now. There are still some German speaking Jews living there. And we stayed in this rooming house for about half a year until my mother had mae the rounds of different refugee agencies and gotten together some funds to get a small apartment, and we started in school, the children, and my parents began to learn English.

It's a family myth that I picked up English in six months and taught the whole family to speak English.

INTERVIEWER: You're almost--you're accentless.

MAIDEN: Yes. Very clear diction. I seem to have had a gift for languages. I had picked up the Swiss-German dialect and spoke perfect Swiss while I was in Switzerland and then picked up English very quickly, and for my parents, it was a tremendous struggle, and refugee agencies who were helping kept suggesting that my parents go to work, or at least one of them go to work,

so they wouldn't have to pay for both of them to stay home and study, and my mother was adamant that under no circumstances would she go to work so that her husband could study, it was out of the question. They were both doctors, they were going to get back in practice as soon as possible, and she would announce to anyone who would listen, she would have tantrums about this, and she would announce, "I once lost a year--" that was the year that she was not admitted to medical school. "I am never losing another year." And she insisted that neither of them work, and both study.

In the meantime, probably half of the food budget, which wasn't very big, went toward various last-minute, really, after the last minute efforts to try to get relatives out of Gaina. There were unscrupulous people who had scams for so and so many dollars, we can get your relative into Cuba.

INTERVIEWER: And the money was gone.

MAIDEN: And the money was gone. And I suspect that half of our food money fell into a hole in these ways, through those efforts to get other relatives out.

INTERVIEWER: Did your parents or your mother or your father finally get back into practice?

MAIDEN: Well, first off, they couldn't practice by the United States laws that was a doctor over there, it's different at that point. They had to pass their

state board examination, and they did.

INTERVIEWER: Both of them?

MAIDEN: Both of them did. And then they began to practice in the same specialties they had before. By now, of course, the war was in full swing. Most of the male population, at least of a certain age range, were gone. There wasn't really that much work in their practice, and they were determined to repay the relief bonds which the family had received. I only recently learned from my mother that that was not mandatory, that was something she felt she needed to do.

INTERVIEWER: Your mother is still alive?

MAIDEN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: How old is she now?

MAIDEN: My mother is 88. She's still practicing.

INTERVIEWER: What a trip.

MAIDEN: What happened, then, is that my mother began to realize that they really knew a lot about psychoanalysis, much more than the American doctors, and that maybe they should specialize, and she went into analysis; partly to help her severely emotionally disturbed son, my brother; partly to understand herself better, and partly to get a new medical specialty, which she felt she was already somewhat qualified, because she--she and my father had attended Freud's lectures at

the University of Vienna, and had no--she had been somewhat affiliated with the Alfred Adler Institute, and they had known a number of the psychoanalytic greats in those days, and also some of the analysts came out as refugee survivors, and they were in contact with these people.

And so, in time, she became a psychoanalyst and helped to found the Karen Horney Clinic, and to make highly original contributions to the field of existential psychoanalysis, for which she received international awards and a great deal of recognition. One of her international awards was to be bestowed on her back in Zurich, and a dinner was given in her honor, and an award placque for an international psychoanalytic award was given her, and sitting next to her was a Swiss official saying, "Oh, Frau Doctor, I understand that our country has previously been honored by your presence." And she said, "Yes, and I wasn't even allowed to audit medical classes at the time, and was harrassed every week by the alien police."

INTERVIEWER: Where does your mom live?

MAIDEN: New York.

INTERVIEWER: Sounds like a lady I'd like to meet.

MAIDEN: Really. She's really something.

INTERVIEWER: I think you're following, there.

You've had a role model. It's had an effect. Definitely. Where is your aunt? Is she still alive, too?

MAIDEN: My aunt lived to be 91. She--by the way, my aunt who worked as a baby nurse had been a professor of classics in Vienna, and was very knowledgeable in Latin and Greek literature. My father lived to the age of 76, and was a highly regarded psychoanalyst who was a consultant to the Jewish Board of Guardians, which had at one time fed us, and sent me to summer camps for underprivileged children because I was unnaturally thin. And also my father was a consultant to geriatric programs such as the Home of the Sages, where he had a wonderful rapport with other patients.

INTERVIEWER: Such a wonderful name for it.

MAIDEN: Yes. So they continued to make a contribution to society after re-settling in America.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel comfortable in talking about your brother?

MAIDEN: My brother continued to feel intensely persecuted throughout his entire life. He is a graduate of New York University, and when his severe persecution feelings have abated somewhat, from time to time, he's been able to work as a translator and interpreter, and he's been active in the socialist movement and Amnesty International as a volunteer throughout his life. He still frequently develops paranoid ideas, often with

themes about the Nazis and torture.

INTERVIEWER: Do you still have dreams, or nightmares?

MAIDEN: Yes, I suffer from insomnia, nervousness, nightmares, sometimes.

INTERVIEWER: I think that it's interesting, and if anyone would be able to get a handle on the whole thing--I think what I'm really trying to say and get at, is that if anybody was going to be able to get a handle and hold on the risks of you and your family, with your own knowledge, the intellectual and the academic knowledge, we're talking about something that ends up going so deep, you can't touch it. That's why you say you still have insomnia; intellectually you understand it, but the effect just never goes away.

MAIDEN: I think that the ordeal of living through extremely terrifying, life threatening situations as a family, as we did, drained the emotional resources, so that there wasn't a margin, and that the quality of the family life was very damaged. And so that had a deep effect on me.

INTERVIEWER: Could you describe what family life was, you know, as your parents--

MAIDEN: I think to my mother, her own personal recovery, the recovery of her dignity required her to work constantly, and to drive herself with a very high

level of ambition toward being at the top of her field. She did not find family life rewarding and did not have family centered activities with us children, nor did she seem emotionally available, as so many survivor parents don´t.

INTERVIEWER: But your aunt was?

MAIDEN: Yes, my aunt was.

INTERVIEWER: I could think of a lot of things we can go off into at this pont, but I don´t think it´s part of this study, some of your own psychological growth and development, because you´ve ended up being a giver and a sharer in the field of psychology. Do you think this is following the footsteps of your mother, or--

MAIDEN: For me to be a psychologist is an inevitibility. First of all, because of my own suffering, and because of my desire to help other oppressed people through understanding them and through empowering them. And this was the area where I had special knowledge. I watched my parents study, I listened to their discussion of medical issues and psychiatric issues. I read their journals, I translated their papers. I met their patients, I read their lectures and their case reviews of their patients. I was, unknown to me, to myself, I was apprenticing in their work, but I didn´t know it. I also was the member of a family who had a mentally ill child, and it was a good idea to know as much as possible in

order to protect myself, if I was able to protect myself, and in order to manage a sick family member. It was, in fact, my job in the family to manage him. I was expected to do that, throughout my life.

INTERVIEWER: Is he still alone?

MAIDEN: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Living out here, too?

MAIDEN: No, he lives in New York. Actually, my brother lives with my mother, and I arrange their care for this, so I am still taking care of--

INTERVIEWER: You became a mother real quickly.

MAIDEN: Yes. Also, my parents had a very interesting circle of friends, other European refugees. Eric Fromm was a close friend of the family, a close friend of my aunt´s in particular, and Alexandra Adler a current friend, she´s still living, and very active, and a lot of stimulating discussions about the arts and current events and so forth took place, in a number of different languages in my home. And, of course, there were the stories. Throughout my childhood, I remember people coming from Europe, and each one told their story. Later, people came who were escapees from concentration camps and within the family there were a few who were survivors of concentration camps. (Untelligible) There were Israeli relatives, too, whom I later met, who had other stories to tell, so I grew up hearing survivor

stories.

INTERVIEWER: Not bedtime stories.

MAIDEN: No.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything that you feel is important that you want to add at this point?

MAIDEN: For a few years I've been attending symposia and seminars at the orthopsychiatric association conventions regarding the psychology of holocaust survivors and their children, and I've never presented, but I've been an active participant in their discussions, and I personally am not as much interested in evaluating the pathology of survivors and their children, as in understanding, appreciating and celebrating our strengths, and the strength of my own, which I aspire to keep developing throughout my life, is the ability to transcend, the ability to transcend one's own suffering and turn it into compassionate action, or turn it into a re-evaluation of self and a renewed sense of an integrated self, of a well-liked self.

It's very, very difficult for persecuted people to turn around and love ourselves, and for the German speaking Jews, the feeling of a divided self, German and Jewish, or Austrian and Jewish is a very special issue, because one's own language, it causes pain, and that conflict is so deep within the psyche it's beyond the horizon of what one can even understand or heal. And that

there´s been a deep, inner conflict for persecuted Jews for thousands of years, and it just has a special flavor for the German speaking Jews.

I might add that I went back to Giana in 1955 as a college student, and I went back to the building where I had lived, and typical of me, with my vivid memories, I didn´t ask directions, I just found it. I got off the streetcar because I knew I was in the right place, an I walked to the building, because I knew it was my building, without looking at the number, and there was the hosbizorgiore (P) which is the same as the concierge, a Czech Christian man, who had been there when we were there, or when we had left, and I (unintelligible). And my brother had previously visited this building and received he two letters, and this man took me around the buiding--he greeted me very warmly, and took me around the building, and we stood in front of each door, and he said "This family went to Australia. This family went to Dachau, all of them. This family escaped to Shanghai. These people went to Auscwitz," and he knew, he knew every story.

As it happened, while I was there, I became very ill, and I visited my father´s friend, the one who had shielded him and hidden him in the closet, and he referred me to a specialist, who was three doors down from my parents´ house. And when I got there, this doctor

apologized to me, and I couldn´t understand what was going on at first, and he said, "Oh, Fraulein Wenkhart, I´m so terribly, terribly sorry. I wish I could have done something," and I thought, well, he is doing something, he´s going to examine me, I think. And he said, "I wish I could have done something back in those days, but I didn´t know what to do. Please, let me take care of you now." And he arranged for me to have a hospital stay, and I was the American girl who was ill in a Catholic hospital. All kinds of fantasies were going through my mind, as I was having a high fever, and even the fantasy that perhaps I had not escaped went through my mind. And watching the nuns, the fantasy, the fantasy that perhaps I had been hiding under a new identity in my mind. And in and out, I was listening to women consulting in German. No one knew that I spoke German in my ward, and two women were saying, "Don´t you think the Nazis exaggerated back in those old days? They overdid it a little bit when they made you show whow your grandmother was and all those birth certificates. It was ridiculous, wasn´t it?" And the other woman said, "Yes, they overdid it a bit. I didn´t think the Jews were really all that bad. You know, my husband was a butcher, and whenever we had bones, we gave them to the Jews."

And here I was, an American college girl, 1955, listening to this conversation. They had no idea.

INTERVIEWER: Did that give you a handle on some level on time perspective during the next couple of years, even though you grasped the conversation, what was going on, and they didn't know, that is, you were going sort of in and out of questioning your own sanity, if that gave you some time perspective?

MAIDEN: I got the time perspective, all right.

When I went back, I wanted to develop a sense of reconciliation, and do some acts of reconciliation, and in fact I did do community service work in Salzburg for a couple of weeks, an international project, and I tried to be, in a sense, an ambassador of good will, and to create more good will in myself so that I would be less bitter and to bring about good will in others, by showing them that I was ready, we could face each other, and that was a very important experience. I wouldn't mind going back again, I wouldn't mind not going back again.

About five years ago, there was a new reparations law and I applied for financial reparations from the Austrian government under the new law. I believed I was eligible from my reading of it, and my parents were already receiving retirement benefits, which had been their due, although they were never recompensed for their losses, and my brother was receiving disability pension as a totally disabled son of a Viennese pensioner. However, I received no benefits. And I got a

letter back from the Austrian government indicating htat my claim had been denied, and the reason--this is all a form letter, not personally to me, the reason was insufficient persecution. And then they gave a list of conditions under which people did receive the benefits, which included at least six months of imprisonment or loss of an arm or a leg or an eye.

And so there are, I do, of course, have some feelings about the lack of restitution of any kind. But on a person to person human level, that's something else again. I tried to make inroads of reconciliation.

INTERVIEWER: Let me turn this off at this point.

(END TAPE>)