Interview with EVELYN FIELDEN
Holocaust Media Project
Date: Place:
Interviewer: Sarah Klionsky
Transcriber: Katherine Wayne

Q: LET ME START AND ASK YOU IF YOU COULD TELL ABOUT YOUR CHILDHOOD.

A: My childhood? Okay. Well, I was born in Berlin, Germany in 1921 and it was right after the first World War. You know, the first World War finished in '18, and there was tremendous inflation in Germany and both my parents were Jewish, but my father did not like the idea of being Jewish. He was, like so many Germans, a German first and a Jew second.

His family traces back to 1600. You can see it in the back of you. There's my family tree. They have been in Germany since the 17th Century. They've always been Jews, but for some reason, my father did not want to have anything to do with Judaism. My mother also was Jewish. She was born in Leipzig, Germany. My father was born in Berlin, Germany, and when I was born, they decided to baptize me at the Lutheran and my father figured if I was baptized and I had a foreign name -- my first name was Evelyn, which was at the time a very strange name in Germany. It was an English name. In fact, at the registry office, they didn't know how to spell it, so my birth certificate is a little bit mixed up.

He figured that if anything happened in Germany --

you know, Germany was always antisemitic; people in Germany had a tremendous antisemitic history -- that I would be safe, but he also did it because he wanted to get away from Judaism through me and my sister. I had a sister. He did the same thing to my sister.

So he was a very well-to-do businessman. I had everything I ever wanted in Germany and we lived in very good style. All his friends were nonJews, so I grew up in an atmosphere of wealth and without any specific knowledge about Judaism. In fact, I did not know I was Jewish and I did not know my parents were Jewish. I had a governess who always took me to church every Sunday, sometimes to a Catholic one, depending on the governess, you know. Sometimes we went to Catholic and then Lutheran, depending. So when Hitler came into power, I was about 12 years old and I was always very interested in sports and the school I was involved in was a private girl's school.

As I say, it was a private girl's school. There were no other Jewish children at all, and so I had no idea that I was Jewish and I came home one day and I wanted to join a sports organization. It was just after Hitler took power and I had my -- my parents had to sign the certificate and my mother said " , I cannot sign that." I said "Why can't you sign it?" "Because," she says, "we are Jewish, and you cannot join that" and that was the first time I heard that I was Jewish.

And it was a tremendous shock on me, and I

remember we had an old maid and I threw my arms around her and I said to her "Please, please tell me it's not true that I'm Jewish," because I heard in school antisemitic remarks, but they never really affected me, because I did not know that I was Jewish and, you know, at that time, when you were 11 or 12, you didn't think much about politics or -- I was not particularly religious. I believed in God and that to me was really quite immaterial, to what church I went and how I believed in God, just as long as I prayed, that was fine, and my mother did not teach me how to pray. It was always a governess who taught me how to pray and that was all very fine. I never questioned anything, you understand?

And then finding out that I was Jewish really was to me the biggest shock I can remember ever having in my life. To me, it was something really terrible, you know, because I heard so many terrible things about Jews.

Well, from then on -- I was about 13 -- I made the best of the whole thing. I had to, of course. In school, they did not know that I was Jewish, you see. Somehow or other when my parents registered me, they did not mention that, and they had religious classes or so and I had to of course leave, you know.

From then on, I was the Jewish girl in school, you see, because I told everybody I was Jewish. I was just so shocked that I broadcasted it. Suddenly I wanted to be a Jew, but I didn't do anything about learning about Judaism and so, because my father was really against it. He was

more antisemitic as a Jew than a nonJew. That happens quite often, dear. I don't know if you came across that, but it happens quite often that Jews can be more antisemitic than nonJews.

So I always wanted to leave Germany. I never liked living in Germany, although I had everything I wanted. I didn't like the way life -- you know, we lived in Germany. I didn't like mannerisms, I didn't like strictness. I didn't like being so regimented. You see, our upbringing was very strict, and I begged my parents to please let me go to school in England. My father said "You're not leaving."

By that time, it was 1936 and things got a little bit, you know, difficult, more difficult for the Jews, and one day, my sister went to the American Consulate and -- she was two years older than I was -- and she registered for emigration. You had to get a number at that time, and she came home and told my father and my father was so upset, he made her go back and cancel it all. He did not want us to leave Germany, and I was really absolutely devastated.

When it came 1939, I was never really touched personally by the Nazis. I've seen the Nazis. We lived in a big apartment and my father had a business. Eventually, that business was taken over by the Nazis and even then, he did not want to leave Germany, but I personally never suffered under the Nazis, but my cousin who lived in Czechoslovakia and my uncle were taken to the concentration camps and my mother lost three brothers in the concentration

camps, and even that did not persuade my father to make an effort to leave Germany.

Well, I happened to know an English girl who lived in Berlin whom I was very friendly with and she said to me "If you want to come to England, my mother will sponsor you." You know, you needed a sponsor at the time. "You and your sister," she said.

So I took her home and she talked to my parents and finally -- that was in 1938 -- my father agreed that my sister and I could emigrate to England under this sponsorship of that lady, but my parents did not leave.

So now we branch. Now I tell you what happened to me. It's very interesting, because my parents left in 1941 and how my parents managed to stay underground, because they could not live together and I tell you why. I first tell you my parents' stories and then I tell you mine.

After I left early '39, the war broke out in September '39. Now, I could communicate with my parents between England and Germany from April to September. There was no war, but the war started in Europe in September and any communication broke down. So I did not know where my parents were and my parents did not know what happened to us.

But later on, I found out that my mother managed to live with a Swiss friend of hers in Berlin, but see, they had a maid who was Aryan or what they call Aryan, nonJewish. My father was not allowed to live in the same house. Those

were the new Nuremberg laws they had, you know, that Jewish men could not live at the same house with a nonJewish woman. So my father had to live in a little guest house, a Jewish guest house. That was from the year 19 -- when the war broke out, '39 and then he finally made efforts to emigrate and it was not too easy, but he had some very well-to-do relatives in America who sent him an affidavit and in 1941 I think it was, in March -- January, February -- something, early 1941, after having packed 19 suitcases and trunks with all their belongings -- which they had to do on the sly. It was not allowed. You had to declare everything you took out of Germany -- they went to the railroad station in Berlin and my father, who wore a monocle -- he felt very German, you know. He even went as far as having his nose -- he had a very semitic nose. He had it operated on so it wouldn't be -- nobody would know he was Jewish.

Well, anyway, they got into the railroad station. They had bought tickets to Moscow and they had a Jewish passport. All Jews in Germany had a passport with a big "J" on it. I'm sure you've heard about that, and he also had a Jewish name, you know. Every Jew had to take a Jewish name by -- the men were called Israel and the women were called Sarah. Everybody, and then their real name.

So he had that passport with a great big "J" on it and Israel Fritz Bendix. That was his name.

So the controller came through and it was an SS officer, I believe, and asked him for his papers. So he

wore -- he was in the first World War and he got the Iron Cross that was a decoration and he wore the little ribbon of the Iron Cross and he said "Heil Hitler." You know, that greeting. "I am an old war veteran from the first World War" and the SS man clicked his heels and said "Heil Hitler" and never asked him for his papers.

Now, if he had seen his papers, my father could have never left. The nerve -- I mean, I'm very bitter about my father. I loved him dearly, but he dragged my mother through so much anguish and he took so many chances.

Well, they finally left Germany. They got to Moscow and that was a few months before the agreement between -- I don't know how much you know about history, but Germany and Russia had an agreement, a nonaggression pact, and then Russia broke it. Well, it was just a few months I think before that happened, so they could still get to Moscow. They got a ticket to Shanghai and they went all through Siberia with their 19 great big trunks full of French crystal and German silver, what-have-you -- which I can show you here; I have it all here -- and arrived in Shanghai and my father -- and Shanghai was a great big Jewish colony of refugees, you know. My father saw that and he says "I'm not going to stay here." So my mother says "But we can't leave. We have no visa for Japan," where a ship would finally -- could take them to America.

So he said to my mother "You will -- you will get the Visa for me." So my mother went to the Japanese

Consulate and the way she described it to me -- see, my parents never wrote any of that down. They just verbally told me about that. And they had a tea ceremony, she and the Japanese Consulate, and my mother was a very pretty woman and she charmed him so much that he gave her two visas for my father and her to go to Yokohama. So they -- always with 19 great big trunks. You must imagine that. In fact, I cannot to this day. I cannot imagine how they did it.

So they arrived in Yokohama and they got the last ship called the to Pearl Harbor and by that time, it was just a month before Pearl Harbor was attacked. So you see, my father always spurted on the verge of disaster. And then from Pearl Harbor, they made it to San Francisco and they arrived here 1941.

To me, that's one of the most dramatic stories, because how anyone can be so brazen and flirt with death like that is still incomprehensible. After that, my father still lived ten years in San Francisco, then he died.

Well, in the meantime, I was in England and we arrived at that lady's house there, the mother of that girlfriend I had, and she was quite proud, as a matter of fact, to have my sister and me and she, in typical English fashion, showed us off. She invited all her friends to show what, you know, the little girls from Nazi oppression looked like.

Then the war came and she came to my sister and me and said "I'm now a member of His Majesty's forces and I

cannot afford to have Nazi" -- not Nazi -- "enemy aliens in my house." You see, the English did not differentiate really between Nazi Germans and Jewish refugee Germans and I'm telling you all this, that in contrast to a lot of others who suffered a great deal in Germany, I did not suffer so much in Germany, but I suffered an awful lot in England, because suddenly, I was stranded. I didn't know where to go. I looked at the newspaper and I looked to, you know, who could use -- I didn't know what -- I was not trained in anything.

Q: HOW OLD WERE YOU?

A: I was 17. See, I just finished school. I did go to art school. I knew how to draw, but that didn't get me anywheres, you know. So I finally kept house for an old gentleman somewhere in Norfolk. You see, I also had to move to restricted zones. In the eyes of the English, I was an enemy alien, okay? I accepted that, but I had to be 50 miles from the coast, so that meant that I could really -- I was very restricted in my movements; not only I, but all of -- everybody like me, so I had to move away from that gentleman who, you know, he was 80 years old, his children went to war and he needed somebody to keep house for him. And I had to not only keep house for him, I had to shoot rabbits and skin rabbits. The English are kind of tough, you know. I don't know, they expect you to do an awful lot and I just had never done anything.

Well, then the police came and said "You have to

leave" and I took a bicycle with me which I called Felix. I loved that bicycle dearly and that bicycle always had to go with me. He said "Well, you're not allowed to ride the bicycle along the coast. You have to move 50 miles inland."

So I looked in the paper again for a job and I found a lady who lived in Sommerset that was fairly far away from anything, in the moors. She wanted a housekeeper. Well, by that time, I knew how to prepare kippered herrings and cook on one of those impossible English stoves. Also, we never had enough water. In England, you just -- you know, England was really very, very bad. You were restricted from the very first day the war started. If, for instance, in one family there were six people, you had one inch of bath water and, you know, if you were the youngest, which I always was, you went into that bath, you know, at the last and it wasn't very much of a bath.

Well, anyway, I kept house for her until the police came again. This time, they said I -- I was the only foreigner in that little village. Mine had Sommerset. Somebody had denounced me and a German U-boat had escaped from the Bristol Channel the night before and they said they saw me there with a flashlight; that I was -- you know, I was, what, 17, 18 years old -- that I had helped that submarine to escape.

Well, I came before a tribunal and most men in England at that time had to go to the Isle of Man, German aliens, you know, and the women, they left alone, and I was

so afraid that I would be sent to the Isle of Man, because there was a detention camp.

Well, the lady I worked for was very nice. I had a very good rapport with her and she vouched for me and the judge heard my story and my background and so -- and he was very, very nice and he says "I don't think that you could have done that," and he let me go, and that was really, you know, a great relief to me, because it was bad enough as it was, you know, having to move around every two minutes.

Well, as I say, the police told me I could not stay in that area much longer, so I had to go more inland. Then I ended up in Cambridge, where I managed to join the Land Army. They took -- they also took aliens into the regular Army, but there, you had to only K. P. duty. You know, you could peel potatoes. They gave really -- I love the English dearly, but you know, they did not deal very nicely with us, because they did not differentiate between -- as I told you before -- between the Jewish people and possible spies or any other Germans who could have lived there.

Well, I was in the Land Army for about two years. I was quite lucky. It was in Cambridge. I was in an institute there for research. They did artificial insemination. It was -- I had a very, very good life. Then I got sick and then after I recovered -- a friend of mine took me in. After I recovered, the Land Army would not take me back and then I joined the National Fire Service and

there, I was on a motorcycle and there, they taught you how to take a motorcycle apart and I was a dispatch rider between Cambridge and London.

Now, it was very, very hard work because the bombs were falling all around you, but you know, you don't think much about that at the time. When you are young, you can do all those things. One day, I fainted. It was just a little bit too much for me, and mind you, I'm just telling you all this because I was brought up with a golden spoon in my mouth and I was not ever told or taught to do any manual work or anything, and I didn't mind at all. In fact, I knew -- I was young, I thought it was terribly adventurous, but I got -- I fainted on the motorcycle and I injured my head and I got really sick. I was in the hospital and after I recovered -- I never had any money, of course; there was nobody to send me money or give me money -- I took a job delivering milk. That meant three o'clock in the morning I had to get up. I had to hitch a horse too. I had never done that either. I just tell you all these things you can do when you have to do them.

So that was within the bound and the farmer who owned the horse told me earlier, "Just hitch" -- showed me all these things to do and I went over to that horse and these enormous crates of milk. They're in bottles, they're in cans, you know, and I had to deliver. There it was really quite touching. I got to know a lot of English people, how they behaved during the war. They accepted the

rationing. There was no black market at all.

They got so little, you know. My ration, for instance, was I think one egg a month, a quarter of a pound of margarine a month. You were lucky -- in the beginning, we still had fish and chips. We lined up with the newspaper and, you know, there was no wrapping or anything. You got a piece of fish and some chips. But then as the war went on, you just got the chips and then there was no more oil for the chips so then you didn't get anything.

So we really had very, very little to eat, but there was no black market. There was no asking anybody under the counter "Can you give me this, can you give me that," and I respected that. The English were very disciplined.

Well, at one time, I delivered milk from 3:00 to about 7:00 in the morning. Then I had a job in a sporting good institute, some sort of a store where I sold sporting goods and at night, I did the fire watching. That meant going on a tower to look around where the bombs had fallen and then take the telephone and tell the Fire Department, so I got about three to four hours sleep, but I got the money to live on, you see, but I was constantly short of cash and all that.

But somehow or other, looking through my diary which I kept, I was fine except I was always chased by the police, because I forgot to -- I'm not a very methodical person, so I forgot to register. We always had to register,

every time you moved. Every time you moved residence, you had to register.

So I always forgot, so they put me into jail and then they let me out. But, you know, English jails aren't too bad. So that went on from about '39. I moved around a great deal more.

My sister was joined up in a hospital. She trained to be a nurse, and she had a real tough time. When France fell, they wanted to kick her out as an enemy alien, out of the hospital, so I went up to the north and I got her and we lived together on practically nothing, and at one time, I remember I ate dog biscuits. I had really nothing to eat, you know, and I discovered if you toast dog biscuits over the fire -- the English have a very weird system. You put a shilling in and the gas comes on, you know. You have gas for about, I don't know, an hour, and then you have to put another shilling in. Well, I never had enough shillings, but that one shilling lasted for an hour and then I could toast the dog biscuit and eat it, just like that. It wasn't too bad. Raw, I couldn't eat them, but when I toasted them, I could eat them. I lost a lot of weight, too.

And towards 1943, the bombings got very bad, you know. I was in London with a friend and I always got bombed out, and I met my husband who came over. He was an American, but he was a Lithuanian boy, and he had met my parents here in San Francisco at the time and they told him

"If you ever come to -- with the Army come to Europe and you go to England, look up my daughters" and he looked me up, and then I got -- that's how I met him. I'm just telling you that because it goes into a story later on.

In 1944, my quota number finally came through. It took five years for me to enter the United States, to be able to enter the United States. I don't know, it was a very high quota number. But I managed to -- then I had heard from my parents in the meantime, you see. '41, they got -- the war was on, of course, but they communicated through America, you see. Before America entered the war, that was in '41, they could send me some news, so I knew that they were in America. And in 1944, in April, I left. I was taken to Liverpool. We didn't know from where we would leave, because we were in a sort of transport, and they said "There's a ship. You can go to America on a ship, but we can't tell you exactly when and we can't tell you where," because it was wartime, you see, and America already was in the war.

So my sister and I waited three days in Liverpool and we were in dirty barracks. It was like a prison, and then we were put on an empty troop ship, an American troop ship, which brought troops over to Europe and brought some Australian war brides and stray people like my sister and me, who finally got the quota number to America.

And it took us 21 days in a convoy of 20 ships and we were scheduled to go to New York, and then word came

through that there was a German submarine in New York Harbor, so we landed in Boston. Of course, it was strict blackout -- well, you know, it's interesting. When you're young -- I was a little younger than you are -- and we had a tremendous amount of fun. You see, we got American food. It was our first introduction to American food and it was incredible. It was just -- I'll never forget it. I did not eat very much. I never ate a lot, but my sister ate so much that she could not hold anything. She just kept vomiting all the time because it was too rich, the food.

Q: IS THIS ON THE BOAT?

A: On the boat, yeah. The boat had good food. Well, Army chow. Now we probably wouldn't eat it, but at that time, it just was marvelous, you know. Twenty-one days. It was blackout at night, and we got cigarettes. Cigarettes were a big thing. I started smoking when I was 14, because I was always hungry, you see. At home, I sneaked the cigarette here and there. My parents smoked, you see, but then in England, when I was so hungry, I did not have money for cigarettes, but I learned to get a pipe and put tea leaves in it. English always had tea for some reason or another. I put tea leaves in it and I smoked that, and I was a real hooked smoker. I finally stopped now, eight years ago, but, you know, when you're very hungry, you want to do something.

So anyway, I got to San Francisco -- I got to Boston with my sister and we took a train across the United

States, took four nights and five days, full of troops, and we had to sit up four nights. There was no way, absolutely no way of stretching out, because, you know, they were troop trains going back and forth and after all that time, my parents waited here in San Francisco. We couldn't -- you know, when we wanted to leave the train, we couldn't get out because our feet were all swollen, but we managed to sort of crawl out and it was a tremendous reunion, you know, after all these years, to see my parents.

Well, that was fine. I lived in San Francisco four years and then I married and my husband was with the Army of Occupation and he was stationed in Germany and I married in 1948 and he came over from Germany to marry me, and I had not been a citizen at that time. You see, it takes five years. See, I arrived in '44 and my citizenship would have come in in '49.

So I said "I'm not going back." He wanted me to go back with him to Germany. He was in Bremen at the time. He was a film officer, and I said "I'm not going back to Germany as a noncitizen." You see, I denounced my German citizenship, so I was stateless. So I didn't want to.

So he said, "Okay, I go with you to the Immigration and see if I can straighten it out, because by marrying me, I'm a citizen. You know, you can" -- well, they lost my first papers in Russia. I had that trouble all my life. Something always happens. You know, you make an application when you come to the States for your first

papers to become a citizen. At that time, it was more strict than it is now, and those papers were completely lost. They had no record of me at all, absolutely none.

But they did have a record that was very, very interesting. How America works, I tell you a little story. In 1944 about six --

(End Tape 1, Side 1.)

A: -- how they knew it, I don't know, and they asked me if I had photographs and I say "Yes, I have photographs of that island." He says "Would you turn them over to us?" And I turned those photographs over -- not just of our house and the beach. It was a very small island, and after the war, the FBI sent those photographs back to me, thanking me for loaning them --

Q: YES.

A: -- those photos. I'm just telling you this, how well our FBI works, because I had no idea they knew anything about us. But they did screen you very, very carefully, you know. Apparently, they said it helped them greatly. I don't know how far, but, you know, they were bombing that island very heavily, because it was -- they had tremendous defense there, the Germans. It was right close to Denmark, you see. Denmark of course was an allied country with America.

So the photos seemed to have helped them, but that was just a little side story.

Anyway, my papers were finally found. I became a

citizen with a private swearing-in ceremony. That's another little story about how America works.

The judge was so nice and he felt so sorry for me as a newly-wed bride, that I couldn't join my husband, that he gave me a private swearing-in ceremony. Normally, you go with a whole bunch of people, you know, and you swear that.

Q: RIGHT.

A: But he asked me to his chambers and he says "I want to expedite matters and I give you your citizenship so that you can join your husband." That was written up in the San Francisco newspapers and all that, you know.

Here in America, I worked -- I went to school and I was also -- having studied a little bit in England in the Land Army about farm methods and so on, I got a job as the first female milk tester. That's milk tester in Napa -- that's how I got back to Napa -- in Napa and Sonoma counties. So I tested milk, but my troubles with my health -- you know, it was a very heavy job and I was always a bit fragile, so I couldn't do that job very long. So I went to art school and got my degree.

So, anyway, I went back to Germany and that's my other story. It had been ten years since I had left Germany, all right? I did not want to go back to Germany and I told my husband that, but his job was in Germany. He was with the Army of Occupation. He was a journalist. He was an expert on public information and communication and there was little I could do about it, so I went and we got

to Bremen and my first impression was "It's very strange. Everything is written in German." You know, I had not spoken much German at that time anymore.

My parents tried -- you know, refugees in America wanted to be very American. They did not want to speak German. They wanted to assimilate as Americans. So I had not spoken much German and to me, coming back to Germany was very traumatic. I looked at everybody as a potential Nazi, naturally, you know. At that time, you know, that was 1949 in January and it was -- you know, the war ended in '45 and there was still rubble everywhere. Bremen was completely bombed, and of course then I came back as an American, you understand? And that was strange.

I did not feel good. I did not feel good coming back at all, and I had tremendous difficulties with my husband, who for some reason or other did not feel like I did, although he also had left Germany. He was a young man, he had lived in many different countries, you see. He did not have the same background I did, but he was Jewish and he was brought up very, very orthodox, and that's where our whole trouble came in later on, that his -- he turned Judaism down because he was brought up too orthodox. I didn't turn Judaism down anymore at that time, but I didn't know anything about it, so when our children were born, we didn't quite know what to do. There was a conflict.

Q: I UNDERSTAND.

A: Well, anyway, we lasted six months in Bremen,

Germany. I tried to be -- I tried not to speak German, which did not work too well, and when I did speak German, people remarked "How well you speak German" and I've heard that from a lot of other people who were in a similar position I was in. We always say to them "Oh, I learned it in school." So they say "You must have very good schools in America." I say "Oh, yes, we have marvelous schools in America." You know, you have that animosity. You can't help it.

We were looking for my relatives and I went to the documentation center in West Germany and I saw the great big ledgers the Nazis left behind. That documentation center was run by a friend of my husband's, an American, and the Germans were not allowed in there at that time. I'm talking about '49, '50, in those times.

And there, I opened the books, and my maiden name was Bendix and I saw six members of my family. They had a red line through -- I think a red line meant gassing, and a black line, shooting while trying to escape, something like that.

Now, the Nazis, they put terrible -- German writing, you know, is very meticulous writing and everything was documented in there. Everything.

Well, I mean, they were not my -- of course, they were my family, but they were not my father, my mother, my sister and so many other people -- I always say I'm one of the luckiest people in the world the way I got through it

all, you know, but I saw what happened to Germany right after the war and to me, that was -- that was really traumatic, because we were six months in Bremen and I hardly talked to any of the Germans. I did not want to mix at all. I just kept -- which is in a way not good, either, but I had nobody who was in a similar position I was. All our friends were native-born Americans with the Army and -- you know, the Army was all. Then my husband left the Army and he joined what is called the United States Information Agency. I don't know if you heard about that. That's connected with the State Department. And we were sent to Vienna, Austria.

Now, Austria was really much worse during the Nazi time than Germany. The Austrians were very, very cruel, as you may have heard or may have read, to the Jews, and the Army at that time had -- our American Army in Austria had confiscated a lot of houses owned by Nazis and in '49, Austria of course was still under full power. Vienna was under full power and always, there was a Russian zone, a French zone, an English zone and an American zone. We, of course, were in the American zone and I lived in a house and I cleaned up, I looked in the attic, and I found all that Nazi literature. I mean, it was so much, I just -- you know, if I had been a little more enterprising, I would have kept it all and I could have, you know, sold it. I don't know for -- I just didn't want anything to do with it.

The lady who owned the house, I met her every morning walking her dog and if eyes could kill and looks

could kill, she would have killed me, and Austria was very difficult to live in because the Austrians were not convinced at all that they did wrong. They always blamed Germany for annexing them. They were the victims. To this day -- you must have followed it up a little bit, if you're interested at all in that part of history, but at that time, they were completely innocent in their eyes, you see, but my husband ran a newspaper and the radio station there, which was originated by the State Department, you see, to educate the Austrians and the Germans in democracy, so suddenly here I was, through all these years where I had been a German and then suddenly, I became an American and then I was issued a diplomatic passport. It was a tremendous change for me, and we stayed nine years or eight and a half years in Austria and it became more and more difficult for me, because the Austrians were really in the end -- the State Treaty came in 1955 and after the State Treaty, it became a neutral country and when I heard about Waldheim now, all this, you can imagine my feelings, but over the years, I mellowed.

My two girls were born in Vienna, Austria, and I had a little experience, like for instance, when my first child was born, I went to an Austrian hospital. We had an American Army hospital there at that time, but I did not want to go. Didn't have too good a reputation, so I went to an Austrian hospital. With your first child, you want to do the very best, and I asked the doctor could he please get me an anesthesia, and he looked at me and he said "Do you know,

Austrian women are proud to have their children the natural way, but if you're insistent on anesthesia, I have to go out and ask your husband for permission." Just to give you a little idea what they're like. Were like. I think they've changed a little.

My husband stood out there and he said "I don't know what you're talking about. Would you please do what my wife asked you to do and don't bother me with this anymore. I don't want any time wasted," but those were the sentiments there. They were very anti-American, you see. Anytime they could give you a stab in the back, they did.

After that, I asked my husband could we please go back to the States. He said "Well, I put in for a request to go back to the States," but since he was actually bilingual -- in fact, he spoke five languages -- they needed him, you know, for classes in Berlin. So I went back to Berlin. There, he was connected with the Rios, the radio station, the American radio station in Berlin, so I had two years in Berlin.

Well, after that, you know, Berlin, I really never liked and I don't like it to this day, but after that, we came to Washington, D.C., and somehow, it was like coming home, you know, because for some -- I don't know how to get that across to you. I just to this day don't like Germany or anything connected with it and yet, I -- the German is in me, which I can't -- you know, food-wise, I like German foods and I've been back to Germany, but every time I go

back and see friends -- because I really have met very, very nice German people who are my friends, who are not Jewish, so I cannot say I am bitter against everybody. There's always an exception, and I'm just telling you that, that one can't condemn just everybody.

I know friends of mine who would not have anything to do with Germany. They will never -- they won't talk about it, they will never -- you know, they've been in a concentration camp and I realize that, but my philosophy is a little bit different. I have very good German friends, you see, and, well, we lived in Brazil, we lived in Mexico. I mean, I've lived all over the world since then, and I lived in Paris, and we were posted to various areas, you know, and I must say, I've had a very, very good life and I'm very grateful for that, but the only thing I am bitter about, really very, very bitter, is that I did not grow up the way I should have grown up in a Jewish way and I could not give my children the heritage which I think I owed to them. As a result, my children think they are Jewish. If you ask them, they say "Yes, we're Jewish," but they don't want to know anything about Judaism. They're not interested.

So that is my life in a nutshell. If you want to ask me any questions, if you're -- you know, you want to know anything, go ahead. I could tell you a lot more details, but I can't. I can't think of them right now. I don't know how long you want to make that tape.

I personally would like to have some coffee.

Q: OKAY.

(Pause in tape.)

A: There's a word I'm looking for, a ditch. Like a ditch.

Q: A GAP?

A: A gap, that's the word. That's the word, a gap between the Germans -- western Germans, Jews, and the ones from Russia, and I remember my father saying "Oh, these dirty" -- what did he call them? He had a horrible name for them. "Eastern Jews, they can't read, they can't write, they're dirty, they don't know how to dress."

You see, the poor -- I know the whole history about it. Why they came into Germany, you know, all the pogroms in Russia and all. They came with nothing on their backs, but Germans were more fortunate, you see. They were better educated at the time, they were more settled and so on, but also they had their noses up to here. I tell you that as a German Jew. I'm sorry to say that, but I see it very clearly and I've always seen it. I've seen it in England, too. Among the refugees, there were the western from Germany. France not so -- the French were a little bit different, but the German Jews were always different from anybody else. Quite arrogant. Quite arrogant. I have to tell you that.

That always bothered me, and that bothered me about Judaism, why there has to be so much different -- why

Jews fight so much among each other. Why they make such a tremendous -- there is a cultural difference. All right, an Ethiopian Jew certainly has nothing in common with a French Jew, but learn to -- for heaven's sake, learn to understand each other.

Have you ever been to Israel? Well, I was shocked. First, there's no religion. I don't expect everybody to go to synagogue, you know, daily and what-have-you, but there is no -- there is animosity, you know. They hate this group, hate this group and they're all fractioned here and fractioned there and that really bothers me. It's always bothered me about Judaism. A lot of things bother me about Judaism, which I haven't yet been able to understand. I'm still learning, you see. I'm reading -- I'm reading books on Judaism. I go to Bar Mitzvahs, I go to Seders and all this, which I think is wonderful, because it brings your family together, but I can't get my kids to.

My husband was happy when I showed some interest, but he says "Don't talk to me about religion so much." You see, his tremendous Lithuanian orthodox upbringing turned him off, you see. After a while, he didn't want to know anything about it. He observed -- he didn't observe, but he -- you know, came Yom Kippur, he put on -- he didn't go to synagogue, but he did put on the tape. He loved the music. He said to me once he always feels better with a landsman, you know, with somebody Jewish, so he was very, very Jewish, but religiously, he didn't want to have much to

do with it.

He took me -- the first time I entered a synagogue I think was in Mexico City. I asked him to. I said "I would like to go into a synagogue" and that was an orthodox one where I was shoved upstairs. I'll never forget that. In some wooden chair I had to sit. I thought it was horrible. It was orthodox, and I'm still reading an awful lot of books on Judaism and I have a good friend here, he's a rabbi. He explains a lot to me and to me, it's an absolute fascinating subject. Only I cannot bring myself to learn Hebrew. Do you speak Hebrew?

Q: YES.

A: You see, I cannot do that. I am still in a way an outsider. It's really funny. When I enter a synagogue and I hear everybody saying the prayers in Hebrew and so on, I cannot see it. I feel like an outsider. Do you know what that is? To me, religion is one thing, believing in God in quite another. I can pray to God.

(Tape volume decreased.)