Interview with SUE SIEGEL
Holocaust Oral History Project
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Transcribed by: Laron A. Johnson, CSR

PEGGY COSTER: I'M THE INTERVIEWER. AND I'M PEGGY COSTER. AND JACOB OFFNER IS ALSO ASSISTING.

Q. SO WHY DON'T YOU START OUT BY TELLING US WHERE YOU WERE BORN?

A. Okay. I was born in a small town in the Rhineland called Landau. German pronunciation. And it was a very small town in 1938. The year I was born, we had about 15,000 inhabitants, I would say. And I remember considering the town fairly large, because I guess children view things from their perspective. So it never occurred to me I was born in a small town until I moved to a big one.

And I suppose one of the things that stands out more than anything else is that we had a very nice family life. A very comfortable, warm, cozy family oriented life, where there was a lot of warmth and a lot of love and a lot of sense of protection.

And the earliest memories include a lot about my grandmother who became a very important figure in my life, and who has been the focus of a lot of my pain about the Holocaust, because she was killed in the Holocaust. And because of my really early and deep love for her, and association with her

as somewhat of a saintly figure, someone whom I wanted to emulate, and who meant a very special human being to me, I had focused, I believe, most of my thoughts about the Holocaust on her. And even now that I'm so much older, I haven't quite given up my grieving. And I'm torn between the remembering of it as being part of my redemption, and the giving up of the grieving as part of my growth. Because I believe until I can somewhat disassociate myself from all the pain, I'm going to be stuck in a certain behavioral pattern that I don't really enjoy carrying on to the rest of my days.

Q. HOW DO YOU MEAN PART OF YOUR SALVATION?

A. Well, I think in redemption you have to go through some sort of a process if you want to redeem yourself. And I think remembering, to me, and never forgetting what happened was part of that process. And so I have chosen to live with this as part of my everyday life.

I have never forgotten what happened to my grandmother, she being a symbol for everything else that happened. And I have always felt that my mother who, of course, fortunately lived to be 89 years old right here in America, my mother sort of instilled in me this feeling that I should never forget, and not just not forget like you forget something, but not forget ever, ever, ever, in all your dealings in life, including attitudes about the Germans today, who, after all, are many, many years past since that

happened and a whole new generation.

But I have difficulty because of this remembrance to not think about this current German generation with that big cloud hanging over my emotions and my mind.

But, any way, to go back to the little girl in Landau, when I was 11 years old, that was 1934, my sister died. And she was three years older than I was. She was the middle child.

And I had an older brother. He left home to go to school in France when I was 10. So my sister and I already had been alone for about a year in the family. He left Germany because he could no longer attend his German school, which was called in German Gymnasium, which is not gymnasium, but the name of a high school.

And he was the best student in German. And one day when the teacher asked all the children, and he was 16 at the time, who got such and such a paper, because it was the only A in class, he raised his hand. And the teacher was totally taken aback, and said, you got an A? And he said I guess so. You know. This is my paper you are holding up.

And he said, well, even though you are a guest here, we do want to make you feel that you are quite permitted to be comfortable. And as long as you remember that you are a guest here in Germany. And this story was told to me, because I don't

remember anything about this.

But he went home and he said to my dad, I'm not going back to that school. You know. You have got to get me out of here. And he was politically quite aware with his sixteen years. And he had seen things happening even before Hitler came to power. And he sort of sensed already when he was like 12 and 13 and 14 that things were going on in Germany. They were not going to end up very well.

Anyway, to make a long story short, he went to France to go to school, to Strasbourg, which was only about an hour and a half from where we lived. We were very close to Alsace-Lorraine, this part of Germany. And so he left. And my sister and I were home alone. And, of course, my parents were already grieving about him not being there. And then she became ill with the same illness that I used to get every year, namely a middle ear infection. And this middle ear infection was a very common thing with me. I just after two or three weeks got up and ran around and was fine. She had never had anything like that. So theoretically she had no immunity. She had no antibodies. And she became ill with a mastoid that then went into the brain. And she had meningitis. And all I knew was was that one day she was in Heidelberg in the clinic. And what do you know when you are ten and a half? You know. You don't know too much. And we visited her in

Heidelberg, my family and I.

And as she was lying in bed with her head all bandaged up and looking at me with a look that I can still see, which was one of great question. Her eyes were sort of questioning. And since that I have often thought what was she thinking, was she thinking why aren't you helping me? You know. I'm in terrible pain. Why am I here?

But I still remember her very vividly being there lying on that pillow with her head all bandaged up.

That was the last time I saw her. And then I was told she was dead. And I remember not feeling anything. You know. I just remember feeling terrible that I didn't feel anything. And everyone around me was very depressed. And my father put his head down at the dinner table and cried, which I thought was like impossible to happen.

And my mother who was more open and emotional as part of my experience seemed more natural in that state. But my father certainly didn't.

And I remember not going to the funeral, not being permitted to go to the funeral. And then I remember in school being sort of looked at strangely. And I felt strange. And nobody really talked to me about it. It was just sort of a hush, hush kind of terrible thing. And I was alone in the house. And

my brother was in France, and my sister was gone. And suddenly I was the only sourceof joy to my family.

And I was talking to Jacob before about this, that I suddenly realized that it was totally up to me to make my parents happy. And if I didn't, then they were going to die of grief. And then it was going to be all my fault. And maybe it was already my fault that my sister died. So I had a lot of guilt, and a lot of confusion about everything that went on. Like I never knew how much of my parents pain had to do with the Nazis, had to do with my father's inability to continue his wine business, which he had had all this generation. I didn't know how much had to do with my sister dying, my brother being gone. I just sort of managed to keep smiling and keep everybody amused. And it didn't seem that hard to for me to do that. I don't remember having a great deal of difficulty. I was just conscious of what my role was.

And I don't know, John, this is a picture of my sister, who was age 14 and a half when this picture was taken.

Q. What year was it she died in?

A. 34. OKAY.

JACOB OFFNER: OKAY.

A. And she had been sort of a star in sports. She was a good ice skater, and she was a good swimmer, and

she was fairly courageous. I was sort of a little more namby-pamby. I didn't like ice skating, because I didn't like to fall, and didn't like swimming because I was afraid of the water.

So she was sort of a hero and I was a little bit more of a fearful child. And I always felt there was sort of some pressure on me to either get to be more like that, or to do something different, you know, something else that would help me be come outstanding in some way because I came from a fairly ambitious set of parents who wanted the children to do well and exceed in whatever they did.

And I remember distinctly being compared in school with Ruth, my sister. And one teacher saying to me, you know, you shouldn't just rely on your parents' good feelings towards you to get by in school. You know. Now that your sister has died they only have you. And she was such an outstanding student, so why don't you try to, you know, sort of follow in her footsteps. I remember that. And I just realized I could never follow in her footsteps because she was so great and I wasn't. I carried that with me.

On the other extreme, my brother was a very intellectually developed young person, as I already mentioned, and had a great deal of ambition intellectually. So he always got all A's. I sort of probably snuck by with B's and C's. I didn't hate

school, but it wasn't very important to me. I wanted to play and have fun and dream about other things. This is more or less the family scene.

As far as the Nazis are concerned, I have some very early memories that are very vivid in my mind. And one of them is one that I also haven't made peace with. And it's about a girlfriend whose name was Hillock Knaebel, whose father owned a little small electric shop in town. And her father's store was opposite my piano teacher. And so every opportunity we had after my piano classes, and after school, we would play. And that was when I was maybe 9 and 10, and going into 11.

And she and I had the most wonderful relationship. I had just a perfect playmate there. She was very imaginative. She also was sort of a dreamy child, and carried on with me on these imaginative things that we accomplished together. And sometimes she played at my house, and sometimes I played at her house.

She had have sort of dark olive skin and dark eyes and dark hair. I was very light blonde as a kid have blue-eyed. I don't think my nose had turned into the Semitic shape it has today. It was fairly obvious that I looked more German than she did. And the memory that I have in my mind that focused on sort of the first time I experienced personally anti-semitism was when we walked home from

school one day towards her house.

And at one point she said to me why don't you keep going? I have to stay here right now, and then I'll catch up with you. I sort of looked at her like is she crazy or something? And I remember standing there, and then when she caught up with me. I said now what is this all about.

And she said, well, you see, you are Jewish. And my father told me that I can't be seen with you because, then people will boycot his store because I'm not permitted to have any Jewish friends.

And I cannot describe to you how I felt. Except that I have never forgotten it, you know. And it was like probably a combination of amazement, totally unbelieving, totally crushed. It was nothing physical. You know. But it was just a mental blow that I have never been able to forgive her.

So we stopped playing together after that. Because I didn't want to do it behind anybody's back. You know. Part of me felt why should I do that? So our friendship ended. And shortly thereafter, I think there were only one or two other young Jewish girls in this school, which was a private girls school. And when one of those girls was sick or out out of town, or something, I didn't have anybody to play with during break. You know. Here I am like 11, 12, 13. And I went to that school until I was 15.

And I think it was psychologically very damaging to me, because I pretended a lot of things that weren't true. Number one, I pretended that I didn't care, which wasn't true. I did care. I felt terrible. I mean that's an age where you conform. And you want to be like everybody else.

And I even remember having distinct feelings of envy that I couldn't wear the Nazi uniform. And that I sort of longed to wear this brown jacket that would make me feel like I was part of the club. And then the other part hated that feeling, because obviously, being Jewish, I was insane to want to wear a brown jacket, right? Lot of conflicts there.

And then there was a small beginning of a Jewish Israeli young organization that promoted young people emigrating to Israel. And they started having a uniform. And it was the navy blue version of the brown Nazi jacket. And I just loved that jacket to death. I mean that jacket was my entry into some sort of a group that wasn't my family.

JACOB OFFNER: WHAT WAS THE NAME OF THE GROUP?

A. I have forgotten.

JACOB OFFNER: WAS IT MASHA MER MAZAIEM (***PHONETIC***)?

A. It was something like that, probably. It was a youth group. It was organized around interesting young

children and Zionism. Thanks for reminding me. I didn't remember the name.

So the only other really personal physical experience I had was when some boys threw some rocks at me and said, you dirty Jew, you know, get out of here, or something like that. And that was also when I was about 12. And I don't remember that being nearly as painful as when my best friend didn't want to be seen with me.

The other seemed sort of just like a stupid bunch of buys. I could sort of forgive them because I know how dumb they were. I knew she wasn't dumb. And I knew she was very close to me. Very different experience.

The other, of course, more obvious things that had to do with anti-semitism was my father and mother's dinner conversation which was constantly focused, you know, around Hitler, the threat to the business, the feeling of insecurity that we had towards the employees my dad had.

To backtrack a little bit, part of the wonderful parts of my childhood was a very vivid and colorful kind of image of these grapes coming in with horse drawn carriages into this place that was a winery, which was maybe only a hundred yards in back of the house. And there was a press. And as children we saw the grape juice coming out of the press. I mean very sort of luscious and sensuous

kind of images that I grew up with.

And standing in the big barrels that were in the backyard, you know, and playing hide and seek around the cellar. Being able to taste some of the wine when it just began to turn, which was when it first became alcoholic. And you could have just this much of it, because if you had too much you could get real tipsy on it. And, you know, all these things were very esthetically pleasing. And maybe some of the reasons why I developed a strong interest in art and in color and all those things. I mean who knows.

I think my father's concern about his employees being loyal, had to do with the fact that they also were encouraged to join the party. But you couldn't work for a Jew as long as -- you know, if you had joined the party. So they did not join the party. But there was always this fear, you know, this uncertainty.

And my mother always promoted emigration. She talked about it all time. Because my dad had three brothers in Buffalo that had emigrated at the turn of the century when there was an another wave of emigration because of economic reasons in Germany.

And my father said, no, I can't go. He was in business with miss he his brother. He was very loyal to his older brother. He also felt that he couldn't make the step from being independent and,

you know, middle class, to going somewhere where he had to be obviously asking for help.

He was a very proud man. Even though he was extremely intelligent, and knew exactly what was going on and saw the handwriting on the wall, he didn't want to see it. He was one of these people who thought, well, something is going to happen. Hitler is not going to last. You have heard this many times. There will be some kind of an interference from England or America or France. They will take care of this guy. And, of course, nothing happened.

So there was this sort of combination of gloom and doom about my sister dying, my brother being gone, and the fear of what we should do as a family. And I tried to not say that I wanted to leave, which part of it was unconscious. I did want to leave. I hated being in school. I didn't really feel comfortable in the town.

When I was a small child I loved going to Synagogue with my dad. He was one of the trustees or something. And I remember the distinct feeling of having my hand in his hand as we walked to Temple. And how comforting that was, and how complete I felt, and how proud I was to be walking alongside of him, this little girl sort of jumping along. And singing in the choir when I got to be a teenager.

And, you know, my father just made me feel

that I was needed there. There was this subtle kind of pressure not to talk about leaving. My brother emigrated from France to America in 1937. He then started writing my parents almost immediately saying, you have got to get Sue out, you have to get Sue out. And we didn't.

Some time after Chamberlin went to Munich and had this disastrous meeting with Hitler, we started getting telegrams from my brother saying if you don't get Sue out now she will never make it.

So some time in, I guess, June or July of 38, I did go to Strasbourg to the American consulate, and I was given a number, a quota number. And my number was supposed to come up in two or three months. And all this sort of seems like a dream now.

And then when the number did come up, my family said, yes, you know, you have to go. And I said, but I can't go. What's going to happen to you? You know. I can't leave you here. And there was this terrible crosscurrent of guilt and emotion and fear, and at the same time anticipation and joy and looking forward to being, you know, away from this very serious environment, and maybe being able to be carefree again.

I remember thinking when I was about 15, which was just shortly before I emigrated, that I didn't really truly ever feel the way I pretended to

feel. And I remember sort of thinking, God, it must really be nice to be sort of totally able to express what you feel. And I thought, well, maybe I'll be able to do that when I go to America. I remember sort having this sort of insight.

And in 1938 then, in September, I said goodbye to my dad and my mom. And at that time my father was in bed. And he seemed to have quite a few stomach pains over the last couple of years that I was home. But I never took it very seriously, because they always went away. And I never thought anything of it. And I didn't even know what the word cancer meant. You know. In some ways maybe I was sort of sheltered. I had no idea he was ill, seriously. But he was in bed when I left.

And I said goodbye to him. And it seemed that we were both trying to cheer each other up. So we didn't really cry. We sort of were joking a little bit. And he was saying, now don't be a flirt. You know how you always flirt with the boys. Don't do that. You will just get you into trouble. I remember him saying that.

And an aunt took me to Holland where I waited for three weeks for the boat Rotterdam to leave. So I guess my brother really put a lot of pressure on my parents to get me out. Even though I could have stayed another three weeks in Germany.

Well, lo and behold, I left October 8th,

and November 10th was Crystal Night. So I actually just really did get out in the nick of time in terms of the accelerating series of events that happened. And my father apparently became gravely ill just shortly after I left. So went from just periodic stomach aches to severe pain.

He was then diagnosed with x-rays to have some cancer in his intestines. I knew nothing of this. Nothing was written at the time, except that my mother said after the 10th of -- no, no, wait a minute. Before the 10th of November, he was hospitalized in Franfort in a Jewish hospital. And my mother was telling me that after the operation, which he must have been operated some time maybe the 7th or 8th of November. And then after the Crystal Night, the halls of the hospital were filled with people who were lying like -- lying there because they didn't have enough beds. And her sense of it was that my dad didn't get enough attention -- medical attention to help him survive the operation that was her feeling.

I have no idea what the truth actually was. I assume he just had a bad cancer, and he didn't survive.

So at that time I only remember in Buffalo where I went to high school the first two years I was in America. At that time --

Q. HOW OLD WERE YOU?

A. When my dad died I was 16.

JACOB OFFNER: AND HE DIED IN NOVEMBER?

A. He died November 28th. So I guess he lived like 18 days after that. I only heard from my mother afterwards how horrible the scene was. She, of course, was all alone. She did have my father's brother, whom my father had been in business with all these years.

But people had fled Landau shortly after the Crystal Night, where apparently people just came into our house and just, you know, ripped everything out of cupboards and threw it down. And it was called Crystal Night because people smashed things, you know.

The only good thing was apparently the two employees that I had mentioned before that my dad had in the winery that he was concerned with were a good influence on the people, and there was no fire set or anything to the house. And according to my mom it was because of them.

But the Synagogue was burned down. And my mother never went back to Landau after that. She stayed in Frankfurt. And then all her energies were finally put into trying to get to the United States. And it was really a miracle, I think, that she got here, because she didn't leave Germany until May of 1939. And she was on the Saint Louis, which is the boat that went to Cuba and wasn't permitted to land. So she was on that boat. And they made a movie of it

called the Voyage of the Damned.

And when she was in Cuba my brother kept wiring to the Joint Distribution Committee, I believe, who had someone that was in touch with all the people that were on that boat. And he somehow got across to her that when they went back to Europe, because America wouldn't take them, and nobody would take them, that she should not go to either France or Holland, even though her mother and father were in Holland at the time. And that's where she wanted to be.

He said, you must go to England, because he was so bright he knew that Hitler was going to overrun, you know, the Low Lands.

And I didn't know anything about this. I mean I was in another space altogether. But he was very much in charge. And due to his insistence, she did go to England. And that's how she survived, and finally was living through the early years -- the early months months of the Blitz was settled somewhere in the country in Abbotts-Langley outside of the London area, and came here in December of 39 on a boat that ran the blockade. So at least I had one parent. And happily she was here until 1981.

Q. WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR GRANDPARENTS?

A. Well, my grandmother and grandfather moved to Holland I believe the end of 38 or end of 39, I'm not sure. Because one of their daughters, my mom's sister,

had settled in Holland shortly after Hitler took power in 33. They were there for a long, long time that was the family I stayed with before I went on the boat. they were in a little town called AANAM. [STPHFPLT/] check that [STPHFPLT/] and my grandparents felt that's at least, you know, they were with one of their children. And they felt safe like people felt safe when they went to France, too, didn't they? So when the Nazis came to Holland, I believe my aunt and uncle and their two children were hidden by righteous gentiles, people who took it upon themselves to, you know, fight the system and give assistance to these juice, and I think they were hidden in separate houses. But there was no one that could really hide my grandparents. So I'm not a hundred percent clear where my grandmother was. But I believe she was with another Jewish family somewhere in Holland. And so was my grandfather. Then some time in 39 my grandfather died, and my grandmother was deported. My aunt, you know, the one that I stayed with, stayed in hiding all the way through until the end of the war and was liberated by the first Jewish brigade of Israeli soldiers. Then they moved to Israel. That whole family moved to Israel. I don't really know where my grandmother went. There was some talk that she might have been in this tress even [SHATS/] but I don't really have any proof of that.

Q. YOU WERE UNABLE TO FIND OUT?

A. Never able to find out. So my father's death was always to me a more natural death than one that had been specifically caused by the Nazis. My mother always experienced it as a combination of all the suffering he wouldn't have gotten sick if it hadn't been for all the pressure for all the pressures that he was under. I was always to take a little bit more of an -- I don't know what you would call it -- a different view of it. I thought he was probably meant to die of cancer. I couldn't quite believe that it was out of negligence that he died. But the crucial fact was that I lost a parent at age sixteen. And he was irreplaceable to me, because I was closer to him than I was to my mom. We were more alike. We just sort of took to each other. And I was the youngest. And he sort of spoiled me, when he had been fairly strict with the other two. So I have experienced that loss all my life.

Q. AND YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN RESOLVED?

A. No. I think I still miss him. You see, I do have -- I seem to have this tendency to hang on to pain.

Q. WELL, IT SOUNDS TO ME LIKE YOU ALSO YOU ARE QUITE A WELL AWARE OF LIKE THE FEELINGS THAT BECAME CONFLICTS IN YOUR LIFE AND YOU KNOW THAT THAT IT SEEMS TO ME A LOT OF PEOPLE AREN'T AWARE OF. SO HOW DID YOU BECOME AWARE OF LIKE WHAT WAS GOING ON PSYCHOLOGICALLY?

A. I think that's easy. I think that because of the

fact that I experienced some of these traumatic things very young, I think that that was an awakening of sorts that just sort of made me more conscious of what was going on the inside. I think so. I think that maybe later on I started reading more books. And then maybe realized that what I was doing naturally was something that was maybe helpful in trying to come to terms with the experience.

Q. DID YOU EVER TALK TO PEOPLE VERY MUCH ABOUT IT?

A. No. No.

Q. AT ALL?

A. Not until maybe the last ten years of my life have I been willing to really sort of talk more about it. And also I think not until the last ten years have I been willing to sort of deal with my husband's illness. I feel that the whole subject of loss is something that has somewhat dominated my life experience. And my husband became ill after we were married about seven years. And he got multiple sclerosis. He had it for 15 years. And I had three children when he was diagnosed. So my experience as a caregiver and as someone who was terminally ill, even though MS is not like cancer. You do die eventually from other causes that are caused by MS. But necessarily you don't die from MS, because it's neurological disease that just becomes life-threatening otherwise. I think that because of that experience, on top of all the others, I think maybe I began to realize

that something had to happen inside for me to be able to digest it all and deal with it in a more open way.

Q. WHAT DID YOU DO TO START MAKING THAT HAPPEN?

A. Well, I think for one, maybe I started talking about it a little bit bit more. I formed another relationship about another man who was very open and warm and loving and supportive. And that began to sort of maybe release some of that pent up lifestyle that I led. My kids sort of accused me of coming home from work during the years that William was so sick, and having a smile on my face. And then later on they told me why did you smile, mom? We knew you felt terrible? You didn't have to smile. You could have told us how you felt.

But I didn't feel free to tell them how I felt. I felt it was important that I kept the stiff upper lip and the happy smile that I had done for my parents. You know, it had become a modus vivendi, you know. It was something that had supported me all through all the years that I lived to where I wasn't going to give it up. And then slowly I think it became more apparent to me that honesty maybe was better than hiding.

Q. HOW DID YOU REACT TO YOUR CHILDREN WHEN THEY SOUNDED LIKE THEY WANTED YOU TO TALK, BE MORE OPEN ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS?

A. I think it's always been hard for me to really open up to them completely. Although it's

getting much better.

Q. SO DID YOU JUST AT THE TIME SAY YOU COULDN'T DO IT?

A. No. I remember saying that it was very important to me to keep the family intact as a, quote, unquote, healthy family. And my coming home and having a long face wasn't going to make anybody feel any better. Certainly not the children. And so I thought I'd done the right thing, because the alternative was that we were all miserable. And I was determined to keep William at home. I did not want to put him in a rest home. And so we had to learn to work around the situation. And I think if I had to do it all over again, I may not have been as tight-lipped about it.

But I think I still would have tried to have been as normal, quote, unquote, as possible. And not, you know, have this kind of a gloomy atmosphere that didn't seem right to me. However, I think I would have been maybe more open with them as they got a little bit older, than I was.

So, anyway, the rest of the family, my mother was one of eight, also experienced some tragedies in the Holocaust. One sister of my mom's was deported. Another one was on the boat with her that went to Cuba, and she is now in America and still alive.

Q. SHE GOT TO ENGLAND TOO?

A. Trying to remember. No, I believe

she actually got off the boat in Cuba, which is really strange. And I may have my history a little bit wrong there. But I know that she spent some time in Cuba.

Q. DOES THIS MEAN -- I ALWAYS HEARD THE STORY. THE BOAT WENT ALL THE WAY AROUND THE WORLD. IT WOULDN'T LET ANYBODY IN?

A. No, didn't go all the around the world. It was anchored outside the harbor in Cuba. And there were wires flying to Roosevelt and to all the heads of state, and the Pope. And they all said here is a few hundred people, you know. What sweat is it off your back to take those guys in? If we send them back to Germany, they are certainly not going to live.

But nobody could get it past their legislature. Nobody could really get their act together. So then they divided the people among France, Holland, and England. And I don't know whether a followup study was ever made that traced the people that went to France and to Holland. But I know the ones that came to England were safe.

Q. OKAY.

A. It didn't go all around the world. But I guess they went back and forth. Yeah, I think that this whole issue of surviving is one that involves a lot of guilt, you know. It's difficult to justify your surviving. If you are just an ordinary person who hasn't done anything very extraordinary, why are you alive? You know, maybe somebody else could have made a

huge contribution.

Q. ARE THOSE THE KINDS OF THINGS YOU ALWAYS FELT ABOUT YOURSELF?

A. Yeah. It's at always been a catalyst.

JACOB OFFNER: IN TERMS OF THAT, I'M REALLY CURIOUS. YOU MENTIONED THAT YOUR GRANDMOTHER WAS SUCH A SAINTLY FIGURE FOR YOU.

A. Uh-huh.

Q. THAT YOUR MOTHER ENCOURAGED YOU TO ALWAYS REMEMBER. WHAT WOULD IT BE LIKE FOR YOU TO NOT REMEMBER YOUR GRANDMOTHER SO STRONGLY? WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF YOU WERE TO JUST LIVE YOUR LIFE AND NOT HAVE TO REMEMBER HER SO INTENSELY?

A. I have thought about, you know, letting go of parts of my remembering and just remembering the good things, you know. I have thought if I could just remember her as the wonderful grandmother who baked cookies for us all the time, and visited us, and who was always so great, but not remember her end, that I think that would be better for me. At least for my growth.

JACOB OFFNER: BUT YOU HAD -- SOUNDS LIKE WHAT YOU ARE SAYING IS THE REMEMBERING INVOLVED SUFFERING FOR YOU.

A. I don't think it necessarily needs to involve suffering, if I can start separating those two aspects of my grandmother. You know. And I think that's what I'm working on now, is to not associate only the pain,

but just associate all of the beauty that she represents to me. I don't want to forget about her. It's very important to me that I remain faithful to her memory. She was an extraordinary woman. In many, many ways.

PEGGY COSTER: I'M SORRY. WHEN YOU SAY YOU ARE WORKING ON IT NOW, WHAT DO YOU MEAN? HOW ARE YOU DOING THAT?

A. Well, I'm working in a group in Tiburon called The Center For Attitudinal Healing. And it was started by a name man named Jeffrey Gympalski, who based his work on a series of books called The Book of Miracles. And it's simply --

Q. IS THAT THE COURSE OF MIRACLES?

A. Uh-huh. It's simply an expression of conquering fear through love. And you can state that a thousand different ways. But they define health as inner peace, and healing as letting go of fear. So my work with them at the moment is in a support group with caregivers for people who have life-threatening illnesses. Half of them are AIDS. Many of them are cancer patients.

And because of my experience with William, I feel I have a lot of empathy with people who are caregivers, because caregivers have their own special problems that they need to work with in order to be able to continue to be caregivers. And when I was one,

I didn't have any support at all. I didn't even know what a support group was. And I don't know if any existed at that time.

PEGGY COSTER: NOW, I'M THINKING THAT WALLY IS YOUR SECOND HUSBAND. WILLIAM DIED?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. HOW LONG AGO DID HE DIE?

A. In 74.

Q. AND -- I'M SORRY. I FORGOT WHAT I HAD IN MIND.

A. That's all right. So I think -- go ahead.

JACOB OFFNER: WE ARE TALKING ABOUT, YOU HAVE MENTIONED THIS A COUPLE OF TIMES, AND I DO AGREE WITH YOU, THAT JUST TALKING ABOUT IT IS REALLY THE MOST HEALING ASPECT OF IT. THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN BEING ABLE TO OPENLY ADMIT TO WHAT YOU FELT AND THINK ABOUT OUT LOUD WHAT YOU FELT, THAT THAT IS VERY HEALING, AND MAYBE FACILITATING OF YOUR LETTING GO TOO. IS THAT TRUE?

A. I think it's true. I think being in a supportive environment, which I am in the center, is very important. Talking by itself I don't think is very healing, if you are with someone who isn't very receptive. But being in a group of people that encourage you, and empathize, that's sort of a healing thing.

PEGGY COSTER: GO AHEAD.

JACOB OFFNER: IS YOUR DOING THIS INTERVIEW PART OF THE HEALING TOO? KIND OF CAME SUDDENLY. BUT

IS IT PART OF THE HEALING TOO?

A. Maybe.

PEGGY COSTER: YOU SAID YOU SORT OF STARTED TALKING ABOUT TEN YEARS AGO. WHAT CATALYST DID THAT?

A. I think I'm very conscious of getting older. And I realize there is a limited amount of time during which I can grow. And that it suddenly became more pressing, you know, that now that something happened in my development, you know. I don't want to die the same person I am today. I hope I can make some progress. And I realize that the progress involved opening up, and not continuing to be sort of closed and more of a pretending kind of a person in my relationships.

It's still difficult for me to be really totally open. Maybe it always will be, I don't know.

PEGGY COSTER: YOU KNOW PEOPLE ALWAYS -- I'M CHANGING THE SUBJECT RIGHT NOW. PEOPLE TALK A LOT ABOUT THE LESSONS FROM THE HOLOCAUST. AND WHAT ARE THE LESSONS THAT YOU WOULD GIVE?

A. I don't think there are any lessons. I think life itself is a lesson, and it's just part of life. I see no lesson in pain. I don't think anything good comes out of pain.

I have often jokingly said that I thank Hitler, because I really love being in America. And he permitted me to be in America, but at what expense? Look at all that pain and suffering.

If there is any lesson, it's that we can't

let evil be without trying to get ahold of it and fight it.

PEGGY COSTER: HOW ARE YOU -- I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT FIGHTING IT? BECAUSE A LOTS OF TIMES THERE IS THE TWO PHRASES I HEAR A LOT. ONE IS IT COULD HAPPEN AGAIN. AND THE OTHER IS THAT IT WAS CAUSED BY THE GERMAN ECONOMY AND THE ARMISTICE. AND BOTH OF THOSE ARE TOO BIG, YOU KNOW. THERE IS NOTHING DOABLE IN EITHER OF THOSE SENTENCES. SO IF ANOTHER HOLOCAUST COULD BE PREVENTED, HOW WOULD PEOPLE GO ABOUT DOING THAT?

A. By confronting every person that makes an antisemitic remark. Not letting anti-negro, anti-anything go by without making a comment on it. By making sure that you raise your children in a way where they realize all human beings are alike. That, you know, it's such a fundamental approach, that it has nothing to do with the German economy, or with, you know, is the next recession going to do this or that.

It has to do with people's basic human attitudes. And I feel not terribly hopeful at this point, because I think we have gone unbelievable in technology. But I believe human nature hasn't progressed very much. We have these basic feelings of fear and, you know, mistrust, and all the things that come out of fear, which are sometimes hatred, or certainly violent dislike, that make people do things that aren't rational.

So part of the attitudinal healing attraction to me is that it really tries to sort of make people respond in a more human, appropriate way.

Q. UN-HUN. NOW, ONE OF THE THINGS I HAVE BEEN READING ABOUT IS THEY ARE BEGINNING TO PUT BOOKS OUT NOW ABOUT CHILDREN OF THE PERPETRATORS, CHILDREN OF THE SS, AND THE TOPNOTCH PEOPLE LIKE THAT. AND A LOT OF TIMES THEY HAVE ACTUALLY SUFFERED VERY MUCH, AS HAVE THE PARENTS. BUT ONE OF THE QUESTIONS ARISES, IT ALSO ARISES MY MIND IN CONJUNCTION WITH SOME WORK THAT'S BEING DONE BY SOME THERAPISTS, INCLUDING ALICE MILLER, WHO HAS PUT OUT A BOOK CALLED FOR THEIR OWN GOOD. IT'S ABOUT CHILD ABUSE. ABUSIVE CHILD-RAISING PRACTICES. AND IT ANALYZES HITLER IN DEPTH IN THAT BOOK. BUT IT ALSO PUTS OUT THE IDEA THAT CHILD ABUSE WAS A MAJOR CAUSE OF THE HOLOCAUST. AND SO LIKE MY QUESTION IS GETTING KIND OF LONG. BUT IT'S LIKE, HOW WOULD YOU PUT THIS TOGETHER? LIKE IS IT POSSIBLE TO AVOID HAVING ANOTHER HOLOCAUST WITHOUT SOMEHOW DEALING WITH THE PERPETRATORS AND THE CHILDREN OF THE PERPETRATORS AS WELL? LEAVE THAT ONE BY ITSELF.

A. Un-hun. Well, it's a very big question you are asking, because it involved a tremendous amount of things. Certainly it seems to be proven that whoever has suffered pain does not become better for it, but tends to evolve out of the pain by passing it on to somebody else. It seems that that is the case with abused children. That the opposite occurs from what we

think. Namely, they would grow up and say, I'll never do this. But without their almost being able to control it, they will do it again.

So I don't know how accurate this really is. These are all, you know, things that we hear and read, and sometimes it seems to be true, that there is something in us that has to come to terms with our pain by inflicting it on somebody else.

I don't have much patience really with that kind of an approach, and I'll tell you why. Because it's not going to get us anywhere.

I think that the approach that I'd like to take is not so much what do we do about child abuse, but how can we get enough individuals conscious as to their actions, and take responsibilities for their actions on a very simple level. How can we? It seems almost an insurmountable task.

Q. HAVE YOU THOUGHT MUCH WITH THAT? BECAUSE THIS IS THE LEVEL I USUALLY GO TO, IS BECAUSE I DON'T THINK THE ECONOMY CAUSED THE HOLOCAUST. I THINK HOW PEOPLE RESPONDED TO IT CAUSED THE HOLOCAUST. AND SO LIKE, HAVE YOU THOUGHT MUCH ON THIS LEVEL OF WHAT CAN YOU DO TO, YOU KNOW, IN TERMS OF LESSONS OF THE HOLOCAUST, HOW COULD YOU GO ABOUT ASSISTING PEOPLE IN SEEING THEIR ACTIONS COUNT?

A. Have you thought about how to eliminate anti-semitism? I'll ask you that question.

Q. YES.

A. How would you go about eliminating anti-semitism?

PEGGY COSTER: IS THIS OKAY FOR THE INTERVIEW, JOHN?

JACOB OFFNER: SURE.

A. I think it's important. I know where your question comes from.

Q. OKAY. I HAVE TO GET -- I THINK -- MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IS THAT INTELLECTUAL ACTIONS DON'T DO A LOT OF GOOD MOST OF THE TIME, BECAUSE THEY ARE VERY OFTEN BASED ON UPON FALSE PREMISES. AND I THINK WHAT WOULD DO THE BEST GOOD FOR PEOPLE TO REALLY TALK ON THE KIND OF LEVEL WE ARE TALKING TODAY. BECAUSE I KNOW THAT MY ATTITUDES HAVE CHANGED. I MEAN I WASN'T Anti-Semitic BEFORE I STARTED DOING THE INTERVIEWS. BUT I'M MUCH MORE AWARE OF THE KINDS OF EXPERIENCE AND THE DEPTH OF EXPERIENCES OF WHAT PEOPLE HAVE GONE THROUGH DURING THE HOLOCAUST. AND I THINK THAT IT'S -- I CAN'T REALLY ARTICULATE AT THIS POINT WHAT THE CHANGE IS. BUT I KNOW THERE HAS BEEN A CHANGE. AND I, YOU KNOW, THAT'S BEEN MY EXPERIENCE MY WHOLE LIFE, IS THAT IF I TALK TO PEOPLE ON A DEEP LEVEL ABOUT EMOTIONAL THINGS, THAT IT CREATES BRIDGES AND BONDS. AND THEN ONCE THOSE BRIDGES ARE CREATED, YOU CAN, IN THE FACE OF REAL EVIL, I THINK STILL DENY THOSE FRIENDS. BECAUSE, YOU KNOW, IF YOU ARE FACING YOUR OWN ANNIHILATION, IF YOU DON'T, I CAN SEE WHERE PEOPLE WOULD SUCCUMB AND DO THAT. BUT I THINK TALKING LIKE I HAVE HAS MADE ME MORE AWARE THAT I REALLY HOPE I WOULD NOT DO THAT.

AND I HOPE YOU DON'T FIND IT OFFENSIVE THAT I CAN'T SAY I NEVER WOULD. BUT I JUST KNOW HUMAN NATURE. YOU CAN NEVER SAY NEVER.

A. On the contrary. I totally empathize with you. Because I have asked myself that question many times. And I have expressed it to John and to Lonny and to whoever wants to listen, that the real question is, is how many Jews really would have stood up if the tables had been turned and another part of the German population would have been persecuted and sent to the gas chambers.

You know. We all have to ask ourselves how deep is our courage? And how far would we have sacrificed our families and our lives for the sake of another human being? So you are not alone in that at all, you know, in asking that question. I think it's a very important question, and one that I have been thinking about for many many years.

Q. UN-HUN.

A. But in response to your original question, like what lessons are there from the Holocaust, I think we do not have control over how parents raise their children. You know. You and I are just sitting here. All we can do is affect the very close circle that is our life. If we can do our own small part in trying to impart to those people that are close to us, whose lives we touch, the importance of honesty, and the importance of love rather than fear, of caring rather

than pushing down, helping people to rise up out of their problems, rather than making their problems worse by exacerbating their pain. If we can just do our own little thing, that's all we can do. We can't change the world. Nobody can.

I think that if I were -- I have not wanted to go and really resume any friendships with any of the people in Germany. You didn't ask me that, but I'll volunteer it. I went back in 1980, or something, and wanted to show Walter where I was born. And I felt totally alienated. Totally unable to bridge that huge gap. And I experienced it as a fairly negative experience. And I haven't wanted to go back since then. So, obviously, I wasn't able to rise above my pain and above my experience.

That made me realize that if I had met any one of the people that I went to school with, I would not have been a good force for them. I would have been full of bad feelings and negative attitudes, and they would not have gained anything from it.

Until I'm ready to forgive to some extent -- can I use that word? I would not want to make any contact with any of them. And I have been invited to go back to certain groups that have formed that are quite positive and, you know, doing political things, and having lectures, and so on. I just can't do it. I know that my vibes wouldn't be good.

Q. YEAH.

A. So, yes, I think --

Q. WELL, YOU KNOW, GETTING BACK TO THE CHILDREN OF LIKE THE ABUSERS. ACTUALLY THAT'S ANYBODY WHO PARTICIPATED, NOT JUST THE TOP PEOPLE. AND WHAT'S GOING ON IN GERMANY TODAY, LIKE HOW DOES ALL THIS NEW POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND TALK OF REUNIFICATION, HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT?

A. I'm very torn about it. I'm very torn about it. Parts of me would like to believe that the new generation of Germans should not be held responsible for what their fathers did, you know. Like the sins of the fathers should not be passed on to the sins of the children.

Part of me wants to -- this is the struggle inside of me that I'm describing to you that is going on now. I want to let go of a lot of that negative feeling and pain. And I do want to be able to look forward rather than backward. I find it difficult.

I do have apprehensions about a very strong economic and political Germany. On the other hand, another side of me says it's better to have a strong and economically healthy Germany, because then they won't have to repeat the past, which was acting out of frustration and feeling suppressed, and feeling that they don't have enough power.

Q. UN-HUN.

A. So I don't know.

Q. SO WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THE FACT

THAT THEY ELECTED ELEVEN NEONAZIS?

A. I feel very threatened by that. And I also feel threatened by the whole concept of the political right, whether it be in this country or any other country. I feel there is a certain fear that I have that obviously comes from experience, that sometimes a very small group of extreme people can bring out the worst in a lot of big groups of people.

But it's -- the inverse can also happen. Sometimes a small group of good people can influence people out of their proportion also.

Q. UH-HUH. OKAY.

A. So there is potential in human beings for good and evil. And you know that from the Catholic religion. I know it from the Jewish religion. I think that potential exists from the day we are born. And history evolves on the basis of during which time good or evil had the upper hand.

JACOB OFFNER: IT'S INTERESTING THAT YOU TALKED ABOUT WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF ANTI SEMITISM. AND, TO ME, ONE OF THE CAUSES OF ANTI-SEMITISM IS ENVY. IS THAT PEOPLE IN THEIR OWN LIVING OF THEIR LIVES HAVE SUCH DESPAIR AND SUCH HARDSHIP, THAT THEY NEED TO PICK A TARGET THAT THEY FEEL ENVIOUS TOWARDS, AND BLAME THEM FOR THEIR POOR EXISTENCE. AND I THINK IN MANY WAYS THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED IN GERMANY.

AND ONE OF THE LESSONS THAT OFTEN COMES OUT OF A TERRIBLE SITUATION LIKE THIS, IS THAT TO BE GREAT

AND TO ASPIRE TO GREATNESS IS WRONG, IS BAD. AND IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU HAVE REALLY LIVED, TO ME, WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON OF THE HOLOCAUST IS, TO NEVER LET ANYBODY'S POWER OVER YOU DIMINISH YOUR OWN ASPIRATIONS TOWARD GREATNESS. YOU HAVE REALLY ALLOWED YOURSELF TO LIVE YOUR LIFE IN AS FULL AND SUCCESSFUL MANNER AS POSSIBLE, AND NOT LET ANYBODY'S ENVY STOP THAT; IS THAT TRUE FOR YOU? DO YOU FEEL THAT THAT'S TRUE?

A. Not consciously. I wasn't doing it because I thought that was a precept.

JACOB OFFNER: I THINK THAT THE STATE OF ISRAEL IS SORT OF LIKE THAT. IT'S AN INTENSE APSIRATION TOWARD GREATNESS. AND TO NOT LET THE ENVY THAT OTHERS HAVE FELT FOR THEM STOP THEM FROM ACHIEVING. OR THE JEWS IN THIS COUNTRY TOO.

A. I could make a sad commentary on what I think right us now is not a show of greatness on the part of the Israelis. I think they are working hard on whatever greatness people felt for them in 1967, 70, et cetera.

PEGGY COSTER: YOU MEAN BY THE WAY THEY ARE TREATING THE ARABS?

A. Yes. By the way they are handling their own internal situation. Not being able to come to a consensus. It's a very difficult time for me in terms of my relationship to Israel. I have a lot of mixed feelings.

PEGGY COSTER: DO YOU THINK THAT THAT COULD

HAVE SOME -- THAT COULD PARTIALLY BE THE RESULT OF THE FACT THAT SO MANY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE WHO SETTLE THERE WERE HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS, AND POSSIBLY HAVE NEVER REALLY DEALT WITH THE RESULTANT EMOTIONS?

A. That could be partially true. Certainly a lot of fear. I have talked to a lot of Israelis. And I have some very dear Israeli friends. And a lot of them say that they have very good relationships with the Arabs. Especially the children of people who settled there. You know. It's very complicated. I don't think I could really do it justice right now in going into it in detail.

PEGGY COSTER: THIS INTERVIEW HAS ACTUALLY TAKEN OFF FROM THE WAY THINGS SHOULD BE GOING. SO IF YOU DON'T WANT KEEP TALKING LIKE THIS, YOU DON'T HAVE TO.

JACOB OFFNER: I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW, GETTING BACK TO SOME OF THE MORE FACTUAL STUFF. WHAT WHERE THE WONDERFUL QUALITIES THAT YOUR GRANDMOTHER HAD? YOU MENTIONED THEM. BUT YOU HAVE NEVER TALKED ABOUT THEM.

A. Okay. She is sort of a symbol to me of kindness. And her presence in a room without her ever taking sides in arguments, in family arguments, always seemed to be a very steadying one that I sort of sensed as a child. She would never take sides. She would just be there. And somehow felt better because she was that way.

She was very generous. Her love, like many

women's love, was expressed in the form -- she cooked and baked, and took care of her family. That was her expression. And she loved all those eight children, and made them feel secure, I think, and loved. She had a certain persona, you know, that was just very different from anybody I have ever known. Different from my mother.

She was totally nonjudgmental, which I have always envied. Because I did have a fairly judgmental family that was, you know, not being able to step back and let things be. There was usually something said about this and that.

I liked her warmth. I spent quite a few childhood vacations there. They had a little farm in a tiny village near the little town where I was born. And I loved being there. There was a great atmosphere of -- sort of natural kind of healthy, comforting environment.

I remember how I felt when she stood in front of the door when I opened the door, and there she was with her two shopping bags. One was with cookies and one was with cake. And I always thought, well, this is heaven. Here's my grandmother with all the goodies.

I remember her sitting in bed when I was a child when she slept overnight, which she sometimes did. It was like a half hour train ride away from where we were. And I had this very vivid picture of this woman sitting in bed in a white nightgown with

eyelet embroidery, and sort of pretty ruffles on the sleeve, and her hair which was usually braided and pinned up in back in a bun was let down. And because it was braided, it was in all these little curls.

And she would sit there in bed and brush her hair. And I thought she was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. She is just a beautiful person.

JACOB OFFNER: DO YOU HAVE A PICTURE OF HER?

A. Not right here, interestingly enough. It's right here.

JACOB OFFNER: WHAT KINDS OF ACTIVITIES DID YOU SHARE WITH HER? WHAT THINGS DID SHE WANT TO DO?

A. Well, I remember her giving me a bath. And they didn't have a bathroom. They had an outhouse. Until I got to be about twelve or thirteen they had an outhouse. And so there was water heated on the stove, and there was a big tub on the floor. And she filled it with water. And she stuck me in the tub and scrubbed me down. And I thought it was wonderful.

And she dried me off. And we would go and play in the hay loft. And they had a couple of cows and chickens running around the yard. I mean it just was -- really seemed like a really nice life to me. Real nice environment. And her house was always full of something, you know. Cousins were there, or an aunt or an uncle. My mother's brothers and sisters were visiting and spoiling me. You know. Fussing over her. I probably loved that too.

JACOB OFFNER: DID SHE EVER ENCOURAGE YOU IN THE DIRECTION OF THE ARTS, OR THE AREAS THAT YOU WOUND UP IN?

A. Huh-uh. No. However, I do think I did get a sense of being valuable, you know. Because she loved me. And she let me know how she felt. And I guess that made me feel sort of a sense of self-worth. I think all those things are very, you know, reinforcing. But I wasn't conscious of it at the time.

JACOB OFFNER: Was she around when your sister died?

A. (Nods head affirmatively)

JACOB OFFNER: WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT WAS SHE?

A. Nobody talked to me about it.

JACOB OFFNER: INCLUDING HER?

A. Huh-uh. I think in those days people thought children shouldn't talk about death. I have just recently started talking about my sister's death.

PEGGY COSTER: YOU KNOW, WHEN YOU SEE MOVIES ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST AND STUFF, HOW DO THEY STRIKE YOU? DO THEY STRIKE YOU AS BEING --

A. Well, I think I have seen mostly documentaries. I don't think I ever saw a feature film about the Holocaust. But I have seen Shoah. And I remember Shoah the most.

Part of me just doesn't want to believe it. Part of me just sort of stands outside that experience and says it couldn't have happened. It's too inhuman.

It couldn't have happened. How could anybody do such a thing? How could anybody starve people to death and then gas them, or. You know, I see these pictures. And I know I went to the Yad Vashim in Israel. And I just couldn't believe it. Part of me still doesn't want to believe it. A certain amount of denial is still going on.

PEGGY COSTER: YOU MEAN WITH YOU, OR WITHIN SOCIETY?

A. With me. I can't possibly accept it.

Q. WHEN DID YOU FIRST HEAR ABOUT IT? MUST HAVE BEEN DURING THE WAR SOME TIME?

A. I don't remember when I really first heard about the specifics of it. Must have been when everybody else heard about it. You know. When it became -- when the Americans came in and liberated these camps. I think there was a lot of disbelief. And I think parts of me still has that. I mean can you believe such a thing?

PEGGY COSTER: UN-HUN.

A. You can believe it? I find it difficult.

Q. ARE THERE ANY OTHER PEOPLE YOU REMEMBER IN PARTICULAR -- HOW DID YOUR BROTHER HAPPEN TO BE SO FARSIGHTED?

A. He's very intelligent. He is just a very, very politically astute young person. He read the newspaper when he was ten. When I was playing with dolls at age ten, he was already reading the daily paper. He was

just one of these intellectual kids. He wasn't very sporty. He didn't do a lot of daydreaming. Like I spent a lot of my time daydreaming, having a lot of fun. Riding my bicycle, and things like that.

He was very focused on politics very early. He ended up being a labor economist and working for the UN in Geneva for twenty-five years. He's just very politically savvy.

Q. SO LIKE IS THERE ANYBODY IN PARTICULAR THAT YOU REMEMBER, EITHER GOOD OR BAD, THAT JUST STANDS OUT IN YOUR MIND, PEOPLE WHO STAND OUT IN YOUR MIND?

A. You mean when I was a child, or at any time in my life?

Q. ANY TIME.

A. Well, there are a lot of people who have had an influence on me. I have had several surrogate fathers, you know. Men that were a lot older than me who sort of became substitute father figures. Couple of them were European. I think I have always been attracted to people who had this combination of strength and warmth, you know, that weren't just coldly intellectual, or weren't just purely emotional, but were able to combine some of those two qualities. It's nice when you experience it.

Q. IT IS.

A. I think I have been impressed with some of the people I have met in my working life. You know. People who have shown me direction in how to think on

other levels, and who have broadened my ability to operate on different stratas, you know, in the business world, as well as maybe in the arts.

JACOB OFFNER: YOUR HUSBAND STRIKES ME AS BEING A REAL INTERESTING COMBINATION OF THE INTELLECT AND EMOTIONAL.

A. Un-hun.

JACOB OFFNER: DO YOU FEEL THAT'S BEEN HELPFUL TO YOU IN PUTTING SOME OF THESE FEELINGS ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST TO REST AND COME TO TERMS WITH THEM?

A. I don't feel they have come to rest. But maybe I'm dealing with them.

JACOB OFFNER: COMING TO REST?

A. At least they are stirring instead of just sort of sitting there on top of me. Yes, I do believe he's been very helpful. And if I were more willing, he would even be more helpful. I have resisted him for a long time.

PEGGY COSTER: HOW DO YOU MEAN?

A. Well, he wanted me to sort of open up more, and to be more open in general. That's why he took me to Germany. And I have just not been a very willing subject.

And I'll agree with you, Jacob. I think he's had a very good influence on me. Sometimes I think he isn't serious enough. I'm the heavy in the relationship, you know. I'm very serious about everything.

PEGGY COSTER: HOW COME YOU DIDN'T WANT HIM TO BE HERE TODAY?

A. It's not easy for me.

Q. YOU MEAN TO TALK?

A. (Nods head affirmatively).

Q. YOU HAVE TALKED TO HIM ABOUT IT, THOUGH?

A. I have never sat down and talked to him for two hours about it. I mean he gets snatches. And my children get snatches. And my friends get snatches. But it's rare that you really sort of sit down and keep going.

Q. HAS THIS BEEN REAL HARD?

A. Yes, it's hard.

Q. DO YOU WANT US TO STOP?

A. I'm not in agony.

JACOB OFFNER: WHAT IS IT THAT YOU ARE ALLOWING US TO SEE THAT YOU ARE AFRAID TO LET HIM SEE?

A. I don't think I have said anything that he doesn't know. It's just that we have never had long, long stretches of this kind of a conversation or, you know, like I will talk sometimes about this and sometimes about that.

I think the main issue, really, is this larger issue of forgiveness. Is it possible to forgive? And is it only out of forgiveness that something positive can happen? And is the perpetuating of reaction, the negative to the negative, is that just perpetuating more pain, you know.

PEGGY COSTER: WHAT'S THE NEGATIVE TO THE NEGATIVE?

A. The negative is that I'm still full of bad feelings for the Germans. And is that going to just perpetuate more bad feelings by the Germans towards the Jews, or towards their having been guilty. They have certainly been made to feel guilty for a whole generation now, or more.

Q. YOU MEAN THE GERMANS?

A. Yes. And I think nothing ever comes out of guilt. Nothing good comes out of guilt ever. You just hate people who made you feel guilty, don't you? So I don't think anything positive --

JACOB OFFNER: OTHER THAN HAVING A CONSCIENCE.

A. Yeah. I think there must be a lot of German people who feel terrible about what happened, you know, who do have a conscience. And, you know, those are the Germans that we hope will take the upper hand.

PEGGY COSTER: ONE OF THE THINGS I WAS THINKING ABOUT WHEN I WAS ASKING YOU THOSE QUESTIONS WAS THAT, YOU KNOW, RIGHT AFTER THE WAR, AND FOR YEARS, PEOPLE REALLY COULDN'T EXPRESS NAZI PHILOSOPHY OPENLY. BUT THEY COULD TO THEIR CHILDREN. THEY COULD PASS IT ON. SO I WAS KIND OF EXPLORING WHAT YOU MIGHT THINK ABOUT THAT POSSIBILITY.

A. You know, I have never permitted myself to even think along those lines. Because if I would I would

just be very depressed. If I thought that a lot of these, you know, ex-Nazis passed all this hatred and, you know, disgust and this Anti-Semitic kind of feeling on then, you know, why are we here? Why don't we just go and kill ourselves? It would be much easier than to wait for the next time around. I just can't permit myself to dwell on that. Maybe it's stupid. Maybe I'm just sticking my head in the sand. But I do know that there is Anti-Semitism all over the world. You know. There is still people who still think the Jews killed Christ. If they are very religious, they have a perfect reason to be Anti-Semitic, right?

PEGGY COSTER: I UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE SAYING.

A. Yes. Let's face it. There is -- what about all the people who are anti black? You know. They are just as bad. People who think that there are no good blacks. And, you know, you just can't trust them. And there are a few that are educated, and a few that have made it. But most of them, it's the same thing. The human race is a very strange race. We seem to need to pull ourselves up by stepping on somebody else down. You know that's our way of rising. That's not good. We have got to do something about that.

I hope I have raised my kids at least on that level to be decent human beings. And I believe I have. I believe that, you know, if I have accomplished that, then I have at least been a good parent.

JACOB OFFNER: SPEAKING OF THAT, HAVE YOU TALKED MUCH ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST AND YOUR EXPERIENCES AND YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT IT WITH YOUR CHILDREN?

A. No. Not a lot.

JACOB OFFNER: WHAT'S THE REASON FOR THAT?

A. Well, early on I had a wonderful excuse. I didn't want to burden them, quote, unquote, even more, because they already had the experience of their father as a big, you know, negative experience in their lives. So I thought, well, that's enough. And when we first got married, well, neither one of us ever wanted to marry a European. We both had determined when we were young that we would marry only an American. Because we didn't want do relive all these experiences. But, of course, then we -- the opposite happened, you know. You are attracted to somebody who understands you, or something.

So then we decided we would just have the most American kids in the world, and we raised them by Doctor Spock, you know, by the book. And a lot of freedom and not much discipline. And you name it. You know. We were as American as could be. So part of that was not to give them this heavy duty kind of feeling that their parents had suffered. And we were classic. I know that this is what goes on with most people who went through that period. We were no different.

PEGGY COSTER: HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THE

SYNDROME THEY CALL CHILDREN OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS?

A. What kind of syndrome is that?

Q. IT'S A -- THERAPEUTICALLY IT'S BEEN DIAGNOSED AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL ILLNESS, I GUESS, THAT CHILDREN OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS OFTEN EXPERIENCE.

A. And how does that express itself in them?

Q. I DON'T KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT IT TO SAY.

JACOB OFFNER: LET ME TELL. IT'S DONE THROUGH FEELINGS OF FEAR OF LIVING YOUR OWN LIFE. TREMENDOUS FEELINGS OF GUILT ABOUT SEPARATING FROM THE FAMILIES. PHYSICALLY LIVING TOO FAR AWAY. MAKING CHOICES WHICH WOULD WOUND OR HURT THE PARENTS, THOSE KINDS OF THINGS.

PEGGY COSTER: PROTECTING PARENTS. AND IT HAPPENS VERY OFTEN WHEN PARENTS NEVER TALKED ABOUT IT.

A. Well, we do talk about it now. Although I usually wait until I get questions. I don't sit them down and say today we are going to talk about it. But I'm very open to answer questions now. And sort of waiting for them to ask me.

JACOB OFFNER: HOW DO THEY KNOW WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO ASK YOU IF THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT'S IMPORTANT?

A. I have dropped hints in the last couple of years that I'm ready to talk about it now. When I wasn't before.

PEGGY COSTER: WHAT MADE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU WERE READY TO BE INTERVIEWED NOW LIKE AS OPPOSED TO A

MONTH AGO?

A. Basically because John said he has two hours, and he wanted to fill them. I wasn't really any more ready. I just thought I was doing my duty. Here is this man giving his expertise, time, and nothing was happening.

PEGGY COSTER: HOW DID YOU HAPPEN TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE HOLOCAUST CENTER?

A. Someone approached me about ten years ago whether I would make a contribution. And I didn't even know that the library existed. So then I went down there, and I got a little bit more involved in it, and went to a couple of meetings. And, you know. Then Lonny one day called me and asked me whether I wanted to be involved in the Oral History Project. And I said yes.

I really haven't devoted a lot of time to it, but I'd like to. I'm afraid I haven't answered all your questions as well as you'd like me to.

PEGGY COSTER: NO --

A. I'm just trying to be honest, you know, not give you anything that I don't feel.

PEGGY COSTER: NO, YOU HAVE ANSWERED MINE. I HAVE ONE MORE QUESTION. AND WHAT BROUGHT IT UP WAS WHEN YOU SAID THAT FORGIVENESS WAS THE ISSUE. REMEMBER A LITTLE WHILE BACK YOU SAID THAT? I WAS THINKING THAT THIS MUST BE A PROBELEM FOR YOU WHEN YOU DEAL WITH CHRISTIANS. BECAUSE LIKE, YOU KNOW, A LOT OF SURVIVORS I HAVE ENCOUNTERED, THEY DON'T FEEL LIKE IT'S NECESSARY

FOR THEM TO FORGIVE. YET ON THE WHOLE BASIS OF CHRISTIANITY, FORGIVENESS IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST TENETS. I WOULD THINK THAT WOULD CREATE A LOT OF CONFLICT WHEN TRYING TO TALK TO CHRISTIANS.

A. I can honestly tell you that it makes absolutely no difference to me whether I'm talking to a Christian or a Jew when it comes to all those issues It makes a difference to me as to what kind of person it is, because I have just as many problems with Jews as I do with Christians when they have certain aspects to their philosophies or their expressions of feelings on prejudice or hatred or fear. And I think there are just as many Jewish people who are prejudiced as there are Christian people.

So what I have tried to do, and particularly at my work where I have had more opportunity to meet a variety of people, is to try to live as closely to what I believe in as I can so I can impart directly what my feelings are.

PEGGY COSTER: OKAY. WELL, I DON'T HAVE ANY MORE QUESTIONS. DO YOU?

JACOB OFFNER: NO. ACTUALLY JUST A COMMENT, TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, AND THAT WOULD BE -- IT WOULD BE THAT I HAVE TALKED TO A LOT OF SURVIVORS AND CHILDREN. AND YOU REALLY STRIKE ME AS HAVING GONE A LOT DEEPER IN YOUR THINKING ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF ALL OF THESE EXPERIENCES IN YOUR LIFE TO BE ABLE TO ARTICULATE THEM SO CLEARLY. AND THAT'S VERY EXCITING. AND I HOPE

THAT YOU NEVER STOP IT, AND THAT YOU CONTINUE.

A. Thank you. I hope so too. I'm just starting. Have a little ways to go.

PEGGY COSTER: THANKS A LOT.

A. Thank you.

JACOB OFFNER: THANK YOU.

A. This is a ruin, this little town of Landau where we used to hike on weekends.

JACOB OFFNER: WHY DON'T I GRAB IT AS LONG AS WE ARE SO CLOSE.

A. Do you want to? I got it right now. That's amazing. Okay. And this is a picture of my dad who was a soldier fighting for the Germans in World War One. He was a very sensitive man who did not enjoy wearing a uniform. But he did it.

JACOB OFFNER: OKAY.

A. This is an old etching of the center square in the little town of Landau where they had a market every Wednesday and Friday that my mom took me to where we bought vegetables and things.

JACOB OFFNER: THIS IS THE LANDAU THAT YOU KNEW? THIS IS HOW IT LOOKED?

A. No. This is older than that. But it's exactly the same square. And when I was there, all those buildings are still there. Okay, John?

JOHN GRANT: SURE.

A. And then the other thing I wanted to say, a lot of the German Jews have lived in Germany for hundreds of

years. And felt, because of that, very German. Maybe more German than Jewish, a lot of them.

And these are my mother's grandparents. And apparently their family had already been there for several hundred years. So you are talking about an established Jewish community in that part of Germany.

JACOB OFFNER: THIS IS YOUR MOTHER'S GRANDPARENTS?

A. This is my mother's grandmother and father.

JACOB OFFNER: OKAY.

A. That sort of explains why some of the German Jews had trouble leaving. They felt that they belonged there as much as the non-Jews did. But they found out otherwise.

PEGGY COSTER: I WOULD HAVE A HARD TIME IF PEOPLE TOLD ME I WASN'T A REAL AMERICAN.

A. Would you leave?

PEGGY COSTER: I WOULD AFTER HEARING ALL THESE STORIES.

JOHN GRANT: OKAY. GREAT. THANK YOU.