Interview with ALICE STALLER
Holocaust Oral History Project
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BY SUSAN MONTROSE:

Q I AM SUSAN MONTROSE WITH THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, AND I AM TALKING TODAY WITH ALICE STALLER.

JOINING ME TOO, IS TAMI NEWNHAM FOR THE INTERVIEW, AND I GUESS WE COULD START JUST BY ASKING YOU TO TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT WHERE AND WHEN YOU WERE BORN, AND SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR FAMILY, WHO YOUR PARENTS WERE, BROTHERS AND SISTERS. TELL US ABOUT YOUR LIFE IN THE BEGINNING.

A Okay. In the beginning was July 25, 1923, which was a bad day because all the years -- throughout all the years, I never had a birthday party because everybody was out of town on vacation, and that stays in my mind clearly.

In Europe, it gets very hot in Vienna. I was born in Vienna, and people go away to the country during the school vacation, and that's it. So that was one side of the story.

My parents, strangely enough, were themselves refugees coming out of the greater Austria/Hungarian Empire after World War I. My father was an officer in the Kaiser's army. He lost an older brother in World War I, none of which impressed the Austrian Nazis years later. My mother came out of Lemberg in Poland, and I assume they met in Vienna, fell in love, and got married.

It was never discussed. It's one of the things that someone just recently asked me about, and I can't believe I never asked them; but my mother's family came with her. They were all -- they left everything. They were all refugees in Vienna, and started life anew. So they had really gone through a lot that I didn't know about until much later in life, and life was very tough in those days.

There were depression years. My father was a journalist who had to free-lance because he was a Jew. He worked for a -- the most influential newspaper in Austria, the (Reist Post), which was, of course, Catholic like everything else run in Austria; and they asked him to convert so that they could put him on the payroll, and he refused to do that, and so he free-lanced.

He had -- he covered, actually the-- he was a journalist in economics. He covered the (Danube basins), and he traveled a lot around central Europe; and my mother stayed at home and took care of me.

It was very difficult to find places to live. We had a very small apartment, and life was pretty precarious; but my parents were very eager to give me the best in life, and they really did.

The local public school, the elementary school I went to was a very good school run in true European fashion. March style. And then I went to a private school called the (savachva chulay), which was run by a Dr. Eugene

(Shratzsvauld), who was supposedly a leader in a head of her time in terms of education for women. I also was supposed to go to learn the hotel trade in Switzerland, where you had to be signed up years ahead. That's what I was told.

Of course, all of that fell apart as time went on. In 1938, we had to move out as the Nazis marched into Vienna. We had to move out of our apartment because we were fronting Main Avenue, and we couldn't -- we didn't put any flags in the windows. We were told to move out immediately, and we went to live with my aunt and uncle in another part of town; and our belongings were packed up and sent to Switzerland for storage.

My father had received a visa to go to Switzerland professionally, to do some work for the paper, and he had spent a full day at the police station fighting, saying that he would not accept a red "J" in his passport; which every Jew leaving they had stamped in the passport and also sign that he wasn't going to come back. He never had the intention of coming back, but he wasn't going to sign the -- stood up for himself and by some miracle, they let him go and he left.

We were supposed to follow him to Switzerland, but that never materialized. They dragged their feet on our visas. So meanwhile, my mother and I were living with my aunt and uncle. A lot of Jewish emigres from all around the countryside were streaming into Vienna. My aunt had -- was

spilling running a (panziown), and was just doubling up on people coming in to give them, you know, shelter.

One night there was a knock on the door, and some SA troops stood outside and -- it was the middle of the night, and they took all the men away and --

Q WHEN WAS THIS?

A -- when?

Q IN '38? ARE WE STILL IN '38?

A In '38, yes, going into -- yes. I left in May '39. So this is late '38. Around Kristalnacht, during that time.

Q AND THEY TOOK ALL THE MEN?

A They took all the men, and then the older men. My two uncles came back after spending a night in the police station, and my cousin never returned. He was sent to Dachau, and he was there for some months; and then he turned up one night at the door. His head was all shaven, and he had a big scar. He had had some kind of surgery on his neck, and I don't know. They let him out. He refuses to talk about it. He is still -- he is alive, living in New York. He can't go back into that time period.

They let him out, and he then attempted two illegal trips to get across the border. He was shot at one time, came back, and then made it the second time; and ended up somehow in the United States.

Meanwhile, somebody in -- in the group of people who were coming in -- somebody -- we were all networking,

exchanging information. Someone told us about some American who had given affidavits to emigrate; and so I wrote to this man also and -- oh, I had written to Mrs. Roosevelt before and sent her a photograph, you know, show her what a nice young girl I was; and wouldn't she like to rescue all of us?

So anyway, I wrote to this man, and lo and behold, he -- he agreed to send affidavits. I -- I wrote and told him we would never make any demands on him. We just wanted to get out, and he sent affidavits. But time was running out. It -- I went to the U.S. embassy every day because -- meantime, I had had to leave school. You know, we were just sort of floating around in space, and nothing worked out. So my mother got a job as a housekeeper in London, and got a visa that way.

Between my mother and my father, they went to see someone they knew they -- they, the Jewish community in Vienna, who was at that time working to get children out -- Kinder Transports that started, and this man promised her that I would get onto the next train.

So she left because her visa had run out, and they had renewed it, the people in London; but they would not renew it again. They needed a housekeeper, and they weren't going to wait for her. So she had to leave, and she left me behind with my aunt and uncle.

This man followed through, and I truly got on the next train out when Britain was accepting children, and my aunt and uncle took me to the train; and off I went.

NOW WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT BRITAIN WAS ACCEPTING CHILDREN?

A Britain was -- there is a program that Lord -- Lord Samuels, I think. There were a couple of people in the British government who made -- who arranged for 10,000 children to be accepted. Different people volunteered to provide for them. Some of the children went to camps and were then distributed, quote unquote.

My father had worked for the British magazine PUNCH during the time of King Edward's coronation, which then fell apart. But meantime, he had made some connection with people, and a group of people -- he must have written to someone. A group of people said they would pay into a fund and take care of me so that I could continue my education. So there was, apparently, a group commitment; and they were going to take care of me once I got there.

There were -- there was -- last year, we had a reunion in Britain of all the Kinder. There is a woman by the name of Bertha (Levershon), who herself was one of the Kinder who organized an international meeting, and people came from all ends of the world to attend; and a couple of Sundays ago, we had a meeting here in -- in Berkeley, and of children of Kinder who came out of the woodwork. People who I didn't realize that there were also Kinder Transports going to the United States.

At the time, I was told I was getting the last train out, but apparently, there was some trains afterwards;

and that went into December of 1939. I got out in May '39, and --

Q SO YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN 16?

A -- let's see -- '23 -- I was going to be 16 in July. Yes, I was 15.

Q SO YOU --

A I was absolutely at the -- at the end.

Q -- BARELY KINDER?

A Right, barely Kinder. Right.

Q AND WHERE WERE YOU IN SCHOOL AT THAT POINT?

A I had finished the gymnasium, the four years, and I had just started a (hundel sackadamee); which is -- a (hundel) is a trade academy to learn trade, like international commerce; which was in Vienna, and I barely finished a term. I didn't finish a term there. When I came to England, I went to school called Micheal Hall, which is part of the Rudolph Steiner schools. We have some here. The Waldorf schools, and I finished in less than two months there.

Q BEFORE WE GO, I WANT TO HEAR WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU GOT TO ENGLAND. I WANT TO GO BACK A LITTLE BIT BEFORE 1938, AND TO THE EXTENT THAT YOU CAN RECAPTURE THE QUALITY OF LIFE. WHAT WAS IT LIKE IN THOSE YEARS? AUSTIRA, IT SOUNDS, WAS ALREADY PRETTY ANTI-SEMITIC.

A Austria was very anti-Semitic. My -- my cousin who ended up having to go to the (sir bon) to get his Ph.D.,

could not get a teaching job with a public school in Vienna; and he left and just never came back -- didn't see his parents. He went on to serve in the British forces, landed in (done kirk) with -- it was very anti-Semitic; no doubt about it.

I didn't personally have problems, strangely enough, when I was in school just before the Nazis came in. I had a very, very good friend, (Erica Lindameyer), who came in one morning and said, "My parents don't want me to associate with you anymore." And you know, that was the end. Everybody turned up with the swastika on the lapel.

Of course I was in school probably about three or four days after the Nazis came and just, you know, I was totally out of it. I don't know whether I just didn't attend any more or whether we were told not to come back. I have blocked out an enormous amount of stuff from those days. I realize that, but I had a friend going back to elementary school days who lived in the apartment below us, and I spent a lot of time in their apartment, you know, with together -- and found out afterwards her father was a police officer, and you know, a regular police officer; and he had a picture turned around, hanging over his desk; and like a lot of other people, it turned out that he was an illegal Nazi. But he knew I was Jewish and he never had any objection to his child associating with me.

Everybody had a good Jew, but as a whole group, we were for the birds.

BY TA[redacted]NEWNHAM:

Q WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHEN YOU SAY, "EVERYONE WAS WEARING SWASTIKAS?" DO YOU MEAN THE CHILDREN OR -- I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

A He -- are you talking about the picture on the wall?

Q NO, NO WHEN YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT BEING A KID, AND THE NAZIS CAME AND --

A Well, when they came, the children all turned out with, you know, like we have a yellow ribbon now. Everybody put a swastika on their lapel just to be sure they were on the right side. I don't think (Erica's) parents were Nazis. I don't think she was. As I remember the quality of people, but everyone wanted to identify in safety. There were few people who stuck their necks out and there were a few people who really paid back, quote unquote, on -- there were a lot of maids who came in -- it was a different world to anything that -- that, you know, that you can relate to today. There were -- Vienna was a very cosmopolitan city. It was a remnant of a huge empire, and it had become a huge cosmopolitan city in a very provincial, small Austria; and there were a lot of young women who wanted to come to the city who came as -- as maids and who were literally -- came off the farm and were, you know, trained by -- by the people and raised to some degree of sophistication of life in the city; and a lot of them turned around and turned their

employers in for whatever reasons. Those were stories I heard -- Just plain ill-will.

There were people in the building where my aunt lived who, you know, just overnight donned the uniform, and came with a push card and just, you know, went in and took whatever they wanted. I mean it was -- it was so unreal that, you know, there was. One was completely overwhelmed.

It was like night and day. A turnaround of life. The total framework was gone. Everything was gone.

BY SUSAN MONTROSE:

Q WHAT I AM TRYING TO UNDERSTAND -- BECAUSE IT SOUNDS AS THOUGH THERE WAS ALREADY THE REAL ANTI-SEMITIC ENVIRONMENT. WHAT WAS THE RESPONSE WHEN THE NAZIS ACTUALLY SORT OF MADE OVERT, WHAT MAY HAVE BEEN A LITTLE MORE SUBTLE, REALLY SOUNDS LIKE THROUGHOUT YOUR GROWING UP PERIOD?

A Well, yes, but I didn't -- you see children were very protected in those days, particularly female daughters. I mean, you didn't talk in front of the children, and we really didn't know what was going on.

I marvel thinking back these days, we are so -- we are so conscious of being Jewish and feeling good about it here. There it was a question of don't make any waves who are close to the wall.

My parents were trying very hard to assimilate, you know, it was -- it was a very different life. It was a life within the family. I don't remember my parents having the kind of social exchange, you know, the couples getting

together and doing things. My father was a cafe person. He liked to read the papers and play cards.

In Europe, there is a cafe society, and he was a part of that, but my mother was not. She was totally home-oriented. She spent hours baking a cake that was absolutely perfect in decoration, and demolished it in three minutes. She was extremely house-proud.

We were very poor when I first grew up because the income was very irregular being free-lance. A little later on, she was able to find a bigger apartment. It was very hard to find apartments. You had to pay money to buy an apartment to rent. I mean I think that still goes on in Europe. When she did, she was -- we were finally able to have a young woman come in and help her out. She used to send her to the movies with me to Shirly Temple films while she repolished. You know, that was kind of nuts as I look back at it, but also I wasn't allowed to go to anything other than Shirly Temple movies. Upbringing was very strict.

Q WHAT WAS YOUR RELIGION?

A It was mostly family -- we had religious instruction of course in school, because in Catholic Austria, religion is part of the state teaching; and everybody had their own hour of religion. Their own denomination. Confessionalists could just sit the time out. We had a rabbi come in, Dr. (Tiglisht), who taught us; and we went to -- mother and I went to services Friday night.

Of course, it was all orthodox, and I was actually confirmed in at the synagogue, at the main synagogue in Vienna.

There was a -- there was a second -- called a second district where there were a lot of Jew -- orthodox Jews, you know, with (st:iemal) and the (peyos); and there was a division.

We -- there was a difference. They were looked down upon within the Jewish community. I was very conscious of the family striving to be as German as Austrian as the Austrians.

I read a book a friend gave me. A book by (George Clair), who is a Vienese-born writer of a truly Vienese family; and when I read that book, I realized how he was Vienese, but I really wasn't. I was the -- I was born in Vienna, but I was raised by parents by -- by newcomers. It was -- his life was very different to mine. It was the established -- the Vienese Jewish aristocracy, and they lived very differently; and that point of view, their outlook was different to ours.

Q THIS IS A BOOK YOU READ RECENTLY?

A Recently. Yes, yes. So I'm sort of looking back at it and looking at -- we were sort of on the fringes on the edges. There are some very amusing comparisons to be made. For instance, there were no bathrooms in Vienna as part of the house. One went to public baths. There was no printed toilet paper. The newspapers were cut up and used

beautifully; but we were raised to go to the opera, to the theater. A complete divergence from life our children have here where we live with television. There, the emphasis was on -- on a different sort of culture, and time by the children was spent playing together in the park. There was homework, there were bitter tears. My mother used to tear up my book if I didn't do the thing right -- my exercise book, and I had to sit there and redo it all while the other children were allowed to play. It was a very, very strict upbringing, and it's reflected in some of what my children tell me today that I taught them how -- how to better take care of others than of themselves. I look back and I realize that was the way I was raised, in the very straight and narrow fashion.

Q YOU WERE AN ONLY CHILD?

A I was an only child, yes. Right. I had my mother's entire attention. My -- my mother was one of four children, and her oldest sister, her second sister lived in Vienna; and we spent a lot of time visiting. Her oldest brother lived in Vienna, but her oldest sister had married a man who ran a farm in Czechoslovakia; and you know, from Vienna it takes two-and-half hours in the train to be in another nation. So every summer, we the children, were all packed off to go to Aunt (Berta's) farm and spend the summer there. And those were really the highlights of my memories of the huge groups of people and the big farm and working in the fields, and getting paid with the farm workers by my

uncles who spoiled me rotten; but I was the youngest of them all, and it was great fun, and that was because I was a child. When I look back at how the people lived, it probably wasn't so much fun to have to carry buckets of water to the house, and cook with wood and -- yeah. But it was a healthy life.

So I -- I really didn't get into the fancy -- into the fancy summer vacation places that some of the kids went to or go skiing or any of that sort of stuff, but lots of concerts and opera, and theater, and walks.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER AT WHAT POINT YOU BEGAN TO BE AWARE THAT THINGS WERE GETTING SERIOUS?

A Yeah. Pretty early in 1938.

Q WAS THERE A PARTICULAR INCIDENT THAT YOU CAN REMEMBER, OR WAS IT JUST SORT OF BUILDING?

A It was the -- they march in -- it was -- yeah, we were on -- on the -- main Vienna has an inner city that used to have a big wall to protect it, but now it's just a very wide boulevard, and we lived on facing that boulevard, and it was -- they were marching, you know, six, eight deep, night and day; and the red flags, the swastikas were hanging everywhere, and it was like a blood of sea -- a sea of blood I should say. It was -- it was just overwhelming. We -- we were not a part of it, and you know, that -- that was --

Q DID PEOPLE EXPECT VERY MUCH THAT THEY WERE GOING TO COME OR --

-- yeah, there was -- we were glued to the radio at that point night and day, yes, so there was knowledge of what was happening. Schuschnigg, the Chancellor, tried very hard to change things around to stop the (anchelos), but I was a very naive young women at that point. I mean I -- I realize there was trouble, but I didn't know enough about the intricacies of politics, international or domestic. It was just happening right there. I hadn't known about Hitler in Germany. I mean it is amazing to me that -- I mean some people knew and they left, and it seems to me that my father must have known being in the newspaper business, but people were saying, "No, it can't happen to me. It can't happen here. I didn't do anything wrong."

It was -- it was out of this world. It was like from another planet, you know? Life had just gone on in a fashion before, and suddenly, it just stopped and everything was just upside down.

My aunt and uncle from Czechoslovakia could have gone to Canada as farmers. They were looking for farmers. They said, "Why should we? You know we've lived a normal life here. We haven't done anything wrong." It was, you know, you would have had to follow the (Wannsee Conference) to know what was going on. I don't know what was going on in the diplomatic world outside. Nobody gave out any warnings; but some people, it appears really weren't taking any chances and got out, and in some fashion, we did too eventually.

My aunt and uncle didn't survive. None of them. None of the rest of the family. Just some cousins. So, I don't know -- and the thing that amazes me most of all is that there was no talk about going to Palestine. You know, I wish I had know about that. I would have loved to have been among that first group.

Q YOUR FATHER DECIDED TO GO TO SWITZERLAND SOON AFTER THEY MARCHED INTO VIENNA?

A Well, he was looking for any way out, right. It so happened that all the trouble he went through not to get his "J" stamped, I think in the end caught up with him because he went to Switzerland. Our van, with our belongings, went into storage there, and then daddy went to Paris to do some work; and there he was picked up when the French turned in all the Austrian and German people as enemy aliens. And so he was picked up in turn, and finally couldn't get out anymore -- finally ended up in (Ziereis, Franz), in two concentration camps in France. I don't know whether having the "J" stamped in there would have made him less of an enemy alien. I don't know, but it was -- it was sort of a waste of -- of time taking the risk to not have the stamp. He never got out of France, and he spent his years there.

He ended up being alive, broadcasting on some local radio station from the campsite, and my mother had contracted a serious illness, meanwhile, and had to have

surgery, and so he got permission on compassionate grounds to come and visit us. The British would not let him stay.

Q THIS WAS WHEN?

A This was after the war.

Q '45?

A When did the war end? '45 -- sure between '45, '46. Took some months for him -- for us to get permission for him to be able to come over, and when we saw that skeleton walking up, we wanted to keep him there. Without job, without ration, books, you know, just to stay under our roof; and so we kept on asking for permission to extend the visa, and we had detectives come to the house night and day. It was really a nightmare time.

They would not let him stay and finally, he had to go back to Vienna, and there he had a heart attack, collapsed, and died on the sidewalk while he was trying to check up on our stuff that had been sent back to Vienna because we couldn't get money out during the war to pay for the storage. So they shipped everything back to Vienna; and there is only one auction place in Vienna, and there was no record of any transaction; and my father was a very stubborn man, but on top of that, it was also, you know, the only thing we had of any property.

We had no business that, you know, would have enabled us to kind of start her going again or him, and so he really was very aggravated; and I guess that caused a heart attack. So I just never saw him after that.

His stay in London with us was a nightmare. A true nightmare because he -- he was getting -- he was getting pretty paranoid from coming out from the camps, and having to go through all of this just did not compute with him. He couldn't understand it, and we were trying to -- we had reactivated our American visa situation at that point, and we were trying to get us all back together in the United States since they wouldn't let him come and stay in England; and we were all going to emigrate.

But of course, that didn't work out. He died in Vienna, and then my mother and I decided to pursue the emigration to the United States anyway because her brother was here at that point, and so we did.

Q SO ALL OF YOUR BELONGINGS ESSENTIALLY --

A Gone.

Q -- DISAPPEARED?

A Right.

Q AND YOU NEVER GOT ANY OF THAT BACK?

A Yeah.

Q SO LET'S GO BACK TO WHERE I INTERRUPTED YOU BEFORE. IT'S 1938, AND YOU ARE ON WHAT MAY HAVE BEEN THE LAST KINDER TRANSPORT TO ENGLAND.

A At that point, it -- I was told it was, but fortunately, there were others.

Well, I got the train from Vienna to Holland, and there took the boat across the channel; and I, with a whole group of other children, and as the other Kinder talked

about it. I realized I was absolutely blank. I remember the trains going through the night and stopping at different stations, and the blinds going up and the window coming down, and people would hand us bars of chocolate or something like that. It was just like a -- a dead silent journey into the night, and I don't remember any detail.

Q WERE YOU FRIGHTENED?

A No, I think I was just numb. Absolutely numb. You know, I mean it had been one thing on top of another, and it was sort of the whole parent felt like going through limbo and waiting for life to begin at some point. In London, they tell me that numbers were called out; that we all had numbers on us, and I don't remember that at all. I just remember this older woman coming up to pick me up, and God bless her, I remember feeling slightly embarrassed because she was a -- slightly embarrassed because she was a really old fashioned-looking lady; a Quaker lady, who had arranged for me to be living with another woman.

Apparently, she had taken charge, so to speak, and was gathering funds or information from all this group of people whom I never learned about or met; and she -- her name was -- what was her name? (Elsa West). She took me to -- to Miss (Molly's), where I had room and board, and I started off to school; and I knew English. I had had English for three years in -- in school, so I could speak clearly. I could communicate well enough, but it was still -- it was academic English, you know, and I put on my -- my

best dress for school, which I thought would impress everybody; and my (dindel) was the typical Austrian dress, which really wasn't like me, but I guess I felt very foreign about the whole thing.

Anyway, I put this on, which has a little apron, you know, a full skirted dress with a little apron; and the kids came up to me and offered their hand and said, "When are you going to do the dishes?" Looked at me as though I was a skull remain. It was very strange.

This was a school where it was a mixed group. Some of them were boarding school, and some of them were day schoolers; and of course, they were mixed boys and girls; and I had come from a strictly segregated school environment in Europe. The whole thing was totally strange and alien, but there were -- there were two boys there from Germany, and sharing sort of a similar fate; and school was out and we -- we all went on vacation for the summer. This school, the boarding school part took students with on vacation to the countryside.

There was all this war stuff brewing, of course. This is in summer of '39. My mother, in the meantime was working as a housekeeper in London at someone's home, and I went off as school finished. They took me along, and I worked for my keep. I mean, this was for my summer. There was nobody -- there was no academic school here, and there was nobody to pay for me; and so I went along as an old pear, as you might say, as a helper; and then the war broke.

As the war broke out, as they got closer to that, the school did not go back to London. They evacuated to another town away from where they expected the Blitz, or whatever was going to happen, and the people who were going to support me, all evacuated into everywhere. Nobody was left, so I had no school support, and I continued working as a maid at that joint; and that went on for a while until I don't know what happened. Something made me very unhappy, and somehow I must have gone to someone in the village who let me phone my mother. I told her I had no money and she sent me some money and a railroad to buy a railroad ticket to come and stay with her. She had gotten permission for me to stay with her in the house until I got settled.

When I told them at the school -- the school was run by a headmaster and his wife, and she was a very crippled lady with rheumatoid arthritis in a wheelchair, and a very angry woman.

It turned out at that point that he had given her half a crown weekly pocket money for me, which she had never passed on to me, so yeah, it was --

BY TAMI NEWNHAM:

Q WHO? THE HUSBAND?

A Yeah, her husband, Mr. (Sheen). So he was a very nice, nice man, but just simply assumed that she was taking care of that. Anyway, I went off, and I stayed with my mother and I helped her; and then I looked for a job --

never occurred to me to continue my education to find out how to continue my education.

I was very close to my mother, and very much caught up in the whole tragedy of my father. He lived miles away in the concentration camp, not knowing what had happened to the rest of the family.

My mother a domestic and, you know, I -- I found a room to rent nearby, and basically spent every evening of my life for a long, long time after that with her, helping her in the kitchen, or whatever. Life was just totally unlike anything one would expect life to be for a young person.

In order to find a job, I had to prove that there was no -- no British gal available. No British person available for the position, and finally, I found what I thought was a job that turned out had been taken by somebody else who came for the interview earlier; and they offered me a job of running a canteen, a small canteen in some insurance business; and so I took that on, and I called my mother everday how to cook, what do I do now kind of thing and got through that. And that sort of finished after a while, and I decided that I really needed to get an office job; and found something in downtown London through my mother's employer. He had a business downtown and employed me as an apprentice, and that's how I learned.

Life for me as a young woman -- life was totally at a standstill. I know there was a lot of life going on in London during the war. It was not my cup of tea. I went to

work, and I came home, and I realized when I had teenaged children that I was totally unfit for identifying with what it's like to be a teenager. I really felt lost.

BY SUSAN MONTROSE:

Q SO, YOU DIDN'T HAVE FRIENDS IN LONDON?

A Not many, no. I had some friends, and I had -- I had a friend -- made friends with an older woman with whom -- whom I still visit. She's in her 80's now, and I went back to London I visited her, but it was -- it was not the kind of, you know, life that you lead. The friends you have with your school friends -- with a group with a peer group. It was just a totally unsuitable, really life. It was an unsuitable situation.

Q DID ANYTHING HAPPEN IN TERMS OF YOUR RELIGIOSITY AT THAT TIME? DID YOU TURN MORE TOWARD OR AWAY FROM RELIGION?

A No, no. A very interesting thing actually happened. I mean I -- I remember feeling there must be something wrong with me, that all these things can happen to someone -- I was working for a very, very lovely human being, a man. As his secretary, and he was a devout Catholic; and we had a lot of philosophical conversations during air raid sirens, and so on, at work time out; and I began to go -- he -- he sort of urged me to just find out more about the Catholic religion, that it was very satisfying to him; and I began to go to a priest to find out -- to get some information, and I realized I was searching

for idealism, and whatever. I was a very idealistic person, and of course, could not -- could not accept the teaching of the church. There are some wonderful aspects, the humanity of the idealism, but no.

My mother, on the other hand, was raised by an orthodox mother who had a -- wore a (sheitel), but her father kind of pooh-poohed it, and she said, you know, it doesn't mean anything to her to take a cake of soap and have the rabbi say a (brocha) over it; and it changes it. She didn't believe in that, and we went to the temple in London to the synagogue there a couple of times. She didn't like it at all.

The synagogue in Vienna was very respectful, and there is a world of difference between central Eastern -- central Eastern Europe and London. It's already a freeing up of humanity in Vienna. It was very much, you know, according to the rules; whereas over there, people talked, the women chatted a lot, and it was noisy, and they were not really paying attention.

She was very judgemental, and I bought all of that; and a lot of my mother has rubbed off on me, and we didn't go.

We were not a part of the religious community. However, my mother received a lot of help after she got very severely disabled -- sick, and her employer asked me to remove her things from his house. His wife was an invalid, and he needed a housekeeper. He couldn't have an invalid

housekeeper, so he asked me to remove her things from his house. He asked me to find another place for her, and I found a little apartment for us to live in.

It was very heavily involved. Jewish people who owned a business in the area where we lived who really helped her get on her feet with some piece work, and then teaching her how to become an alteration hand.

They had a women's dress store, and that's what she did -- learned to do as a living, but she didn't want to have anything to do with the Jewish refugees. There was (Broomsbury House), which was kind of the hub of the emigre world; and my mother stayed away, independently.

She didn't want any handouts. She didn't want any charity. She wanted to work, and if she had to work as a maid, she'd work as a maid. She was very independent, and so we really didn't have any contact with -- with the other -- our peer group, so to speak.

Q WHY DO YOU SUPPOSE THAT IS?

A Oh, I think part of it was pride, part of it was her insecurity. We never talked about it. We didn't talk about the past. It was as though by not talking about it, we would make it go away.

My whole -- my whole energy as I look back has been not at denying it, but not dwelling on it. Just pretending, you know, life goes on and it's without -- it's taken me this long to realize how much I've been effected

for the rest of my life; but at that time, it was kind of a denial.

I don't know what her real reason was. I don't think she would have been capable of really telling me the truth. She may not have known herself. She had, you know, really gone through quite a bit herself in her own youth; and then again, and just when things kind of began to look up, the Nazis came and everything just fell apart. So we just didn't dwell on it.

We made the best of every day as it came along, and my mother was all for, you know, women getting married. So she really didn't encourage me to go after an education. She was more concerned about really me spending time with her being family, and I have some resentment about that, that I've never been able to deal with. I certainly have to take responsiblity for it, but I didn't know any better.

So when we came over here, she -- she had to come -- we were all, of course, born of different quotas. American, I don't know. I believe it's changed now days, but when we came over, American emigration was based on the land of origin; and so my father was from Romania, and my mother from Poland, and I was from Austria; and every country had a different number of emigre quotas -- number of persons.

So my mother's turn came up first. My father was dead at that point. My mother's turn came up, and she had to leave again and go first; and poor woman had to go in

winter when just looking at the ocean made her seasick, and so she landed in New York to -- I remember there was snow over above the mailboxes.

I came in July and had an absolutely wonderful time coming over on the ocean liner. So we were pretty close coming together.

BY TAMI NEWNHAM:

Q WHAT YEAR WAS THIS?

A I came over in July '49, and she came over December '48; and interesting thing was that I had met a very interesting -- there was a -- a black, a tall black man, because I had never met or really seen black people at that point. There weren't any in Europe, and I hadn't seen any in England; and we had -- he was a professor of music at Howard University, and we had some wonderful talks and walks on the boat; and when we landed in New York, my mother and my uncle were waiting for me, you know, way over there.

We were going through the customs, and they saw this black man come over and talk to me, and he had come over and gave him my mother's phone number where I was going to stay and wanted to get in touch. The first thing I was quized about was, one doesn't do that here.

In six months she had already learned enough prejudice, which was just amazing, looking back. With all the best intentions in the world, she was taking care of me.

So I began life as mother was working as a housekeeper in New York, to a very wealthy lady in a

penthouse in Manhattan, and I became -- began life in New York as a governess to three -- three children in a pretty well-to-do family where the lady of the house was from Spanish aristocracy, and the maids in the house were from Columbia, and only spoken Spanish; and so I learned Spanish.

I have a good aptitude for picking up language, and so in order to communicate with them, I learned Spanish; and that was fun. We went down for the summer to a house in Long Island by the water, and then I got tired of being a governess and decided it was time I went back and got a real job; and Mrs. (Murphy) was real nice and let me stay there while I went through secretarial while I kind of -- to learn the local ropes. Then I found my own place, and found a job in the city.

BY SUSAN MONTROSE:

Q WAS IT HARD TO FIND THAT FIRST JOB?

A It was very hard. I had a very British accent, and I was turned down because the man in Texas would not understand what I was saying. Yeah, British-speaking secretaries became the rage after, but I was turned down. Yeah, and let's see, I stayed in New York nine years too long; and then came out to San Francisco on vacation, and absolutely fell in love with the city; went back and quit and moved, and here I've been ever since.

Q SO, YOU -- YOU STARTED THE TRAINING FOR SECRETARIAL SCHOOL SOMEWHERE AROUND '49 OR '50?

A Well, it was a refresher. I had worked as a secretary in London, but I thought it would be a good idea to get the local color in the local school, and I worked for -- for someone in the city, and then decided that I really had never liked life in New York; and when I found out that there was a San Francisco, that was for me.

Q YOU FOUND OUT A LOT EARLIER THAN A LOT OF OTHER PEOPLE.

A I found out early, much to my mother's chagrin. I can hear her say, "Millions of people live in New York, why do you have to be different?" You know?

Q SO YOU LEFT YOUR MOTHER IN --

A Left my mother in New York, and I told her I would send for her as soon as I was settled, and she didn't believe me; but she was out here three months later.

New York was miserable even then, but San Francisco was wonderful then, and it has changed some. 101 was a two-lane road when I moved out here, and there was nothing in Tiburon. It was countryside, but the thing that was wonderful was people in Union Square, when you asked them a question, they actually stopped to answer and usually also gave you a correct answer. We couldn't count on that in New York. It was just a completely different lifestyle. I had a cousin who moved out here, who settled out here, and that was also kind of a nice reaching out spot.

In New York, I was -- I had a fun time with a bunch of other refugees, young people, you know. We are

still in touch. We rented a place at a lake and used to go out for the weekends there, and had some fun, but it just -- it has never seemed like whatever normal -- a normal life seems to me.

I think it's left its mark on all of us. More serious, different. I don't know, one can't generalize. Maybe I should just speak for myself.

Q -- WELL, YOU LIVED IN MANY DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS?

A Yes.

Q YOUR HOME CHANGED, AND HERE YOU ARE. FROM HERE, DO YOU FIND NOW THAT YOU HAVE SOME CONNECTIONS IN YOUR PRESENT LIFE TO THAT PAST, OTHER PEOPLE WITH SIMILAR BACKGROUNDS, PEOPLE EMIGRATING, PEOPLE WHO HAD TO LEAVE, OR DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU LEFT THAT BEHIND YOU?

A No, there is an almost sickening aspect to the fact that -- sickening in the sense that I have nothing but dislike for what -- what happened, and yet there is a yearning. I feel ripped off for not, you know -- I keep asking myself what does it mean to be of a certain nationality or to be born in a place? I never really got to understand what the country of my birth was all about, or my language. I haven't spoken German since I left Vienna.

In England we were not -- we were cautioned not to speak German by the police, because it was an enemy language; and that was pretty obvious to follow, and I just simply never got into speaking German. It stood for everything that was ugly in my life, but as I get older, I

realize that there is a lot of beauty, you know, in German books that I have not read; and life there -- Vienna is a beautiful city, and there is a lot of wonderful history there, you know, that I can't know anything about.

So in a sense, I feel robbed, you know, of a lot. There is an attraction. There is a yearning for something that I really dislike. It's sort of a Catch 22.

I went back one time to find my father's grave, and it was a dead city for me. My mother's parents are burried there, and my father is burried there; and I went back. There was no one there alive for me. There is one school friend there who, she lived through war, and she certainly is a focus. I know some people who went back who are doing business there. I couldn't. I just couldn't handle there. I mean everything would just come right up and choke me. I could not live there, but there is -- there is a feeling of being a European that I can't deny that is there, and it's as though I've lost something.

Q DOES IT MAKE YOU NOT FEEL A PART OF AMERICAN CULTURE? SORT OF THE UNDERSIDE OF IT?

A No, I -- I appreciate America immensely. I appreciate America far more than someone born here because I've known, you know, the -- what it means. They -- the freedom and the life we have here is something I wish people would appreciate. They don't. None of you were born here really appreciate it, and yet, I feel that you know, it

makes me angry to see so much of it thrown away. I don't know whether that makes sense to you.

Q NO, I UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE SAYING. A RELATED QUESTION THAT COMES TO ME, EVEN TO MIND, YOU ALLUDED TO THAT YOU HAVE FAMILY. AT SOME POINT YOU MARRIED, I ASSUME. YOU HAVE HOW MANY CHILDREN?

A Three, yeah.

Q AND SO --

A I have two daughters and a son, and I married an American man; and we just didn't make it. We were married for 14 years and didn't grow closer, grew apart; and my ex-husband went through some problems in the hippie years, and I raised the three children myself.

I went back to work, and when he found himself and went back to work, he helped support us; but they were hard years, and I don't know at what went wrong.

I think looking back at it now, it's been many years ago -- we separated in '72. I think that I, you know, I think that I want to say flawed, because in some way, we are all flawed; but I think that I just -- I don't know. That life -- my experiences just did something to me that my personality that I was not aware of. I mean, I've read enough about people who -- who have gone through much worse trouble than I have, and it just sort of does something to your personality, and I can't really put my finger on it, but I am probably -- I've been called a heavy, and I probably am. I take things seriously. I don't know. I

guess we -- we just divorced for whatever reasons, and we are good friends now; and I think the children have two -- two decent parents.

They are all grown, but it's sad. I wanted nothing as much as a family, you know, when I got my own family; and I think, you know, one of the things that I am learning is that becoming a mother is not -- becoming a parent is not something that is a God-given talent. It's something you have to work at; and a lot of us don't know that at the time we get married or have children, and takes a lot of know how and humanity and dedication. I hope we do a better job teaching our kids now. I am sort of feeling down about it.

Q -- CAN YOU -- DO YOU THINK ABOUT OR HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT WAYS IN WHICH YOUR EXPERIENCE HAS IMPACTED YOUR CHILDREN AND HOW YOU RAISED THEM? I MEAN -- I DON'T MEAN THIS QUESTION --

A I not only can think about it, I am being told about it by them. Well, as I mentioned before, I had a problem relating to a framework setting limits for myself, for them, you know, as a teenager because I had not experienced that time myself. So I am probably fairly strict myself.

The thing that I've been told is that I've raised my children to be responsible, and it really gets in their way. It's kind of the blunt message that I'm getting that

they have a lot of trouble with their conscience in taking care of themselves.

I remember having a discussion with one of my oldest daughters, and they were all like young kids babysitting in the area, and something better came up; and she wanted to get out of the babysitting. I said, "You know that just isn't done. You don't do that to people." And you know, that kind of thing. So yeah, well, that's the way I was raised, and I realized that at work today in my workplace, I don't take care of myself as well as other people do.

So it's a matter of how one is raised. It's probably a matter of combined with personality, and it's -- there is a whole philosophy we went through with the first born with the pediatrician saying I've never known -- I was very concerned about the trial crying, and he told me I've never known a child from crying too long. Then it was Dr. Spock, and we went back and forth; and I realized when I had my first child that I was really reflecting my mother's upbringing. That was really the last thing I wanted to do because that was not the way I wanted to be raised.

So I got involved in therapy to look at some of these issues, and then, of course, I got into conflict with my mother because I wanted to raise my children differently.

So I've become very clear about the reality of the generation gap, which is not a one-time thing. It's there period. It's with us forever because we are just speeding

up different development, and we are lacking parts of history in order to communicate around that. So there is always going to be a generation gap. There is no -- no way of getting away from that, but certain common sense, I guess, applications will always apply.

Q -- WHAT ARE SOME IMPORTANT LESSONS IS MAYBE NOT THE RIGHT WORD, BUT LIFE WISDOMS THAT YOU -- YOU THINK POSITIVE THINGS, THAT YOU THINK YOU'VE PASSED ON TO YOUR KIDS AS A RESULT OF YOUR EXPERIENCE? NOW IN TERMS OF TRYING TO HELP SHAPE ATTITUDES, POLITICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL, RELIGIONS.

A I think my children are all fine people. Individually, they are very different. They take -- they take their role in the world seriously. They are producers. They participate. They don't --

Q IT'S THE UPSIDE OF BEING RESPONSIBLE.

A -- right, right. They are responsible people, and they are -- the best thing I can sum it up really is that they are good human beings.

I feel really good about them, and I feel good about -- I didn't want to have two children in case something happened to one. I've always been sad that I am an only child. I always wanted to have a sibling, preferably an older brother who would bring boyfriends home.

So I really wanted three children, and I had three children. They are very different, and they care about each other; and I hope they will be family.

One of my daughters has just started becoming involved in the Holocaust environment in helping in the grand writing for the particular -- with a magazine with (Sarah Hoyburger) and (Mary Anne Solomon); and you know, they are just good people.

One of the things that I am very -- I was very adament about was the difference between the way I was raised and my children -- I wanted my children raised, and that was confronting one's self, being honest with one's self, and not running away. Looking at one's problems, and to more or less degree, they are all doing that. They are willing to do that within them -- in themselves, and within their relationships.

I was raised in the world where people kind of walked around issues rather than faced them. I guess that's still going on, but I didn't want any part of it; and so I feel good about that -- in them. I think they feel good about being able to handle that too.

Q BEFORE THE INTERVIEW STARTED, YOU TALKED A LITTLE BIT -- I'D LIKE TO HEAR ABOUT THE SUBJECT OF YOUR OWN HISTORY AND YOUR -- YOUR PARENT SITUATION DURING THE WAR, THE DEGREE IN WHICH THAT'S BEEN TALKED ABOUT IN YOUR HOME WITH YOUR CHILDREN AND THEIR RESPONSES, AND THEIR LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE IN THIS. CAN YOU TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THAT?

A Well, I guess it's part of my -- my loading guilt on them that I try to make them aware of what is going on in

order to help them become, you know, global participants because I -- I am very upset about what is going on.

I really came out of World War II saying to myself, this -- this is so horrendous, that was so horrible that people will surely learn a lesson and not -- not do something about it, you know; and I just see it going on all over again. I don't know. I haven't yet decided that I am going to consider the human species hopeless, but in my lighter moments, I really tell God that he made a mistake or she made a mistake in creating us. I don't know why we need to act the way we do.

I have, you know, in our levels of discussion, the experiences of other Kinder, and other refugees in my own family, I have come away relatively unscathed. I haven't been to a concentration camp. I wasn't picked up to scrub the pavements, and I've had a relatively easy time in many ways.

So we kind of look at the different levels of experience, and I can almost feel guilty because I didn't go through as much as other people; and at some moments we laugh about it, but it is really almost impossible to overdue; and yet, I've heard it said, I can't hear anymore, and part of me -- part of me can relate to that because my father came out of the concentration camp and started to tell us what had gone on in the camp, the fight over a piece of bread. I was so naive in those days that we stopped him from talking like, "Quiet down, Dad." So he could forget

it, you know, instead of helping him to get it out. We didn't know any better, and I know that one can only absorb so much and listen to so much; and life has to go on.

My children have to live their own lives. They can't get hung up on my sadness, and you know, what's part of me for the rest of my life sort of thing; but I do find them from time to time talking, wanting to know, and I -- I try to answer their questions and also encourage them to ask questions. As I said before, there is so much I would want to ask my mother and my father, and they are not here to answer the questions.

My father had an older brother and a younger sister, and the youngest sister was married, and lived in Vienna with her husband, and they had two children; and I feel good about that. I feel very excited out of something -- out of it.

My parents didn't get along. The brother and sister didn't get along. They didn't talk to each other, and at some point during my stay in England, I got a letter from my male cousin who was about my age -- my aunt's son from the concentration camp. He was picked up with his father, and he said, you know, "What have our parents done to us in raising us this way so we never got to know each other?"

His sister and his mother survived, and his mother -- his sister found me just recently through the Kinder books where all the children were listed with the maiden

names, and my maiden name is rather unusual; and she wrote to me, and she is going to be out in a couple of weeks' time. We are going to meet for the first time. So that will be pretty exciting. She lives in the East Coast, and she is active with the Jewish group over there.

Q WHAT IS YOUR MAIDEN NAME? WE SHOULD KNOW WHAT YOUR MAIDEN NAME IS.

A (Beuholtz). (Beuholtz). Now what I'd like to know from my father is where does that name come from? What is the tree? Did he come from Spain? Were the people from the inquisition? Where did the Jewish family come from? I don't know, since one of my tasks to trace that, and when I go back to Israel, I will try and follow up on that.

Now my father's older brother remained in (Czernowitz) in the town where my father was born, in what became Romania. I understand that my father's older brother and daughter, and a son went to Israel; and I am trying to trace them now. I have no -- no idea where they are, but through this cousin who just found me. I understand that they were in Israel, so I am tracing them through the Red Cross. Hopefully I will find them. That would be very exciting. I was in correspondence with the oldest son just before we left Vienna, but it was so traumatic that everybody lost touch with everybody else. So that will be wonderful if I could find them in Israel.

My aunt and uncle in Czechoslovakia, their oldest daughter, her husband and their 5-year-old boy were all

killed in Terezin. Two of their daughters survived and lost their husbands, and are alive. I lost most of my family members.

My father's family I never got to know. My mother's family I knew very well, and most of them are gone, except the cousins, and of course, everybody is getting older now.

I don't know what's happening. Jewishly, you asked me a couple of times, I have become very much involved with the Jewish community in the way that I wish I had felt before. I went through the different phases of certainly being raised Jewish. It was not a -- it was not a religious home, per say, but we kept the holidays.

My mother was not kosher. We kept the holidays, observed the holidays always. I have always observed them in my home, but I have never felt as -- it wasn't until I came to the United States that I began to feel the freedom of being Jewish, and it's just really an extremely important thing that I think people tend to overlook. Maybe people, Jewish people born in England feel, you know, the same way; but from Europe, I did not.

I don't feel Jewish people are any better than anyone else, but I don't feel we are worse than anyone else. So I can just feel okay about being Jewish, and I've become very much involved because I can really deal with the reform approach to Judaism here.

I don't think that I can handle the orthodox, although I can envy people who can -- who -- life becomes very simple. You don't have to -- you don't have to weigh. You just know what you are supposed to do, when you do it, and it's perscribed for you.

So my -- none of my children are really involved with Jewish people. I married a Jewish man who was not really very conscious, not an observing Jew. My daughter is married. One of my daughters is married to a non-Jewish man from Australia, who is a lovely person. They met in the synagogue while he was visiting here. It's really quite a romantic story, and I know Karen will raise her children in a Jewish household. There is respect and they observe it.

My other daughter is involved with a non-Jewish person, and is not particularly involved in Jewish life. My son thinks that Jewish life is sort of something for old age, I think. I am not sure where he is at, but at this point, the family all gets together and observes the holidays.

It is very difficult to maintain a family in -- in the American environment. The geography works against one and the distances. I was dreaming about having Shabbat at my house, and it just doesn't happen because it's so difficult to get together. So there are things to trade off, and eventually, the children quote unquote grow up and live their own lives, and you find your -- your own family

of peers, and have Shabbat dinner with, and make your own arrangements.

It's a very different life focus from when I was a child because the family was the focus. When I look back through the changes we are going through, it's painful. It's disheartening because I think we are going through a lot of change, and I am not sure it's for the better. I just see a lot of lonely people around.

Q I'D LIKE TO HEAR SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR REUNION.

A My what?

Q YOUR REUNION.

A The recent reunion?

Q THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME.

A Here in the East Bay?

Q THE ONE IN BRITAIN.

A The one in Britain. Yes, that was the first time. It was in June. I think it was last June.

Q AND THESE WERE PEOPLE THAT YOU REMEMBER THAT YOU KNEW OR -- OR WAS IT --

A No, no. Not necessarily. No, they were just all the Transports. Ten thousand Kinder who came out. There are a couple of schoolmates of mine who live in London, and one of them I stayed with. Most of them I didn't know. It was a -- it was a monumental happening in the impact of meeting people who -- who had gone to all corners of the earth and who were coming back for this.

Now the excitement of the occasion was more reserved. I think for those children who were in camps together, who were looking for each other, children who went through, I understand some very difficult times in -- in campsites that were not friendly, that were not ready for them. It was winter time. They came over, and they had some incredible memories about spending that time together.

So when they found one another, that was pretty exciting; but they had a program that they wanted to run, and some of those people weren't as much interested in the program as in meeting one another and talking and catching up, so it was -- it was sort of an interesting happening. It happened to be, I think the hottest June that London has ever known. It was dreadfully uncomfortable, and the spotlights were on because they were filming it.

Also in some ways physically it was not a comfortable thing, but it was an exciting happening and it -- it then translated into groups meeting on the East Coast, regularly, and there is a group meeting in Los Angeles; and now there is a group meeting here in the East Bay. In fact, I met one man who was on the same train. He is from Vienna, but I mean we didn't know each other, but realized that we were on the same train leaving Vienna; and he went to England. The joy is in meeting people you have known, and I have not met anyone accidently.

I knew -- now I met a school friend of mine on the ferry years and years ago in New York going over to Stanton

Island on Mother's Day, and she recognized me, and we've been in touch ever since. She is living down in Desert Palms, now retired, and moved out. So there is a whole group who know of each other, and someone assumes the responsibility of keeping track and writing up on where people are.

I have another school friend in New York who I see from time to time, but you know, we've all -- we share the past and yet, we've all gone -- all gone different paths; and our different ways. The big question always comes up: How would we -- how would our life have been different if we had not had this experience if we had just continued to grow up? And some decided we would have been brats. Spoiled brats, and some said that their life has turned for the better and that we are more better people because of our experience and the depth of our perseption. So I don't know.

Q WHAT DO YOU THINK?

A What do I think?

Q WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT YOUR LIFE?

A Well, I think I would have been very different. I have no idea how to justify that I did not continue my education so that I could live up to my full potential, and I don't feel I have. I think I've tried to put some of that on my children, and it's not their problem. It's mine. I really wanted them to work at an education and my daughters did, and my son has disapointed me in that sense; and I

really -- I feel sorry because he feels that. If he -- if he sees that tape sometime in the future, I'd like him to know that. It's just been difficult. This is the first time in a long time that I am crying. I have to tell you that.

I have, over the years until I went back to Vienna, every time the word "home" came up, I would burst into tears because there was obviously something going on that I didn't know where home was.

I didn't know what it meant, and when I decided to go back to Vienna to find out what home is all about, since then, I have -- it's just stopped. So this has been really interesting for me. There is some kind of psychological tape that's been turned off. Home is right here. There is no doubt about it, and it's a wonderful home. I am very fortunate, you know, in many ways.

When I see, as I just did, a young man walking around with a piece of cardboard saying, "homeless" and "wash car for food," or something, I just fall apart. I really don't know what to do. It feels terrible. There is sort of a feeling of I'd like to save the world, and I don't know how.

I don't know what to do in terms of Israel either, and that's why I am going back there to find out, to get some of my feelings sorted out. I have very, very mixed feelings about how to proceed.

Q IS THIS YOUR FIRST TRIP TO ISRAEL?

A No, I've been there before, and it was with a great deal of excitement and satisfaction; but I am very concerned about the views of the world. I feel very, very personally beat up upon when people don't remember why Israel was born.

Only 40 years later we are expecting, and I am one of those, who expects the Jews to be better than anyone else. I guess I want them to behave better than anyone else, and I am pained by what is going on; and at the same time, I have to remind myself of the 40 years of a nationhood that's never been at peace for an hour.

The latest, you know, atrocity to me is that it's okay to send Jewish men and women over there to defend the Arab countries, but one cannot have a visa, an Israeli visa stamped in the passport because otherwise I won't get a visa for an Arab nation. As if that were a crime, or a shame. I mean it's just unbearable. I don't understand it anyway.

BY TAMI NEWNHAM:

Q I HAVE A QUESTION, AND IT KIND OF GOES FAR BACK WHEN YOU WERE IN ENGLAND; AND YOUR FATHER WAS IN FRANCE. HOW DID YOU KNOW ABOUT HIM? HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT HE WAS IN CONCENTRATION CAMPS?

A Yes, there was some correspondence through the Red Cross. Switzerland handled some correspondence.

Q HE WROTE YOU LETTERS?

A Yes, we wrote some letters. Very, very sparse. Yeah.

Q DO YOU REMEMBER THINGS HE SAID IN THOSE LETTERS OR HIS EXPERIENCES?

A He spoke a lot about -- about love for my mother, really. The letters were more or less addressed to her. She -- she had them, and there is very little left. I don't know what she did with them.

It was as though when we left England, we put our past behind us again. I have very little left of family possessions, memorabilia; and sometimes I have this fantasy of going back to Vienna and searching second-hand shops to see what could turn up, but --

Q DID YOU VISIT WHERE YOU LIVED WHEN YOU WENT BACK TO AUSTRIA?

A -- yes, yes. The house, the apartment house where I was born is still there; and I went to look at the door, and then stopped short of asking the people to let me in. It was just the same as when I had left it, and the second house we moved to was bombed during the war; and another building was built in its place.

Spelling I went looking for old [Hanz], and walked around. I walked night and day, I think, when I first came back, and some found out later that some of the places just didn't exist.

There was a lot of bombing down by the area where I had lived, and yeah, the school, the cafe where my -- Spelling [cafe satall] where my father was kind of a steady had was

empty, was not being used. My school was gone, and I didn't inquire about the last school where I spent some time.

I want to write to them. I had some very negative memories there because they -- we were all of an age where girls had crushes on their teachers, and our favorite teacher turned out to be a real active Nazi; and so, you know, it was -- it was one of the negative memories.

Q WERE THERE ANY OTHER REFUGEE CHILDREN AT THIS SCHOOL?

A There were about four Jewish children enrolled in that particular school. I have no idea where anybody is. We all totally lost track.

So in a way, I have very few roots to the Old Country. I just have a lot of curiosity on retreading the path, and they -- one of the things that's coming out from the Kinder Transport is a plan for '92, to celebrate both the Columbus, and combined that with an international arrival in Israel with all the Kinder; but also to go via Spain.

I understand that there is a huge Jewish library in Madrid, and so hopefully, that will happen; and we can have some seminars and learn. I look forward to that. Learning something about the trail of our forebearers.

Q ANOTHER DETAILED QUESTION: YOUR MOTHER FOUND THE JOB, AND HOW DID SHE DO THAT? HOW DID SHE DO THAT?

A She put an ad in the British paper from Vienna. They were just importing domestics. English girls didn't want to be -- they were bringing in domestics.

BY SUSAN MONTROSE:

Q THROUGHOUT YOUR TELLING OF YOUR STORY, I DETECT BY AN INCREDIBLE SORT OF RESOURCEFULNESS AND SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR PRACTICALITY. THIS IS WHAT I HAVE TO DO, SO I DID IT, AND YOU HAVE MINIMIZED THE ADVERSITY THAT IN REALITIES IN THE WAY, I AM SURE, AT THE AGE OF 15, ARRIVING IN A NEW COUNTRY FOR THE FIRST TIME AND GOING TO SCHOOL, BOARDING SCHOOL ALONE, AWAY FROM YOUR MOTHER TO WHOM YOU WERE VERY CLOSE.

A I am very much aware of that as part of my persona. I don't know whether I became that way as the need arose or whether I am that way, whatever needs to be done. I just sort of go ahead and do it.

I think some of my feelings probably sort of got numbed in the process. I really feel that I am sitting on a lot of stuff that just never has been allowed to come out. You know, the kind of expectations that you have as a young girl. The life with -- with young men, the fun parts. It just -- it was just never part of my agenda. I never knew it. It was not an option.

I remember a lot of, you know, scary times in London; particularly during the Blitz, and going around in the blackout, going over to my mother's. I can remember the leaves rustling and hurring up my steps because I thought,

you know, maybe someone was walking up behind me. It was a very lonesome existance at that point for a young, young woman.

It was just kind of nose-to-the-grind, one day after another to get by, and waiting for life to resume so to speak; but when it resumed, it wasn't all that much fun either. I mean my mother had been very sick, and I became the head of household at 18: and it was just hard.

There wasn't much time for frivolous stuff, and there wasn't any money for frivolous stuff. So, you know, when I think back how things would have gone at home, who knows? I don't know who has a magic crystal. I really don't know. I would hope that it would have been different, but that's the way it goes.

Q I WAS THINKING ABOUT ONE THAT WAS A NIGHTMARE ON, DEPENDING ON WHO WAS HERE. I WAS THINKING ABOUT LONDON WAS A NIGHTMARE. I JUST -- I WAS THINKING ABOUT LONDON DURING THE BLITZ WAS A NIGHTMARE FOR ANYONE WHO WAS THERE, COMING FROM A SITUATION THAT YOU CAME FROM. IT'S A FRYING PAN.

A Yeah, it was a real fire. I can remember going to work after the Christmas holidays at that time, and London was totally -- I was working in the downtown area. The really business area around St. Paul's Cathedral, and it was -- everything was aflame, and amazingly enough, St. Paul's was just sort of standing. It was almost unscathed, but everything around was aflame; and we were just told to turn

back and go home. One couldn't get through. It was -- it was a thorough nightmare.

When I [illegible] the [illegible]. one can never [illegible] like an air raid [illegible] that you can never forget, [illegible] the V-2's came toward the end of the war, [illegible] I was working -- my office was kind of on the [illegible] building, so that we would see the air raids [illegible] outside very clearly, and I had a signal to ring a bell for the people in the center office, and we'd just get under our desks where every, you know, we were; and those were really unnerving.

If that had gone on for some more time, the tide might have turned. There -- there is something absolutely awful -- if you can hear the bomb coming, you can gage where it is; but those bombs just landing, coming down silently, it's psychologically really debilitating; and I can understand how that would impact people.

Here we go again, and I am listening about how none of the nations are really willing to deal with not selling war material. I mean what is going on now with the Kurds is -- I phoned President Bush. I left a message. He didn't come to talk to me. I guess he was out. I left a message telling him that I thought that we had some responsiblity, and I felt that in the manner which I was saying this is the internal busineess of the nation, that I'm feeling that if the Nazis are coming back again, I am

going through that whole thing again and nobody will come to my aid. I am back in the same shoes, and you know, this is something that bothers me about humanity, globally, that we are not willing to assume responsibility for one another until we are bombed into some other realm; and there are just a few of us left who will then have to ban together. I don't know. We just don't seem to learn, but that was very clear to me that I could hear the nation saying this is Austria's responsibility. This is Germany's responsibility. It's internal. We don't have to do anything about that.

Q SO YOU ARE QUITE AN ACTIVIST?

A Oh, yes. I am quite an activist.

Q HAVE YOU ALWAYS BEEN?

A No, I have not always been. I just felt if not me, then who? I am particularly active with some Soviet emigres that I have taken responsibility for to help them through the congregation, and heah, I mean --

Q WHAT KIND OF WORK ARE YOU DOING WITH THEM?

A What am I doing with them? I am just helping them to get settled. To, you know, rattle some people's eardrums, and get a social worker, find out -- get a dentist, get a doctor, find out how to help them find work, help them with English.

Just help them deal with whatever comes up that I could have used help with, because I understand how difficult it is to leave everything and walk into another

nation where you hardly know the language and start. So I get some satisfaction out of that, but I also empathize.

Q I WOULD LIKE YOU TO SHARE WITH US THE PROGRAMS THAT YOU BROUGHT.

A Oh, well, I just -- I picked these up. I just took these out because I was really remembering.

This is the man I never met. [showing a photograph] He -- he is responsible, I believe for bringing quite a few Jewish people over. He was the president of a bank in North Dakota in Fargo, North Dakota, and he sponsored several people; but I never met him.

BY UNKNOWN MALE SPEAKER:

Q [BILL STERN, WILLIAM STERN].

A I don't think he is alive anymore.

Q JUST AS A NOTE FOR THE TAPE HERE. WE WILL GET THESE PHOTOGRAPHS AT THE END OF THE INTERVIEW. I HAVE A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS.

YOU MENTIONED YOUR CHILDHOOD FRIEND, [ERICA LINDEMEYER], AND WHO ONE DAY HER -- SHE WAS NO LONGER ABLE TO BE YOUR FRIEND. DID YOU EVER GET A CHANCE TO TALK WITH HER ABOUT WHY SHE MADE THAT DECISION OR WHY HER PARENTS MADE THAT DECISION? WAS THERE EVER A DEBRIEFING ON THAT TOPIC WITH HER?

A No, she was just not to be seen with me.

Q WHAT DID SHE SAY TO YOU EXACTLY?

A Well, I'm not sure. You know, that was a long, long time ago. I am not sure. I can't tell you exactly

what she said, but the gist of it was that she was not to be seen with me. You know, walking with me. It was a dangerous situation for them. That's about as far as I can remember.

It must have been very painful for her to say that to me. I am not sure whether she understood what it was all about. You know, we were just incredibly naive in those days.

In some sense, children today are much more knowledgeable. Maybe that's because of television, but he -- no, we just were not political -- politically conscious, but the gist of it was is that she was not to be seen with me, and not to have anything to do with me.

Q HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN THAT INCIDENT OCCURRED?

A 15, yeah.

Q CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT YOUR EARLIEST MEMORY WAS OF AN EARLY ANTI-SEMITIC EXPERIENCE THAT YOU HAD?

A Overtly anti-semitic at my aunt's when they knocked on the door in the middle of the night and dragged the men away out of bed.

Q WHAT ABOUT AS A CHILD, YOUNGER? YOU DIDN'T DEAL WITH ANY RACISM OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT?

A No, no.

Q YOU MENTIONED -- SUSAN ASKED YOU WHY YOUR MOTHER, DURING THE LONDON PERIOD SPENT SO MUCH TIME IN ISOLATION, AND YOU MADE A REMARK THAT WENT SOMETHING LIKE IT MAY HAVE HAD TO DO WITH THINGS THAT SHE HAD GONE THROUGH IN HER

YOUTH; AND I WAS WONDERING IF YOU COULD ELABORATE ON THAT, AND WHAT YOU WERE REFERRING TO THERE?

A Well, there was a lot of anti-Semitism in Poland where my mother grew up. Her father was pretty much of a middle class, a respected person. He had a small -- he was owner of a small factory.

In fact, he came over the year I was born. My grandfather came to New York, took a trip; and this was the depression time in New York. As my mother tells it, he turned around and said, "Who needs it?" and went back home because there he had the good life; but you know, my mother was obviously a Jewish person within the Jewish community in her home town, and -- and then she never spoke to me about anti-Semitism, but that she had personally experienced -- I heard stories about when she was a child watching the Cossacks come by, you know, and pick up -- pick up Jews.

There was this whole aura of the history, and they were refugees in Vienna. When they came, they were Jewish refugees because they were Jewish. There were people who came, but it was mostly Jewish; and I assume there was anti-Semitism in Poland at that time that drove them out because they left.

My grandparents came. I mean, the whole family came, and it was a hard struggle to -- to get going again. For the entire family as I look back at my particular family, and that may be because they were emigres themselves. Vis-a-vis those Jewish families who had come

earlier who were already established there, and I hear from a lot of German refugees -- German Kinder refugees in my group that the Germans were much, much friendlier, much more accepting than the Austrians. Still are.

So I think that, you know, they just had a very difficult time being established -- establishing themselves and getting going as Jewish refugees because the only thing you could do to work in business or be a lawyer -- you couldn't get a teaching job. Anything to do with the state curriculum, even in as much as a newspaper was concerned that my father experienced was out. So all you could do was to be an independent person.

When I came to New York, and I saw Jewish people involved in everyday affairs, behind the post office counter type of thing, Jewish policemen, it was a complete revelation to me. There was just no such possibility in Austria.

I received a letter from an Austrian man who went through the list of Vienese/Austrian Kinder who attended and wrote to all of us. At least wrote to me. Has already done some interviews, interviewing us. He wants to set straight the record of Austria's shame.

I have not entered into a correspondence with him. I need to check him out some more, but it is an interesting thought.

BY SUSAN MONTROSE:

Q I HAVE NOT HEARD OF SUCH A PROJECT.

A Right. He is either a student, or works at the university in [clawdenfoot]; which is a smaller town in Austria, and there is an Austrian -- there is a book out that supposedly is -- there is a collaboration between the government and private enterprise on 1,000 years of Jews in Austria. They have been there for many, many years, and I am sure have contributed a great deal. Where all this anti-Semitism comes from, it was fostered by the church at one point. Why it has been able to thrive and continue like this in such a logical fashion, I don't understand.

BY UNKNOWN MALE SPEAKER:

Q ONE LAST QUESTION: YOU MAY HAVE GONE OVER THIS WITH SUSAN. WHEN -- DID YOU TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES PRETTY FREELY AND DIRECTLY OR NOT?

A Yes, I have talked to them. In fact, my daughter, Karen just asked me last week again when I said, you know, this was going to happen today; but it seems as though -- it felt as though it was all new to her. You know she just asked me agian to repeat it, and maybe I'll have to repeat it again; and I don't know. My intent was really to sit down and write, write it all out.

********** END TAPE 1 -- BEGIN TAPE 2 **********

A Right. I am sure. I am sure. Yes, and I myself am getting into different facets of the experience at the same time.

My oldest daughter is very interested -- has always had a very special regard. It was -- [Alma] was grandma, and being the oldest, she really had more time with my mother when she was alive; and she is forever asking questions about her; but I am personally loaded with questions that I didn't think of to ask; and it is so amazing to me that, you know, I was asleep.

Q THAT CAN BE SUCH A RICH RESOURSE FOR YOUR DAUGHTERS KNOWING IN ADVANCE WHAT THE QUESTIONS ARE.

A Right, right.

Q YES, TO SOME EXTENT.

A To some extent, but they also have to find their own questions from their point of view, and we have a lot of discussions about the differences and lifestyle; and my unrealistic expectations, quote unquote, and how things change.

Q BUT IT SOUNDS REMARKABLY OPEN.

A Yes.

Q THERE IS THAT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS WHAT'S TODAY, AND THIS IS PREHAPS WHY WE ARE HAVING THIS TROUBLE. I MEAN THAT DIALOGUE --

A Yes, yes. There is -- there is a world of difference in, as I look back at my childhood, it was shy, you know, children should be seen and not heard, period. You know, did as you were told, and it was not good to ask questions. It was absurd. There were more forward-looking people at that time, I am sure also.

I did not have sufficient contact with my father. A part of me is very much my father, and yet, I lived with my mother; so that a lot of her has rubbed off on me, and there has always been a struggle inside me; but I did not have enough time with my father. I had no time with him as an adult, and I feel very sad about that.

I really didn't get to know him as a person, as one adult to another; and my mother was pretty closed. There were things that it was nice to do, and there were things that was not nice to do and not nice to talk about; and I don't know whether she was really willing to -- to talk. She never offered, and when I asked questions, there was a need -- there was a need to be protective, I think. It was too painful to get into.

I am much more willing to go into pain and confront it, and deal with it. Probably -- that's probably my father's side. Arguing. I am very argumentative, or so I am told.

BY UNKNOWN MALE SPEAKER:

Q WHAT ARE, IF YOU COULD SIT DOWN AND HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH YOUR MOTHER RIGHT NOW, WHAT ARE SOME OF THE QUESTIONS THAT YOU WOULD ASK HER?

A Boy, that's a tall one to throw at me. What is some of the questions I would ask her? Well, I would certainly want to hear much more about the reality of her life. Her thoughts and her feelings growing up.

I just got to know the mother. She wanted -- the person she wanted to present to me as a mother. I didn't really get to know my mother as a person, as an individual.

I don't know who she was. I don't know whether that goes for a lot of people that generation, but it was not cool to share the pain, to share the shame. It had to be nice. It had to be wrapped up, and it was -- it felt unreal.

I would want to really sit down and just listen and have her tell me all that was -- all that she was feeling over the years, and just let it come out. We never did that. I don't know whether she wanted it, whether she would have appreciated it. We just really, as you said, life had -- this had to be done, and we went on; and we did it.

We were both very much in unison in that, and I think there must have been a lot going on inside of her that she wasn't able or willing to share with me, or maybe I wasn't willing to listen.

When I hear -- when I feel or hear myself expressing dissatisfaction with my children's actions or whatever today, whatever goes on inside me, I very clearly get feedback from myself that remember how you felt about your mother's needs or demands on you; and you know, that kind of scares it away.

I maybe wasn't willing to listen, and I would like to now. I'd just like to tell her that I appreciate all

that she had gone through in life, and how well she managed and coped.

She did extremely well, all things considered, and she gave me a marvelous coping model. A mechinism to survive. If I pass that on to my kids, then that's all right. I don't know what else. I would just want to know about the past. As we get older, we want to know about the past.

BY SUSAN MONTROSE:

Q IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU -- THAT YOU MAY WANT TO TALK ABOUT OR NEED TO TALK ABOUT?

A Well, if we are looking at this as a tape that I am going to leave to my children, I want them to know that I am really sorry that I didn't do more to keep our family together.

I don't know what I could have done, but I am really sorry that they had to have more than one family. It would have been wonderful to have just had one. I am glad that they have a good relationship with both parents, and that we have respect for each other. Yet, I feel a sense of failure and loss, but I am sure they feel a sense of loss too; and I hope they do better at working with human relations. It's difficult. That's about all I could tell.

Q THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

BY UNKNOW MALE SPEAKER:

Q TELL US WHO THIS IS AND WHEN THE PICTURE WAS TAKEN.

A This is Lizzi [Bookholtz]. That was age 6 when I -- my first passport. Very important occasion. [showing a photograph] I can remember the colors in the dress.

BY SUSAN MONTROSE:

Q SO YOUR NAME WAS LIZZI, NOT ALICE?

A L-I-Z-Z-I, yes.

Q WELL, I SEE.

A See, when I came to England, I thought they'd call me [Lizzy] and all that kinds of stuff, and I went formal. My name on my birth certificate is [Alice], and I would like to ask my mother where that came from. It's a wild name for a Jewish child.

It was very Germanic, plus my father's name was [Rudolph]. You couldn't get more German than that.

BY UNKNOWN MALE SPEAKER:

Q THIS PICTURE PLEASE.

A All right. This is Lizzi at age 15. [showing another picture] Confirmation at temple, and I was a lovely pink organdy dress with a blue velvet sash. It was exquisite, and I felt very stiff in it.

BY SUSAN MONTROSE:

Q AND THAT WAS NOT TOO LONG BEFORE THE KINDER TRANSPORT?

A Right, right.

Q PRESUMABLY 15?

A No, I am sorry. I guess not. It's 13.

Q Okay.

A Thank you for picking that up. That was 13. Confirmation was at 13 in the orthodox synagogue. Right. No, that was way before.

This is my certificate instead of a passport from the stateless person in London. [showing a certificate] That was my registration certificate, and every time I moved, I had to notify the police. So this has quite a few addresses in it.

BY UNKNOWN MALE SPEAKER:

Q THIS WAS ISSUED TO YOU BY WHOM?

A In London.

Q BY THE --

A British.

Q -- BRITISH?

A Right. So at that point, I was 15 going on 16.

Q SAME DOCUMENT, THE COVER. [SHOWING COVER OF THE CERTIFICATE]

A Right. The alien certificate, registration certificate.

Q THIS ONE PLEASE. [showing next picture]

A This is Miss [Elsa West], who received me in London upon my arrival, and took care of me for a period of time until the war broke out. We lost touch, so she is walking with a friend of hers. So that's a picture that she gave me.

Q SHE IS ON THE RIGHT OR THE LEFT?

A I guess she's on the right.

BY SUSAN MONTROSE:

Q THE ONE WITH THE HAT?

A No, both have hats. She's the one with the bib. The one with the dark dress.

BY UNKNOWN MALE SPEAKER:

Q THE ONE ONE THE LEFT, YOU MEAN?

A Right, right.

Q ALL RIGHT. WHO IS THIS NOW? [SHOWING NEXT PHOTO]

A My mother, my father, and myself. I think we were down on [Brighton] on a short vacation.

Q THIS IS WHEN YOUR FATHER WAS ALLOWED TO COME OVER FOR THE TEMPORARY VISIT?

A Right, right. Okay. [showing different picture] Friend. A G.I. Joe we were befriending. His name is George from Cincinnati. We invited some American military servicemen to have dinner to visit during the war, and he was one who visited us. He took a picture with my parents. Nice man.

Q NEXT, PLEASE. [SHOWING NEXT PHOTOGRAPH]

A This is Mr. [William Stern]. A very nice Jewish man who issued many affidavits for Jewish refugees. People he had never seen and probably didn't see. He sent -- he is responsible for my mother and myself being able to come over. I have never met him, but I thank him. It was a good move.

********** END OF TAPE 2 **********