

14th. 14th. What did we say? November 14, 1990. My name is Ellen Szakal, an interviewer with the Holocaust Oral History Project of San Francisco, California.

Today we are talking with Helga Tannenbaum. And assisting in the interview today is Jack Gaines. Helga, would you please begin by telling us where you were born, what country you were born, your present name, and any former names you might have had?

I was born in Wiesbaden, Germany, on May 23. And I won't tell you my whole age. And my father was an attorney. And my mother was a writer. She was the Writers Association of Wiesbaden, Germany.

I had a wonderful childhood. We had a beautiful house, which you will see later, which was taken away by the Nazis. I had a dream childhood with two loving parents. And they were in good position. I didn't suffer. And we were very happy.

My mother used to invite her three children every week, on Tuesday afternoons, and we would stimulate our minds and our imagination. And we had to dress up or not dress up, whatever we want to do, and then talk about the costume that we wore, and then also tell us what-- tell her what we were worried about. And it was wonderful, because she gave us quality time.

And we loved those. We called it [NON-ENGLISH], which means a wreath. That means-- women have [NON-ENGLISH]. They meet every week and play Mahjong and things. She played Mahjong too, by the way. And she was just a wonderful mother.

And I have the older brother and an older sister. My sister was the oldest. My brother was in the middle. And I was the youngest. And my brother and I were very close. We always fought our sister. We did horrible things to her as children. But we had a real wonderful childhood.

I have to tell you two anecdotes of my childhood that were very funny. When I was about eight years old or so, I loved to ice skate. And we had a dining room, big dining room. And my father came late from the office. So I wanted to leave early, so-- I had a big soup, thick soup to eat before. We had two maids, and they served us big soup and stuff like that.

And I didn't like the soup. So I was thinking, what could I do with the soup so they wouldn't see? So for one week I put the soup in the grandfather's clock. And I thought, as a child, it's gone. I don't have to eat it anymore.

And after one week, my mother was going with the maid through the room, and she smelled some terrible Smell every time she came near the clock, it smelled. And she put her hand in there-- oh, it must be Helga, because I did all these terrible things. And that's an anecdote that-- for years, if you don't like your soup, just go-- put it in the grandfather clock.

We did the same thing with-- we had a winter garden. There were beautiful plants. And I did the same thing with my cousin. I taught her to put the cocoa, or the breakfast milk, in there, because we didn't drink it. So we were really terrible children.

What I have to start out with is that I didn't have any Jewish education. My parents told me I was [GERMAN], which means a free religion. They were afraid because-- they were both Jewish. They had a long Jewish-- old Jewish background. But Wiesbaden was very antisemitic.

So I didn't know that I was Jewish until I was maybe 12 years old, which was terrible. And I blame my parents for that, because we-- I didn't-- I went with my girlfriends to the Catholic church. I went with my girlfriends to the Protestant church. I never went into a temple.

And I think my father suffered from that. My mother also wasn't brought up very Jewish. We had Christmas. We celebrated Christmas. We had a Christmas tree. The maids were crying under the-- they got their presents, and

everything was beautiful. And I loved it.

And my mother had a vivid imagination. One Christmas we had-- she decorated our winter garden with veils on the right side where angels-- the dolls were all dressed in white as angels. And the left side were devils-- which was not religious. It was just that it was Christmas. And she did all these things.

And for some strange reason, when my brother was about 12, 13 years old, he-- they changed, and he became bar mitzvah. And they trained him. And it was very strange to us, because we had never seen anything Jewish in front of us. And they didn't know too much Jewish.

But shortly after that, when I was about 15 or 16 years old, my mother became very ill. She went to my grandmother's birthday that was every year. And she always wrote plays.

She wrote one-- oh, I forgot to say, she was a writer, but she worked for the Red Cross in Wiesbaden. And she made thousands and thousands of dollars by writing plays-- Jackie Coogan, or-- she translated it. And she wrote her own plays.

And I was always playing, acting. And Wild West Girls-- and it was like a revue. And the old-- History of the Old Fritz, which is a-- they called the Old Fritz-- was a German emperor.

We did all these things to make money for Germany, for Wiesbaden. I'm just telling you this because what they did to us, and we-- my mother worked so hard to make money for her hometown. And she was very much honored.

And so one day, she was in Kassel. That's my grand-- that's her hometown. Kassel is-- Wiesbaden is southwest, near the Rhine. And it's a beautiful town. It's a spa town.

My daughter and two of my granddaughters have been there. In fact, my young-- my middle granddaughter just came back. She was in Italy, and she visited Wiesbaden, which was very exciting.

And so my mother was in Kassel to celebrate her grand-- her mother's birthday. Was just about to come home to us when she got cookie crumbs in her throat. And she coughed terribly so badly that the main artery in her back busted. And she was paralyzed from here on.

And she died four months later, at the age of 49. And it was terrible for me. And she wrote a letter to all-- to everybody-- to her mother, to her three children. I don't have the letter with me, but that was the greatest shock of my life.

How old were you at this time?

Oh, I was about 14, 15-- 15, 16, about. 14, 15-- something.

And in about five seconds, we'll start [CROSS TALK]

And just pick up where your mother passed away.

Anytime.

So my mother died on March 24. I think it was '34. And she had so many friends that at the funeral, there were 150 people. Wiesbaden just loved her. And especially my girlfriends, because they were on all her plays, and also their mothers loved her. I'm telling you that with-- because later on, I'll come back to this.

So then they didn't know what to do with the child. My sister was in Berlin, in an art school. She was an artist. She designed and painted. And my brother was-- I think he was with my uncle. I had two guardians, one in Kassel-- my two-- the brothers of my father and my mother. One was the brother of my mother, one was the brother of my--

And I was alone with my father in the house. And the house was-- had 18 rooms. It was a very big house. And he was very busy. But he was very disturbed, very unhappy, because he had still a teenager there. Didn't know what to do to protect me.

He was extremely overprotective. And I wanted to go out with a boyfriend. And he looked out of the window, or he sat in bed until I got home. And so I was kind of angry.

And finally, all the uncles in the family decided it's not good for a child to stay alone with her father in such a big house. I still was going to school. So they decided to send me to boarding school in England and learn English.

I had learned French and Latin in school. That's how you start. And when you're 10 years old, you can decide if you want to go to a-- I don't know how to translate it. It's two different kinds of schools. One is for people who don't want to study-- Abitur.

Do you know what the Abitur is? It's equivalent to maybe two years of college already. But they're going to school 12 years. And you can't-- and the other people who don't go to school that long, they graduate when they are 15, 16, or 16, 17. They don't learn all these languages. They only have to learn one language.

Well, I went into the other school. And I did my Abitur, which is my-- but not right then and there, because I interrupted my schooling. I went to England in a boarding school. And my father cried terribly. He brought me to Cologne.

And the mistress of that school-- there was a foreign school, a school for foreign girls. 24 girls of all kind of countries, which was interesting. And my father brought me to Cologne and said goodbye. And that was the last time I saw him.

While I was three months in-- when I was three months in England, the mistress one day was very nervous at lunchtime. And she looked at me. And she looked at the other. And she didn't talk. When the lunch was almost over, she said, Helga, I want you to come to my room after lunch. So I immediately thought, what did I do wrong? Usually I always did something wrong.

And I went in, and she tried to explain to me that my father had died on the street of a heart attack. And I couldn't understand coronary. I didn't know what that meant. I didn't know much English. And finally, I knew. And I fainted. And I was very terribly upset.

And then the uncle in Kassel, my mother's brother, wrote me a very businesslike letter which I never forgot until this day. They loved me, and they wanted to do the best, but they didn't know how to tell me this. They wrote, we have to inform you that your father passed away, so and so.

But we don't want you to come home. We want you to complete your education. And in order to console you, we give you a trip with-- you can join this trip around England with your school. So you can imagine how I felt.

So I was always very slim, but as a reaction-- and in England they have wonderful breakfasts and wonderful afternoon teas. I started eating. And I stayed a year, year and a half, or something. And when I came back-- when I finished there-- I did my English. My pride was to write and write about Gandhi, because I know that would annoy the English tremendously, and-- which it did. In favor of Gandhi, I wrote my graduation speech-- work.

When I came back to-- I came back to Aachen. It's called Aix-la-Chapelle, maybe Aachen, you know. It's another town where an aunt of mine lived, my mother's sister. And they didn't recognize me because I'd gained 25 pounds.

How old were you at this time?

Oh, about 20-- 18, 20, something like that. No. 18, 20. I don't know.

So then I stayed with my-- then I went back to Kassel, where my grandmother lived. My grandmother survived my mother. My grandmother was 87 years old when she died.

And my aunt, whom we loved-- she was like a substitute mother to us. She was a singer. She had a beautiful voice. Her name was Marie-Louisa Wolff. And she dedicated her youth to my grandmother, who didn't let her go. There were cases like that.

She sang and ran away from home several times, even as an adult person, when she was in her 30s, and was a singer at the opera in Hanover and other towns. Every time she went there, my uncle and my grandmother came and got her out. "My daughter does not sing." "My sister does not sing on the stage." That was like that. It was very old fashioned.

So-- but I lived with my grandmother and my aunt. And I went to a school again to finish my German education in the meantime. And that's where the-- wait a minute. Was it then? Yeah. I went into a school. And I think it was in '36.

No. I must interrupt. I did something wrong. I went to my aunt and my grandmother for a very short time. Then they thought I should learn more languages. They sent me to French Switzerland, Neuchatel. And I stayed there for two years. And I loved it there.

But after, I was-- went with a girlfriend from Germany, who also went. And we were there about, oh, maybe three months or so when we overheard the mistresses of the boarding school in Neuchatel talk about the Jewish girls and Jewish-- terrible that we have to have Jewish girls. Very antisemitic talk. I don't recall anything they say.

So we decided, we don't stay here, and we don't tell my uncle. We just take off and look for another school. And we didn't know where to go. So there was a very famous conductor. His name is Maurice de Abravanel. Maybe I've heard of him. He became a very famous conductor in Salt Lake City, Utah.

He was a Spanish Jew. He was the first one who brought the Olympic light-- is it light?

Torch.

Torch. Yeah. He ran with the Olympic torch. And he was married to a lovely woman whom he later divorced.

And my aunt, who was the singer, had her own group of artists around her all the time. And she made him, really, what he was. She helped him tremendously. He became very famous. You can buy any record in any American store about him.

So he was in-- happened to be in Bern. And so I called him and said what had happened then. Since they were very Jewishly inclined, they said, you two come here, and we help you. And I stayed there for one week.

They had to contact my uncle because they were panicking. The mistress didn't find us, didn't know where we were. And so my uncle said, you cannot come home. You have to look for another school. So we look for another--

Was he sympathetic to the story that--

Yeah. Yeah. They were sympathetic to it. But they didn't like the way we handled it, like running away without saying. But they were sympathetic. And they thought we shouldn't stay in a place where Jews were hated.

So we went in a very nice school which I really loved. And I had my first-- I had not my first. My first love story was in Germany. But this was a young professor. And I'm telling the story because I want you to know how the German-- how the Germans think so differently from other people.

And this young professor fell in love with me. And I wrote to my uncle-- he wrote to my uncle he wants to marry me. And he told me-- he wrote me a letter back. Don't you come back with a little Frenchman. That was his answer. And I thought it was kind of crazy.

But I was so young and so inexperienced that I really didn't care if he came or not. But it was a lovely little interval. And

I would have stayed longer in Switzerland, but my grandmother was dying. So they called me back because my grandmother wanted to see me.

My grandmother was a very interesting woman, but she was kind of cold. She didn't have the warmth grandmothers usually have. Like, I'm crazy about my grandchild. I told them so all my life. And she was very strict. And--

This is your mother's mother?

My mother's mother. My mother adored her. She was the only one who really could handle her.

But my grandmother also lost her husband very young. And so she raised her children alone. But she had-- they were very rich. And she had a factory. And she ran the factory, you see. Compared to my life, later--

And one time, my brother was sick, and I stayed for six months in Kassel. And she taught me so much. I was six years old or something. When I came back, I knew more than all the other children. But she-- so I did love her in my own way.

But she also-- oh, that's very funny. She had this high-up attitude. Don't mix with the maids. And I always-- I was always very democratic. I had the-- what they said, I had-- I liked to mix with people of all walks of life.

And I was always with the maids in the kitchen. And my grandmother hated that. And my aunt was just like me. She was a very liberal, wonderful woman.

And we had a cousin in America who came to visit. And in order to annoy my grandmother, we taught this cousin German. He came in the kitchen, and my brother and I, with two breads.

The funny thing was, Friday night, my grandmother-- they also weren't religious. But they kept Friday night. Everybody came for dinner on Friday night. So when this young man came from New York and we said, we teach you something.

So you go in the room. And my grandmother and the whole family is sitting there. And you said, in German-- so we practiced with him for a week or so.

And he was a young guy. He was maybe 18, 20. He trusted us. And when he came in, he said-- I came in and I said, Grandma, he wants to say something in German.

My mother already looked-- she was alive at that time. She looked very-- that was-- I was jumping. That was before. That was at one time when we were on vacation.

And this young man-- so he came in. And he said, good evening, you big pigs, in German. And of course, my grandmother, she was-- but she would never lose her composure. She was-- terrible. Helga is a terrible thing. I was terrible. So-- but my humor kept me, I guess, alive with all the things what I did go through.

So after my grandmother died, they didn't know what to do with me again. So I worked for a little while in the factory of my-- in the office of my uncle, for about six months, as a foreign-- I used my language to import-- they had-- my mother's-- my mother's parents had a factory which still exists in Kassel. It's-- they make tents and-- how do you call that material? It's called Frolich and Wolff. It's a very famous factory.

Like parachute material?

Yeah, parachute material, and also tents for circuses--

Canvas?

--and canvas, and-- and they had their own town called Lichtenau. And all the streets in that town were named after us.

And my uncle, who later-- he headed this. He married a half-Jewish woman who turned into be a religious fanatic, Protestant. She sat at my bed every night when I visited in this town and talked about Jesus and an apple.

Gave me an apple. And the apple was washed with soap, because she was also very afraid she could catch germs. So I-- as a child, I always had this-- I think of apple and soap and Jesus. That was one thing for me when I-- later on, I straightened that out.

And later on, my uncle died. He died in, I think, '35 or '36. Then my aunt and my grandmother-- my grandmother had died also. And they put me in a family called Fackenheim, which sounds terrible to you. But here's a man-- you know him. He comes here very often. His name is Walter Frank. It was his cousin.

John probably knows Walter Frank. He was also from Wiesbaden. And that was his cousin. And they changed their name to Frank because in America you can't use the word Fackenheim. It sounds terrible. It was spelled F-A-C-K-E-N-H-E-I-M.

After I was with that family for a little while, I-- my sister was in Berlin by that time-- in Berlin by the time. My brother already emigrated to America in '36. My uncle visited my uncle in Frankfurt of mine-- that was my brother-- my father's brother. He was Uncle Leo, Uncle Leo. He was my guardian. He was the only guardian I had.

He was also a very well-known attorney, but never married. Lived alone with the housekeeper, old housekeeper, and had a dog, and walked every night. Every day very much with his dog. And he was very healthy.

He was in his 70s, I guess, when he was-- he went to my brother in America to visit him, because he adored the three children. He just was-- because he came every week from where he lived, Frankfurt, to Wiesbaden is one hour. Now it's even less.

And my father and my uncle were very close. They fought like mad about legal things every weekend. But then they talked. And they liked each other a lot.

And my uncle visited my brother in America in '37 or-- '37. And he didn't understand what was really going on. First of all, they all had money. None of the Jews wanted to leave Germany because they thought they couldn't make a living in-- they were old. They couldn't make a living in another country. So he came back to Germany. And he was taken to Theresienstadt by the Nazis and killed.

But before that happened, when I was in Berlin, I had always plenty of boyfriends. I was also in Essen-- I was in different towns-- but I don't want to go into that-- for vacation or things like that. And I met a lot of nice young men.

And twice I sent young men to my uncle because he had to agree-- had my money and what we had there. And he always said, you go out, young man, into the world over there, wherever you want to emigrate, and you make a living. And then you send for my niece. And they said OK.

They were scared by him. They were scared off. And I thought, if they listen to him and they don't stick to me, this is not for me anyway.

But he had something else in mind. He wanted me to marry somebody he knew. And this guy came every week to Berlin and saw me. And I thought he was so boring. I went out with him.

I was in Berlin for about six, eight months, in a language school. And I learned shorthand in three languages. By that time I knew English, French-- I spoke-- I still speak pretty good French-- and German. And I learned a shorthand that you can use in all these languages.

And my sister came to the school and introduced me to the teacher and said, my sister is a younger sister. And I'm responsible. Please look out for her, she said to the teacher. So the teacher liked me a lot. And she tried to do the best for

me.

And one day she said, I have a course to learn Spanish. Why don't you come tonight? There's a young man-- there's a man from-- who just came back from Spain. And he's-- he lost his job. And he's teaching. So I came.

But I had another boyfriend. But this was really serious. We wanted to marry him. I still-- he still writes to me. And we came. We came late. There were 30 people sitting there.

And my maiden name was Weiss, which means white. And I came into the class, and the teacher said, may I introduce Helga Weiss, Kurt Schwartz. Schwartz means black. Black and white.

And immediately when I saw him, he was tall, dark, and handsome. He was a dream of a man. And he was-- when I saw him, this was it. I thought-- you know, I fell in love right away.

And after the lesson he told me about Spain. He had been in South America with the German General Electric for-- he was a-- he started when he was 22. And he went to Chile, America-- all South American countries-- Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru-- as a supervisor in his firm. He went to Spain and he fought in the civil war there-- fought? Was there during-- when the civil war started. He didn't fight.

And he could have gone to Paris, but he wanted to see his parents. So he fled from-- with an under-- with a submarine from Spain to Germany, to the nearest-- to Holland, I think it was-- and then came to Aachen again. It's a very important town in the border of Holland, where he was apprehended by the Nazis, put in jail. And his firm got him out after three days and told him that was it. He couldn't work anymore for this firm because he was Jewish.

So this man, who had really loved his job and had a very interesting life-- he couldn't get married in that job because they wanted people to be independent-- the young men. So he came and he thought he'd teach Spanish. And that's where I met him.

And after the lesson, we got together, and this other man too-- this other friend, who was very jealous. And we became friends, the three of us, for a long-- he went to my uncle after about two months that we knew each other.

The Spanish teacher?

Right. Yeah. I mean, he was not a real teacher. He came back from Spain and taught-- helped the teachers teach.

And he asked my uncle the same question-- I want to marry your niece. And my uncle gave him the same story-- you go out first, blah, blah, blah. I'm your uncle, I-- you know. And he said, I'm sorry [GERMAN]. That's a title that older gentlemen get when they were lawyers. I don't marry you. I marry your niece. I expect you to our wedding on October 27.

And that impressed my uncle so that he loved him. So, on October 27, 1938, we were married in Berlin, in the-- it's called [GERMAN]. It's like a lodge, a Jewish lodge. We were the last one to be allowed in there.

Everybody-- my uncle was also very un-Jewish. He put a handkerchief on his head for when he-- instead of a yarmulke when he had a dinner. And we were married by a German judge.

And now I have to tell you how our wedding certificate sounded. Kurt Schwartz-- that was my husband-- marries Helga Weiss. Black and white. His witness is Adolf Schwartz, the father of Kurt Schwartz; Leo Weiss, the uncle of Helga Weiss. The judge is-- I think his name was Herbert Schwartz. So the whole was black and white, black and white. So we smoked black and white cigarettes. We were very happy.

We had an ad in the paper that-- before we got married that we were engaged. And people sent us letters of disgust. They said, how can you joke like that in serious time? There was one ad, Helga Weiss, Kurt Schwartz. And below was Mr. Gross and Miss Klein, big and small, which was true-- happened to be true. And people thought we were making

fun. But we weren't.

So we got married. And then came the 9th of November, in fact. And that was a terrible time. All the men in Germany were persecuted. They were looking for all the men to put them in concentration camps.

The good thing was, my husband was not registered because he had been out of the country so many years. So they went-- they didn't find him.

When we came to visit his parents, who were wonderful parents-- they were such good people. When I came there the first time, he took me on a Friday night. And they kept-- they were very religious. They kept Friday night. And I just loved it. I'd never seen it.

And for me, that was such a new experience. They had the bread and the challah and everything. They took me to the temple.

Everything was always very hush hush. We had to stay-- we could sometimes only stay 10 minutes in the house, or half an hour-- always running so they wouldn't find us.

And the parents said, all the children must go out. My brother-- my husband had a sister. Her name is Charlotte. Her name was Charlotte Schwartz. She was living with her parents still.

And her other sister, Ruth Hersch, who is now my buddy-- we are-- my sister-in-law, they're much older, 86. And the other one, who was still in Berlin, is 90 and lives in Sonoma. You can interview her too sometime. 91. She's fantastic.

They both run like crazy. They are never-- they don't take any pills. They're not sick. They are in much better shape than I am, actually. I mean, kind of, because they don't live life as I live it. More-- I do more things, and I go to bed later, and I don't rest when I should, and things like-- so they all were at the wedding.

And after the wedding, we tried to get out of the country. So that was very hard. But we got a visa from a man named Honest. But he was everything but honest.

He lived-- he tried to get visas for people who wanted to get out of the country. And he lived in Paris at the time. So we had to pay 3,000 marks each to get this visa with the condition that we receive a baptism certificate, which didn't mean anything-- it was in the passport-- because we wanted to go to Argentina, but my-- we couldn't. We couldn't get a visa. So the next best thing was Brazil.

And we wanted to visit his sister, who I've just said, my buddy now, Ruth Hersch, who lived with her husband in England. They just had emigrated a little while ago. The other sister also went to England, reported to the train. And it was very heartbreaking how they said goodbye to their parents. And they knew they would never see them again.

And we-- one day, shortly before our brother-in-law in England told us to send stamps, because he was a stamp collector-- but put the stamps underneath the other-- the outside postage stamp so they wouldn't see it when they looked through. And we did that. So we had a little bit money there.

So finally, we got the visas. We went into a stamp store to buy some more stamps and take them over. When we came-- we took a taxi to get to the stamp store. When we came into the stamp store, my husband suddenly got up, was white like a sheet. He said, I left my papers-- all the papers in the taxi. We are ruined.

And we almost both fainted. That was our passports, our visa, our everything we had-- the little money we could take. We couldn't take-- we could take furniture.

And we were standing there. And suddenly, we saw the taxi coming back. There was, one time, a good German who felt sorry for us. And we gave him a big tip. And that was really something.

So then we-- my sister had left already. My brother had left. My sister-in-laws had left. Only the parents of my husband were there still.

And my uncle was still there. And he cried when I left. He was picked up later, after-- he was-- I think in '39 or '40 they picked--

The uncle in Berlin?

The uncle in-- no, in Frankfurt. Frankfurt. The other uncles, everybody had died, except my aunt. This aunt who sang so beautifully, the sister of my mother, she married the professor who examined her mother.

And they went-- that's a very interesting story, the way they got to England. My whole family got to England through them. The professor treated, once, an English princess. Sounds funny, but it's true. And this English princess was very, very fond of this professor.

And she also thought it was terrible what was happening to the Jews. So she let all the Jews come to England. She gave him the visa-- my cousins, my sister-- everybody worked for the princess. Not that it was so wonderful-- they had to be maids. They all started-- everybody I knew was a maid, because that's all they could do. They couldn't-- but they were saved. They were all in England.

And when I went with my-- left with my husband in early January-- or, late January '39, was just-- I have forgotten a few things. When I was in Germany, the most important story, which is a very funny story, and true-- I was in jail three times in my-- when I was in Kassel and also in another town.

I went out with-- before I met my husband, I went out with another man, friend of mine. He looked very, very Jewish. So a Nazi-- wherever you went, they looked at people in cafe houses, everywhere. And they said, you, come with us. Aren't you ashamed of yourself to go out with a Jew? Because I didn't look Jewish. I had braids, and my hair-- I had blue eyes. I just didn't look Jewish at the time. I don't know how I look now.

And they put me in jail with him. And I said, you're wrong. I'm Jewish. "Don't tell me that." And they were very nasty. They were so ignorant of knowing who was Jewish and who was not.

That happened to me twice. Once I went out with a nurse who had-- she looked so Jewish, and she wasn't. She had a very big nose. She really looked Jewish. And I was.

And we were sitting in a cafe house drinking coffee. And they got us and again brought us to jail for one day, until I could prove by passport that I was Jewish. They let me, still, go. It wasn't that bad then.

But the worst thing, and the funniest thing, was when I was still in Kassel. And that was earlier. That was in, I think, '36. And they-- one night they smashed the windows. That was not the 9th of November. That was just on a Friday night. They smashed the synagogues and the windows in Kassel.

And my grandmother was-- was even earlier. I think it was '35, because my grandmother was still alive. '34? I don't remember everything.

And she sat there, and she said, what does this man think he's doing? You know, Hitler-- meaning Hitler. She couldn't comprehend. And we all laughed because it was funny.

But during that time, when I was in school in Kassel-- I told you before, when I lived with my grandmother and my aunt-- we had, one day, a teacher came in and said, today there will be a professor. He will-- or a teacher, I don't know. He will teach you about the German race.

I was the only Jewish girl in that class, because most people had left already. I thought, this is it. They're going to really get me now. And I was really very concerned.

Usually I was fresh. I was young, and I didn't think it was all so terrible. And I even contradicted the Nazis sometimes.

And so the teacher or whatever he was came in. He said, ladies, I want to teach you today about the German race. And he looked, and he said, you come. And that's a true story. And I thought, oh my God, he's going-- what he's going to do?

He said, now, here, ladies. I want to tell you-- show you the typical example of the German race-- the blue eyes, the [NON-ENGLISH] ears, the nose. And all the girls went like this.

[STAMPING FEET]

He said, what's going on, everything? So I got courageous. And I said, I'm sorry, but I'm Jewish. I'm the only Jewish girl.

That only shows to show what idiots they were. They had no idea what they were talking about. They had no idea of explaining what the Aryan race was like. He took his book, he smashed it on the table, and he went out and slammed the door.

And my best friend-- friend's father was an editor who had, in the past six months, published each week a poem of my poems. He had taught me how to write-- set the letters right and everything. And he liked me. And I wrote some nice poems. But they were all in German.

And he was so courageous. He wrote this story. He printed it. It was very dangerous. They could have killed him for it.

And my uncle, who still was alive-- he thought that was wonderful, because they were so German. They were so German they couldn't understand why they were hated, suddenly, so much. What had they done? They couldn't comprehend it anymore. That only shows you what the Germans were like and what they knew.

So where am I? I'm just-- oh. So we left for England, to, via England, go to Brazil. We had wanted to visit my relatives in England and then go on a boat to Brazil.

When we came to the station in Hamburg, and the train, each one of us had-- I had two typewriters in my hand. My husband had something else. The Nazis came, and they tore the typewriters out of each hand. And there was nothing we could do.

They took everything what we had what was valuable, like little machines or whatever. And we had bought that. We just had bought that. We thought that we could take that as capital, to make money with it.

And then we got into a train. And here, again, comes a Nazi woman in uniform, in the Nazi uniform. And-- while the train was already riding. And she looked around. She says, you come with me.

And my husband was terrified, because they had many people they examined, and they talked to them in a private room-- in a private wagon. And many of them they took out. There were a few stations before we got to the border. And few were screaming outside. They were separated from their husbands, from their wives.

And they did that on purpose. And the women were screaming when their husband was taken, and the other way around. So my husband thought this is it, they're going to take me too.

But she examined me. I had to undress completely. I don't like to say that, but I'm saying she put her hand down there. And she wanted to see-- she said, you have your period? And I said, yes. It happened. And she said, you're lying. And I said, well, you know-- and she saw that it was true.

Then I had a little pendant on of plastic that a girlfriend had given me, a Gentile girlfriend. She said, what is that? Is that a secret amulet or whatever you have on there? And I said, no, that's just my friend gave me.

So somehow, she must have had pity with me, because I looked at her, you know, and she let me go. And I went back.

She knew that you were Jewish?

Oh, yeah. They were all Jewish. The whole train was Jewish. They were all immigrants going out of the country.

Besides, we had our passport they looked. It was a-- I had to-- my name was Helga Sara, they had to call me. My real name was Helga Lieselotte. We had to drop that. The man's name was Israel. So they knew. Big J in the passport.

Did you have to wear a--

No, not at my time?

--star?

No, thank God. No. So when we came over the border in Holland, everybody opened the windows and spit out of the windows on Germany. So then we went to England. And I met my sister-in-law who lives in Berkeley with me. And she-- I met her for the first time. And it was very nice.

We stayed in England like two weeks and then went on a boat. General Osorio was the name of the ship to Brazil. The Jews had to sit separately. Jews had to sit in the back part of the ship. Other than that, they weren't bothered too much, I must say. But we couldn't eat with the other people.

And we had our own-- but we-- I was on my-- practically on my honeymoon. We were very much in love. And I had a good time on the boat.

And we came to Brazil. And my husband had friends from his former jobs, when he worked for the German General Electric. And they didn't want him to take any job. They wanted him to wait until he found something he could really do. And they helped us.

I, like all my life-- we didn't have much money. But I thought I could relax a little bit. But immediately, I found a job, because we had to work.

And I always got Helga jobs, which I said-- I got very easy jobs sometimes. I worked for an English import-export man who came once a week to the office. I did my two languages or three languages. In the meantime, I could write my private letters. I wasn't very busy. And it was nice.

We went, once, in a train in Rio de Janeiro. And behind us-- in front of us was a big, fat Black woman sitting, a Brazilian woman. And some of them-- some people spoke German-- there were German people.

And she said, who is she? She stinks. So the woman turned around, and she said, if you are here as long as I am, you stink too-- in perfect German. So I just want to say, there were-- in Brazil there were many, many Germans that-- so you had to be very careful how you talked.

And the Jews who came there, they couldn't forget what they wear in Germany. They all were big shots. We used to say they were Bernardine-- you know, the big dogs? How do you call--

Saint Bernards.

Saint Bernadines. And now they are--

Bernard.

--dachshunds. But-- because they were bragging. And we hated that. Everybody was something big that they really weren't.

Well, I was in Brazil for eight years. But in Germany, when I-- before my marriage, you had to be examined. And the doctor told me I could not have children unless I would have a little incision-- very easy something. Says, ah, but when we can do that-- when we want children, we can still do that. So we didn't protect ourselves. And I wasn't even three weeks in Brazil, I was pregnant. It was all natural.

I had an abortion because we couldn't afford it. And then I worked. And my husband got a nice job-- work. And when I was in my fifth month, about, which I didn't know, I got a little faint. And my husband said it's better we go to the doctor. What's the matter?

But in England, I was always irregular too. So I didn't-- so I came to a Hungarian doctor, Dr. Kovacs. And he examined. He said, a very nice pregnancy. You are pregnant. You're on your fifth month. Oh.

We didn't know what to do, because we didn't have much money then. But we were happy. And that was my daughter. My daughter--

So that was your second pregnancy.

It was my second. Then, when my daughter was four months old, again I was pregnant. It just shows you how the doctors in Germany were. I mean, that's not true. There were wonderful doctors. But we just happened to get a bad one.

I had-- in other words, I had six-- four abortions. I would have had six children if I had them all. When my son was four months, I was pregnant. Then my son came.

And they both were born in a German hospital in Brazil. And with-- the nuns were wonderful. They were really nice.

And I-- when my son was form-- when my son was born, there was another Jewish woman who was 42. And she had no milk. And I had plenty. So the nuns asked me if I would nurse this baby. I said, sure. Two babies. I nursed them.

And they were thankful forever. The boy was born with a tumor on his head. And after three days, it disappeared from the human-- from the mother's milk.

And we were very happily married. And had those two kids. And suddenly, my husband started to ail. And we went on vacation. And he looked funny. He didn't tell me.

Finally, he told me. We went to the doctor. And he said he had cancer in the third degree. He was 40. I was about 24. And he was about 16 years older. And he died when my kids were one and three years old. So my life is that everybody died on me.

So I was desperate. I had no money. I had my job. And I had two little kids to support.

The maids in Brazil are very unreliable. I had loads and loads of friends. We lived on the ground floor before. And we had always parties. And everybody liked us. And I wrote the verses. And we-- they came and danced.

So they felt terrified, because we had no insurance-- not one penny insurance, because we didn't have money. We didn't ever think of something like that. We had to worry about our own life.

I think my husband died because he smoked a lot. But he also died of a broken heart, because his parents were killed in concentration camp. And so was my uncle and all my aunts, everybody, because they didn't want to go out. The parents couldn't go out. They didn't have the money.

Now, did you-- when did you find out about--

We found out much later. No. They wrote us-- the parents of my husband wrote us a letter. They wrote, "we are ordered to come here and there in Berlin, in that and that station. And we can only bring our pajamas and our toothbrush." And then we didn't hear.

And then, later on, they found out, in Israel, because they have a brother in Israel-- also my brother-- my husband's brother lives in Israel, in a kibbutz. And they have this-- what's it called?

Yad Vashem.

Yeah, Yad Vashem. And they had the information there. In fact, I'm going, here, to the Jewish Museum. And I think they have another list there. And I want to see.

So you know what [CROSS TALK]

I've been told that they were-- went there and never were heard of again. I know that they went to Theresienstadt. Maybe they were, from there, sent to another concentration camp. I don't know.

I had one aunt who was-- I called my substitute mother when my mother died. And she was a wonderful pianist and a wonderful woman-- also in Kassel. And she didn't want to go out because they were afraid.

And that's the mistake they made. They couldn't separate from their money. And she was sent to a-- in fact, when I was still in Kassel in '35, they came in the house one day and they took the breakfront and turned it over. And all the dishes fell on the floor.

And the husband was pulled by his legs and put to jail. They later released him and then arrested them both again. And they both were killed. So these are memories that were just terrible for a young girl, to see what had happened there.

And she-- this aunt wrote a letter. She smuggled a letter out with somebody, because at that time people who had a visa still could go out of the concentration camp. And she smuggled that letter out. And we got that letter in Brazil-- "Please help me. Help me. Help me. Get me out of here." So we know where she was, in Theresienstadt.

Well, we couldn't-- we ran from place to place. We couldn't get a visa. We didn't have any people that we knew in Brazil that would do that. And also, it was too late by the time-- it was terrible.

So I think my husband's family-- they're a very closely knit family. And so to see your parents, and you can't help-- it was just terrible. So he died.

And all my friends got together and supported me. They wanted me to stay with the children. They didn't want me to work because the children were so small. They were all terrified, because it didn't happen that somebody young, with young children, had no insurance and would live like that.

So after three months I thought, I cannot do that. I was always very proud. I cannot let them support me. So I started a job. And I went to another job. And I didn't know enough Portuguese and was fired from the first job.

And then the second-- then I had a very close girlfriend in Rio. And she moved to Sao Paulo with her husband. And because of her, I moved to Sao Paulo too.

And my friends never forgave me. I said-- I wrote them letters that I couldn't accept what they had done for me. But I just-- I had to be on my own, and even struggle, but not be supported by strange-- I mean--

Were these German friends?

All German friends, yeah. Wonderful friends.

German-Jewish.

German-Jewish. All German-Jewish. Oh, yeah.

Were there any non-Jews-- German-Jewish people over there?

No, not that I can remember. No.

Also, a cousin of my husband lived there. He still lives there. In fact, he came to visit. They helped me a lot too-- not financially, but they helped me by being there. And they were upset that I moved to Sao Paulo with the children.

And then became my-- then, that was my worst struggle. I moved into a family with-- it's not like it's here now, where you can get places for your children to be supervised or stay after school. Just didn't exist.

And I moved into a family with a woman with two children. They were grown. And she had children from all different-- from broken homes, either widowed or divorced, and all Jewish children. And I could stay there too.

Well, after about six months, this woman got very sick. She was very heavy. And she was so good and sweet. But she got-- she was dying. I thought, oh my God, where I'm going to go?

I went to the Jewish home. They were overcrowded. They couldn't take me.

And I had a good job at the time. But I didn't have any-- I didn't know what to do with the children. So I went to the German-- there was a German nun-- what's called the German--

Convent?

Convent. But it wasn't convent. It was a school. They had the German school, and the nuns lived there too. And they had children-- they took children in, only-- a girls' school.

So I went there. And I said, I don't know what to do. Rather here than in a terrible family. Can you take my children?

And they said-- they were very Jew-- friendly with the Jews. The Catholic-- the sisters were wonderful. And they said, we can take your daughter. But we cannot take your son. We don't take boys.

So I came home. I sat on the freeway. I never-- this house where we lived was in the field. If you remember that movie, Lilies of the Field, that's exactly how it looked. This woman who was dying, they had their house there. And I sat on the sidewalk there and I started crying.

I thought, what am I going to do? I don't know. Because you couldn't get a maid who was reliable and stayed with the child during the day, even though the maids cost nothing. They were very cheap. So I went in and I went again to the nuns. No, they said, they couldn't.

Well, one evening we sat in the house. The mother had already died. There was the daughter, who was grown already. And we saw seven nuns coming. That's why I compared with the Lilies of the Field. Seven nuns came through the field to this house. And we didn't know what that meant.

So they came in there. And they said-- the one from school said, I have collected all the nuns-- the mother superiors of the surrounding little villages, and we have made a decision. The first time in the history of our school, we are going to accept your son. I thought, oh my God. You know.

But there's one condition. He has to sleep alone with a nun. He cannot sleep with the girls. Poor thing, he was not even two years old. And the other condition is that you can't see them for one week. So that's what I did.

And when I came first time, there was a-- I told them there was a-- well, this Jewish there, not-- they're Jewish. Well, they have to be a little bit Catholic mother here, but they don't have to be converted, and they don't have to be baptized or anything like that. But then-- so the first time I came, kids both came really excited and said, Mommy, Mommy, I have seen Jesus. No, I've seen God. He has diapers on.

And now-- except my daughter was older. Said, no, Steven, that's not true. God is nude. It's Jesus who has the diapers on him.

And then Steven said, I'm sleeping with this nun. I know how the nun looks when she has her-- not her habit on. I say, Steven, you're supposed to sleep. And he said, I did, but I just did like that, and she's all bald on top.

Well, those nuns fell in love with this little boy. They were so-- probably had never seen anything like it, had never seen a boy in their life. They played with him. They played football with him. They just adored him.

And later on, another woman became angry that her boy wasn't accepted. They had to accept her boy too. There were two little boys and all the girls.

After six months in that convent, or school, Germany didn't send them any money anymore. And it was during the war. It was '40-- they were born in '40-- think it over-- they were four and-- two and four. Something like that-- two and three.

And this was now during the war?

During the war. And they-- the school closed down. The children broke out with hives, and-- all the children, because they didn't get the right food. There was no money they could get from Germany, because Brazil-- I don't know on what side Brazil was. They were impartial. But you have to look for something else.

So I-- finally, I got them into the Jewish home. But the Jewish home was terrible. The people were so overworked. And they hit the children. They were very cruel to the children.

So I couldn't stand that. They cried when they saw me. And I had to work. And when I was working, they called, Mommy, Steven is hitting me, and this and that. It was terrible.

So finally, I found a family where we lived. And then-- should I tell the truth? I met a man. I had a very big romance. And he was an American. The reason I met him was because I applied always for extra work at night. I went into hotels and took shorthand from there. And I met this man.

And he was a lawyer. But he was Catholic. And we were very good friends. We almost married. But we didn't because he divorced his wife for me, and I didn't like that.

And I wrote to my-- I had a cousin-- in the meantime, my sister had come to America. And my brother was already in America. In fact, he fought for the American army. And he was injured during the war very badly. He married, when he was 51, a very nice girl, and died 10 years later of heart attack-- of a heart-- but he was injured. He was-- I don't know. It's probably inherited too, the heart.

And so my cousin who was a doctor in New Jersey-- in Morristown, New Jersey-- he had a sanatorium there. He gave all of us an affidavit. So I worked for three years on my affidavit to-- I saved money so I could come over on a boat or something with my children, to see-- to be with my family.

But also because I-- that man I loved. That man, he loved me. Loved? It was an infatuation, actually.

So finally, I had enough money together. And the way I got my money together was I worked in an import-export firm and did three languages. I knew five languages, but I shortened in three. And I earned quite well. But it was hard

because I had two children too. In the meantime, we lived together in another family, all of us.

And while I was preparing for my trip to America, I put an ad in the Jewish paper in Sao Paulo, jingle poems or verses for all occasions-- bar mitzvahs, weddings, and all this. I didn't bring any-- I should have bought some of my samples. But the kids know it anyway. And I got a fantastic response-- in fact, such a response that every night I worked until midnight. My boss let me type it in the office.

And when somebody got engaged, I wrote poems, party or songs, or whatever they wanted. And then, when they got married, they came back as good customers. And then when they had a baby, they came back. Took me three years to do this until I had enough money to pay for the trip to go to America.

I never accepted any money from my cousin. I was very proud. I didn't want to be on welfare or something.

And then I sold the furniture. The only thing we could take from Germany when we left was a lift. Was called a lift. It was our furniture. We couldn't take any money, nothing. And so I sold all my furniture in Rio.

And the children and I went on a freighter, a Swedish freighter. There were five people on it-- an American couple, the three of us, and an American bachelor, which was very romantic. It wasn't serious, but it was nice. We sat on the potato sacks at night. It took three weeks to go from Brazil to America.

What year was that?

That was in '47. I came to Baltimore, where my friend picked me up. And the children were dressed like they do in Brazil, with a little head-- little-- what? Bonnet. Not bonnet. They wear it here too. The blue little--

Beret?

Beret. I couldn't think of the word. Yeah, beret. And everybody looked at them. At that time it wasn't done that way. So I had to change that very fast.

And we came to New York. And the Joint Commission-- you probably heard of them-- they helped immigrants to get established. And I had-- I think I had \$200. That's all I had.

And she said, do you have any money? And I said, oh my God, I have to give my money. So I told her-- I was scared. I said, I have \$100. And she said, you have to give it to me. They took it. You couldn't take any money. And then they wrote everything down.

Then they put us-- and then it was-- I came on May 23, which was my birthday. And she said, when were you born? I told her, May 23. She looked at me. She was a Jewish woman. She wasn't very nice. She didn't say happy birthday. I thought, gee, how are they in America? They don't even say happy birthday. She looked at me for a minute.

Then she said, you have to go in this Hotel Marseilles, which was for immigrants. Terrible hotel, with the cockroaches crawling up the walls. And that's where we got one room, the three of us.

And, they said, you have little children. You have to stay with them. You get so much money.

They put us up in Hell's Kitchen in New York. And the first thing I knew, the children played with other children, and they learned the terrible words-- terrible language. And I thought, I cannot-- I just can't stand-- I could adjust very well from the childhood where I grew up in-- very comfortable, to a life of nothing, of no money. I wouldn't say that-- an interesting life, but no money. But that I couldn't take.

I couldn't take that they-- the cockroaches that crawled up and the children that were vulgar language and so on. So I did put them in a home in the Bronx, for which my daughter may never forgive. She still is angry at this now.

How old was she at the time?

She was seven? No. We were five years in New York. Yeah, about six or seven. No, they were four and seven when they came. Seven, yeah. Seven and a half. And my son was four.

And this-- there was not an orphanage. There was a home where the kids go until they knew where they were going. And my brother, who was a bachelor at the time-- he went out with the nurses so they would treat the children well. Every weekend he went out with the nurses. And the nurse was nice to the children.

And then they couldn't stay there for some legal reasons, the immigration. They went-- I put them in Far Rockaway-- you probably know that-- in the orphanage. And my daughter was very upset. And I was very upset.

And I didn't want to work in New York, because the first job-- I went job hunting when they were in their home. And they interviewed me. And they said, oh, yeah, we take you. Your qualifications are good and everything. Just wait. I have to show it to the boss.

But you had to put religion on in those times, in '47. And he came back, and he said, don't call us. We call you. So I thought, oh God, that's-- that wasn't a Jewish firm.

So then I applied in Princeton for the simple reason my friend, whom I met in Brazil, lived in Trenton. So I wanted to be near-- I applied at the Princeton University. And I got a job with two professors-- one in the morning, a physicist, and one the afternoon, a chemical-- professor of chemistry. And I lived with one of the professors.

And it was OK. It was nice. But--

And your children were at the orphanage.

And the children were in the orphanage. So every weekend I traveled from Princeton to New York to Far Rockaway. I got the children every weekend, Saturday and Sunday.

And we-- I showed them New York. People who lived in New York all their lives, they had never seen what we had. We have seen everything. I managed. And we went all over. And of course, they've forgot now because they were small. And I brought them back. It was always heartbreaking when I brought them back. They were crying.

And then, one time, my son broke his nose. And they didn't tell me about it. And I was furious. So I went on Wall Street, into a business meeting of the big shots of the board of directors of the home. And I-- they didn't want to let me in. I went right into the door.

And I said, I want to speak up. I'm not going to take what you do to my children. My son fell from the swing. They never called me. They never told me. I heard that they're very mean, sometimes, to the children-- scream at them. If you don't do something about it, I will. And you should see. They really changed their attitude.

And then I couldn't stand it. They were there one year. That was all. So-- and then I say, I can't live apart from my kids.

This man whom I had liked so much went with me on-- just before I did this, take the children out-- he went on a ride with me. And he stopped in front of an adoption agency. And he said, go in there. And I said, what do I go in there for? Well, they tell you.

So I didn't know what he wanted. I went in there. And they said, what do you want? You want to have your children adopted? Then it dawned on me what-- he wanted me to have my children adopted.

And I thought-- the moment I got back to New York, I hid from him. I was-- and my brother and my cousin told me, they said, we told you so. We can't see eye with-- to eye with him. And he tried-- he looked for me for many months.

Is this the fellow--

I met in Brazil.

--who's Catholic, who--

Yeah, right. He wasn't religious. He was crazy, kind of. Maybe that's why we got-- anyway.

And then I took my children out. And the woman of the home said, it'll never work. You can't make it work in one room. I lived, then, in a home for-- there were many immigrants living. And they had each a big room in New York-- you know, like those big rooms with a kitchen-- the kitchen was outside. But it was a tremendous room. And it was OK for three.

And the children were, in that, a little bigger. And I worked all the time during that time. And one of the women-- I asked one of the women to take care of the children until I came home from work. And she-- the kids went to school by that time.

And this woman from the concentration camp had a defect. She got to-- all the time. So I told my children, I said, you don't laugh at such a woman. She went through terrible shock. And she's the only one I can get who is willing. She had a husband. Her name was Mrs. Engel.

And so the children were very understanding. And they looked very serious. And one night I come home, and they both stood in front of the mirror, alone. And they both went like this. They couldn't understand why. It was very funny.

And this woman, later, was completely rehabilitated. She got a wonderful doctor, therapy, and she-- I heard. I didn't see her anymore. But I heard by letters that she--

Was this a psychological thing?

Psychological thing from the concentration camp. So while we lived there, for about five years-- lots of things happening. I was active in the Jewish, see New York first. And I was active with the children.

And I was glad I had the children with me, no matter they were fighting terribly. And they called me in the office. And they were fighting while I was in the office. And it was very hard to make a living and very hard to combine this as having no husband.

And then a couple from Berkeley came to visit. They were sent by my sister-in-law. And they came to visit. And they said, how can you raise children in New York? How can you do this? You should come to California.

My sister-in-law was here already. And they were friends of hers. And I said, well, how are you situated in California? And they said, fine. The people look up to us.

But I had never money. I still don't have much money. But that's OK.

So in four weeks-- my sister-in-law wrote, let your daughter come first. And they bought a bunk bed, because they had a daughter who was-- is her cousin. Eight-- one week older than my daughter. And so they bought a bunk bed. They bought everything. And they wanted Sylvia to come over there. Sylvia and Steven are the names of my children.

And we had already packed the suitcase. And it was about a week before. And suddenly, we walked up Broadway, and Sylvia sat on the sidewalk. And she started crying, I don't want to go to California. I said, you don't have to. You wait until I can go too. So we all came together. We saved the money again, and we went.

And my sister was in New York, and my brother. They didn't like it very much that I left again. But I thought I was adventurous. And I came here.

And my sister-in-law took us in for six weeks. And after four weeks, my brother-in-law said, you-- here in Berkeley, you better look for a job. I wanted to relax. I went to Cutter Laboratories in Berkeley, and they hired me. So--

And you can start up in 10 seconds.

And you can continue. If you have more, continue with your story.

Where were we?

Cutter Labs. You're working in Berkeley.

Cutter Labs. I went-- he said, go and get a job. And the children were introduced in American school. And I went to Cutter Labs.

And he hired me right then and there. And I was really angry, because I wanted to enjoy a little vacation, which I didn't get. And I stayed in Cutter Labs for one year. And then I changed jobs.

Then, after six weeks, we took an apartment in Berkeley-- or a house, rather. And of course, we never had money at that point. And we had an apartment where there was a couch, and at night there was a mouse chasing a nut in that hidden couch, underneath, opening-- you know, bed. How--

Box for bedding.

Yeah. That's right. But we had a nice landlord. He always came and helped us get rid of the mouse.

And it was hard. It was very hard the first few years here. And-- because to raise children and work and make a living-- so I never had money. So I started loaning money. I went to one loan company. And when I was due, I paid-- went to another loan company and paid back. And then I got some money back from Germany, from my inheritance and my uncle and so on.

And I had the best record-- I still do in Oakland, because I never owed anybody anything. That's how I managed, because-- and I had loads of friends. And we have loads of friends.

And the kids became bigger. And they were fighting more. My son was very ingenious. He always made sales on the street. And he took everything I had in my house and sold it-- sometime little thing.

He did take care of The Berkeley Gazette. He was a carrier for The Berkeley Gazette. And one time we went on a little vacation, and his friend took over. And by the time we came back, the friend had collected all the money that was supposed to go to the-- to us from the customers, and he-- to The Berkeley Gazette. And he spent it. And I had to be responsible. It was terrible. It was a lot of money.

And so the children became bigger. And in-- my daughter graduated in 1959. And just before she graduated--

From high school?

From high school in Berkeley. And she asked me if she could be-- take part in the Chamber of Commerce beauty contest. And I wasn't even listening. I said, OK. So one day I came home, and she sits on top of the table and said, I won.

And here she is. This is a picture, as she became Miss Berkeley, with the mayor of Berkeley. Can you see? It's very old. It's in 1959, I think.

Who is the woman there?

The woman is her chaperone. Couldn't do anything without a chaperone. She got all kinds of presents.

And at that time I worked at Herrick Hospital as a medical staff secretary-- also as a librarian in the library. And they-- what is the highest-- the administrator. He knew me, and he said hello. But he never really took much-- he never noticed me much.

When my daughter became Miss Berkeley, he came, oh, that's so exciting. And I was so mad. I told him, I think that's terrible, Mr. Murphy. Beauty is only skin deep. And you didn't ever notice me before. Just because my daughter became Miss Berkeley, that's no reason to notice me now.

He apologized. But he always-- since that time, he always noticed me. And I-- people are funny. When you are just a secretary or something, they don't always--

But I worked in many places-- in a law office for four years, in a criminal law office, when I had to-- I did everything there. And when I had to deliver summonses, I took my son. I think he was 11 or 12-- son. He found that very interesting, like a detective story. I stayed for four years. And then I started working in Herrick Hospital.

And while I was in Herrick Hospital, my daughter got engaged, in 1959, I think. They got married in 1959. I'll show you the pictures later. And one year later, had my-- her first child, a son, whose name is Curtis.

And when she came out of-- she had the anesthesia. She came out and said, Curtis Roy. It's a boy. Curtis Roy. It's a boy. That was my first grandson.

And that was the nicest of them all-- not the nicest. I love them all. But that was the most exciting because it was the first.

And then I went to-- no. I worked for Kaiser first, as a secretary in research, for two years. Then I went to Herrick. And then I went back to Kaiser.

And in the meantime, I met my-- maybe you heard of Kaufman's Draperies in Berkeley? It's a very well-known store. That was-- they were friends. And when I came here from New York, I came to meet them first. And we became good friends.

And then Mrs. Kaufman, one day, told me her brother's coming from New York with his ailing wife. She had cancer. And she came here. And we became friends. His wife died. And her husband and I fell in love.

But we waited a long time because my daughter was very difficult-- my children both. My daughter said, you're not my father. She was very jealous. I don't bring the garbage out, and all these kind of things. So we thought we marry-- we'd wait until Sylvia got married.

She got married. Then we got married. It was my second husband. His name was Hugo Tannenbaum. And he had a PhD in economics.

And he also was kind of displaced, because he worked with his brother-in-law in Kaufman's, which was not really his kind of thing. But he did it. And we were married for 11 years. We were going together for 17 years. And he got cancer. And he died. So-- but that was--

Was he a survivor?

He was a survivor, yeah. He came from Koln, Cologne, actually.

And then-- I tell you all my secrets. Then I-- my brother-in-law, Mr. Kaufman, and his wife-- we were very close. And they got older. And I drove them around a lot. And we were together.

And in 1981, I think, Mrs. Kaufman died. And it just happened slowly that we became very, very good friends. And in fact, he became the best friend I ever had-- was my brother-in-law. And he just died eight months ago. And he was 90 years old. He was much older.

My men were always older. And the reason for that is, I think, I had a father complex. And I always saw in every man my father. That goes into psychology again.

But this man was fantastic. He was really special. And the children all loved him. He was part of the family. And we made it easy for him when his wife died.

And I drove him around in the later years. And he was wonderful until the last day. And I'm still not over it, because he had dinner with me, and he died an hour later. On the telephone, I was, and I just said goodbye. And he died.

But he had to die. Was 90 years old. And he wasn't so healthy. But he was brilliant.

And we had wonderful times together. We drove together. And we rode together in the car. He read poems to me. And he knew everything by heart, all the old, wonderful poems that he learned in Germany. And was very witty. He also made jingles. We did parties together.

We were just made for each other. So now, I think, my love life is over, I think. And now you can ask me questions.

And then my son-- I have forgotten my son. In 1964, I was married to Hugo Tannenbaum. And my son came home one day. It was during the Kennedy administration. And people were sent to Vietnam. And he said, I'm not going to the war.

He was 19 or 20. We were afraid he would be drafted. I think he was already supposed to be drafted. So he worked in an office, educational testing service, where he met his future wife. And I always say they tested each other educationally, you know.

And he said-- he came home one day and he said, I'm going to Reno. So my husband said, fine. I'm going with you. We thought he was joking. But he wasn't joking. He wanted to marry. And they were so young.

So the girl, Carolyn, is a wonderful girl. She's not Jewish. But they're the happiest couple you have ever seen.

They're 26 years married. My daughter is married for 30 years. There were ups and downs in the families. Not everything is always so smooth. But it's a pretty wonderful family.

Then came the grandchildren. Came my second granddaughter, Deborah, who is a sexy little blonde who acts always. She graduated in music from Hayward State.

And she acts in amateur theaters. She was in Alameda, in-- everywhere, in Hayward. And she always has the main role. She was Gigi. She was Maria in Sound of Music. She was student-- not the student prince, Student Gypsy. That was her best role, I thought. She had the main role there. And we all love it.

My other granddaughter, Jennifer, who is my son's oldest daughter, is-- learned, suddenly, to-- she played always the flute. But suddenly, she discovered her voice. And she sings beautifully too.

She has a different kind of a voice, more-- my granddaughter Debbie wanted to make it a career, but her voice was not big enough. So she does the other thing. She loves operettas. She works for the Jewish Vocational Service, by the way. You know that, probably.

And my oldest grandson is Curtis. Then comes Deborah. Then comes Leslie, the youngest granddaughter of my-- my daughter has three. My son has two. She is now 23, 24. Is working on her master's in child development, and learned sign language, and wants to work with children who-- hearing defect children. She doesn't know exactly what she's

going to do.

My grandson is working on his master's too. And he didn't go to school for a long time. And suddenly, he discovered he can't make a living without going to school. And he got his-- two years ago he got his bachelor. And now he's working on a master's. Wants to be a city planner. We hope that works out.

He's engaged to be married-- a Jewish girl. And last year, my youngest granddaughter, my son's youngest, is 20-- was 20 or 19 when she got married. Also not Jewish. Of course, she is not-- her parents, mixed marriage. She married a wonderful young man whom I love. And they're very happy that she's married one year.

And then I live in Berkeley, in an apartment, for 30 years, where I lived with my husband. It's a garden apartment. It was always very, very charming, and very cheap. And now they're raised. They found ways and means to raise. And probably raise more. Well, we still have rent control in Berkeley.

What I learned through life, what I didn't know when I was in Germany-- that I am basically Jewish, and that I feel Jewish, and that I wanted-- I felt very well when I came to the parents of my first husband and I saw them, and then later on to my second husband, who used to be a Zionist. He was together with Martin Buber and with-- he knew all these people in Frankfurt am Main. Simon, Ernst Simon-- you probably heard of him. And he taught me a lot.

He wasn't religiously Jewish, but he was a conscientious Jew. And he wasn't a Zionist anymore, in later years. That's only when you're young and enthusiastic. He would have never lived in Israel because, I think, he was too spoiled to live such a hard life. He was an intellectual. But he was a Zionist.

And he wrote his PhD on Zionism. And I didn't read it. It's too long. I got offered a little bit. And sometimes, when I need to sit up high, I use his PhD work and sit on it.

No, he really was very, very educated, and also requested the same for my children, which they didn't. They were not-- they're not intellectual children. They are just normal human beings, and not as sophisticated as he probably would have liked them to be as far as intellect goes, as knowledge and background-- interest in background. And I, as a woman alone, could not instill it in them completely.

But they learned a lot. And they're on their way. And they're doing fine. So that's all what every mother wants.

And I love my grandchildren. They're all the best grandchildren in the world, of course. And so you can be happy with little.

And I'm very active in Berkeley. I play bridge with a passion. I belong to the B'nai B'rith. And we have meetings there. I drive many people around many times, friends, and visit people.

I did retire very early, before I was 65, because my husband got very sick. He had heart disease and cancer. And I stayed home with him. And I wished I'd worked longer, because I would have gotten a bigger Social Security. But I didn't.

And some things are very hard. I need to buy a new car now. And I don't want to give the money, because then it-- I miss it some other place again. But those are all little things.

And you-- and then I swim a lot. I swim every other day. I used to swim every day, but now I swim every other day. And I do aerobics in between every other day.

So that's my life story, in short. There are many other things that I forgot to tell or that I don't remember now. But that's in big-- that's all I have to say right now. I can show you pictures.

Well, before we go to the pictures, I-- since we were-- you mentioned something just recently, which was in reference to your-- you feeling more of a Jewish identity now--

Much more.

--than you did growing up.

I belong to the temple now in Beth El.

And I wanted to know why.

Why? Because I wasn't brought up Jewish at all. I didn't see it in front of me. And then, through circumstances and through the husbands I married-- they were all Jewish. And through life itself that you become close in a community. You automatically decide if you want to belong.

It gives me a feeling of belonging when I-- I'm not religious at all. I don't know enough about Jewish religion. I'm very-- I should read more about it. But I learned what I never knew before. And I'm trying to still learn more about it.

I'm not religious. I still love Christmas. I have that with my daughter-in-law. But I also love the Jewish festivals. But I'm not religious, per se. But I feel that I'm a conscientious Jew. I would always stand up for my people and feel at home when I'm going to the temple. It's my people.

And your children-- do they have a consciousness or caring about the Holocaust? What do they feel about that?

My daughter, yeah, because she went-- they went to Germany once. She went to my home-- to my house and everything. And my granddaughter, since she was in Germany and she heard from those friends I made when I was in Germany two years ago, is trying now to establish interest in it.

But-- they know all about it, but maybe not enough. And that's why I want to tell them more and more about it. My son and my-- my son is not very interested in-- he's interested in it, but he-- maybe they're too busy to think.

He always tells me he wants to hear about my past. He wants to know everything. But maybe because he intermarried, I-- it's different if you-- my daughter is more interested in her past and in family trees and things like that. And, well, maybe if he gets a little older he will. He's old enough, but I don't know.

Do you personally feel a sense of loss?

About what?

About having to have left Germany. Loss?

What do you mean, a sense of loss?

A loss of your past, having been so uprooted.

Yeah. Loss is not the right word, I think. I think it's--

Injustice?

Huh?

Injustice?

Injustice. You think, Hitler-- if he hadn't been there, my life would have been very different. But maybe it's good, because I have all these wonderful children and grandchildren. But it wouldn't have happened this way. For this I'm thankful.

But of course, you-- I had a very secure life in Germany. And I had to struggle ever since I left-- always struggled, even though I got money back. But I always struggled.

It was never-- and then, when I married the second time, we made a mistake. We didn't buy a house. We could have, for very little money. And I would be much better off. We didn't do that for some reason. I don't know why. And-- well, we both didn't have much money either, because you were still refugees. And the money I got, I spent part of it, because I lived on it.

So I get money from my pension from Germany. And I get Social Security. And I have a little interest. But when a big expense comes, like buying a car, then you're terrified.

You spend a lot on insurances all over-- over-insured for this and that and the other. But I don't let it bother me too much. I still-- it's OK. What else you want to ask me?

I'd like to ask you in greater depth about how the Nazis affected your life, if you can remember incidents where--

Well, I told you the incidents where they put me in jail and where they took my aunt and uncle by their feet and-- they were monsters. And we were scared. But yet, I wasn't so terribly scared. As I remember, I was always speaking up to them, because I didn't feel persecuted. I don't know why. Maybe because they didn't persecute me personally, only some incidents, as I told you.

And then I was busy with my social life, with everything. Of course, when in Berlin in '38, it was all-- you could not go anywhere anymore. You could only go to Jewish places. You couldn't join anything anymore. And so you joined Jewish places. You were happy with the Jewish places.

And everybody was interested, how do we get out of here? How-- we were trying to decide what we wanted to do. And that kept your life very busy. You couldn't think much.

I was studying, going to school. And so you were so busy that you really realized what had happened much later, when you were out of the country already. You realized what a terrible thing had happened.

And I'm glad that my parents died just before they were taken to a concentration camp. That was somehow good. It was terrible they died so young, both of them, but the way my uncle died, it was just terrible.

And you must understand, older people in Germany, they-- as I said, they were deadly afraid to go in another country. They thought they couldn't make it. They couldn't take any money. They wanted to hold on to their money. And that's what brought them disaster, in the end. Many could have left before. Many couldn't, but many could.

And so-- of course, young people, they didn't care. They went out. But many young people stayed with their parents and also vanished.

You realize much later what really-- what this insane character has done, and how the Germans were all like sheep. They said yes to every-- they were afraid to speak up. Of course, on the other hand, they would have been killed if they speak up.

So there are two things-- in the beginning, they probably could have still prevented it. And then, here, Roosevelt didn't-- wasn't so interested in getting the Jews in either. You know the boat, the ship, the Voyage of the Damned? There were relatives of my husband's, my second husband. They were never saved. They died.

They couldn't-- they weren't let in in Cuba. They weren't let in in America. They went back to Germany, and they were killed. So Roosevelt could have done something. I don't know. I'm not good in politics like that. I'm interested in politics, but not good.

Actually, there was always a war since I was born. Always upheaval. There was never a quiet time. Even in Brazil, there

were revolutions all the time. You woke up in the morning, you had a new president.

There were always-- and Brazil was very hard to live, I think. There were-- there's no middle class. There's only the rich and the poor. Well, I had nice Brazilian friends, too. But we always stuck together with the immigrants, the German immigrants.

And I liked it. But it was too hot. It was terribly hot. It's as hot in Rio as in New York in summer. It's very hot. And I suffered there. I hate heat. That's why I can't buy a car without air conditioning, because I don't like heat.

Did you lose friends as a result of your being Jewish?

Yeah, of course. I lost my very best friend, who was Gentile. Very best-- I never heard from her again. I tried to locate her.

But I want to tell you, about two years ago, I was invited by the town of Wiesbaden. They do this all over. You probably have heard this. Did you hear that? That they make up for what they did to us? And they invite people.

I wrote to them once. And I wrote to them, I want to come back to Wiesbaden. I don't have the money to go there. Can you-- what can you do? They wrote to me, we have such a big quota-- not now. So I had already given up.

Three years later, they wrote a letter-- we now are ready. And, oh, I was very excited. I thought, should I go?

I had been, with my second husband, twice to Germany. He worked for the firm called Kaufhof or Tietz. It is a very big firm, like Macy's. And he had a top job there. So he fought for his pension and for mine.

And we were in Cologne for four weeks. That was in the '60s. So I had been in my hometown. I'd seen all that.

And I always-- when I was standing at the Rhine at that time, I saw the-- in my mind I saw the Nazis marching over. I mean, they couldn't march over the water, but coming-- but it wasn't so. I always saw them.

And I talked to people there, and I said, oh, I can't forget. And they said, it's not our fault. We were small. We were children-- which is true. But their parents--

Many Germans went back because they couldn't make a living in Israel or other countries-- South America. We met quite a few at that time. They were all unhappy. I think you can't be very happy to go back to Germany and live there and remember what has been done. Maybe now. But--

So I don't like the fact that the wall-- that they are liberated. I mean, I'm glad they are-- there's no more division. But I think we are all afraid. All Jews are afraid that it could happen again, because they get so strong, and people follow-- people in Germany follow. They don't stand up for themselves. They follow the leader.

Why is that?

I don't know. That's their nature. Germany was always a very rich country, most of the time. And they were always leading. That was the first defeat, I think, they really had. I don't know if the first one, but it was-- everybody looked down after Hitler.

And what I wanted to say-- when I came back to Germany, they put our paper-- our picture in the paper. At first we had a meeting with-- there were 20 couples. I took my sister-in-law. She's not from Wiesbaden, but they said she had to pay for her trip and for half of the hotel. And they paid all the rest. They were really wonderful.

And the mayor came and received all of us. And I have pictures there. And it was-- they didn't know what to do for us. First thing they did, they gave us \$250 to spend-- spending money-- and a big umbrella with the name of Wiesbaden on. Then they took our pictures. And all the papers had our pictures with our-- my maiden name on it.

Consequently, the girls who went to school with me recognized my name, because they knew that many came back. And I got so many calls. I got calls from four or five schoolmates, and also our neighbors in my street.

And all of them adored my mother. I told you, they were all very-- that she was really a wonderful woman. And the neighbor said, we didn't know what to do. They invited us by car to go to dinner in different little towns. And they arranged a meeting to see our house in Wiesbaden-- my house. It's not my house anymore.

I told Jack, yeah. When my parents died, my uncle was my guardian. And we thought our house was sold. We thought he sold it. But he hadn't sold it.

So when Hitler-- the Hitler people, the Nazis took everything, all-- everything that was in that beautiful house-- carpets and paintings and-- and we thought the house was-- the Nazis took it. And then, after-- when the war stopped, they were looking for us, for the three-- my brother, my sister, and me. And they didn't know where we were. We didn't have anybody anymore. They were all dead or gone.

So they looked for eight years. And when they didn't find us after eight years, they sold the house and gave the money to Israel-- which I could have had, which we all could have had, which would have made it a lot easier for me. And it's terrible, but I did my duty to Israel.

Who's they? Who spearheaded this?

Well, there's a statute of limitation. I think the city of Wiesbaden-- I don't know who did this, but there was a Jewish organization, I guess, also who did this. When they looked and they can't find the owner-- I don't know how that works, but that's how it-- we still want to investigate now because there are some new laws.

But we-- my daughter met the owner, I think, of the-- who bought the house from-- he's from New Orleans or something. Some American bought it. It's a beautiful house. We went there and-- but gone is gone. It's only money. Can't replace-- money you can replace. You can't replace other things.

And so that's the story. I met those girls-- I wanted to tell you-- the girls I went to school with me. And we had-- Wiesbaden is a beautiful resort town. I don't know if any of you have been there. It's really beautiful. And we had outside-- it was summer. And we had outside-- we had dinner outside.

And I didn't know them. We were kids-- 12 years old, eight years old, I don't know. And they're old women now. And, ha, you know.

I said, where were you all when this happened? Where were you when Hitler came? Oh, I wasn't in Germany. I wasn't either. None of them was in Germany-- which was, of course, not true.

And you try to make conversations. Very nice. And they talked a lot about my mother, how they liked my mother. But the real warmth and feeling you cannot have. It's impossible. First, they're strangers to you. And they were very sweet. And so-- and it was a very interesting phenomenon.

In fact, they have in Wiesbaden-- they call it Jewish Museum. It's not a museum. They collect anecdotes, like you do. And through them I met a wonderful young couple, a woman who was my-- each couple had a guardian, like their guardian angel, who showed them around, who became-- and we became great friends. In fact, my granddaughter just stayed with them overnight. And they were wonderful.

And this woman, young woman of-- in her 40s who discovered, when she was 19 years old-- she looked into the encyclopedia and looked for her grandfather's name and found out that her grandfather was Jewish. And her mother had never told her. She only told her that her father was killed. And he was-- Nelson, his name was-- I think Samuel Nelson.

And she asked her mother, why don't you tell me? Why don't you tell me what happened to my father? Did the Nazis

came? And the mother, until this day, wouldn't tell her. That's why her relationship with her mother is very, very loose.

And she became obsessed. She wants to become converted. She takes-- she goes to Hebrew lessons. She goes in the temple every Friday night. She has a husband. And they're typical German-- wonderful people. And became a real great friend.

And she met-- I don't know if you know Leo Trapp. Lives in Napa. Well, he's a professor of Jewish history. And also, he goes every year to Germany as a-- he teaches in Frankfurt. He's very-- he gets medals and all kind of things. Very much recognized there, which he likes.

And I introduced those two. And he told her how difficult it was to become Jewish converted, because they don't do it in Germany. It's very hard. They don't want to disturb the married life. This had nothing to do with antisemitism, it's just there are no Jewish chaplains there.

You said that when your brother was bar mitzvahed, you hardly realize until then that you were Jewish.

That's right. I didn't know.

What was the reaction of your friends, who must have--

I don't know.

--you went to Catholic school with, or church [CROSS TALK]

I didn't go to Catholic school. I went with them when they went to church. I went to church. I even confessed like they did, for one day or so.

When they found you were Jewish, do you recall any--

No, I don't recall, because--

--any negative feeling or antisemitism?

No. When you're kids, they don't-- they're not so interested in what-- I was a kid. And they weren't so interested what happened then, no.

But I know that suddenly there was a Rabina-- I don't know, Silverstein or something-- who just became my brother-- the teacher of my brother, and he became bar mitzvahed. And it was strange to all of us because we weren't brought up like that. And we didn't understand our parents.

And I always had to say in school, I'm freireligios, which means I'm a free religion. And the teachers very often called my sister and asked her, what are you really? And we didn't know what to say. We're free. We don't believe in anything. And when the other kids had religion in school, we had to be sent out. Jewish children went to Jewish religion. But we didn't have that.

So that's the only thing I blame my parents for, because they made it very difficult. But Jews wanted to be acclimated. And they wanted to-- they didn't want to be Jewish. I say-- not all of them, but certain kind of people to which my parents belonged. And they was like that because probably because they were afraid of antisemitism, which was always there.

And yet, twice a year, my father had-- they had big dinners of all doctors and all lawyers. And they were not all Jewish that came. They were mixed-- a mixed bag.

You brought your father up. I wanted to ask you a couple of things, but-- about your father's occupation, because you--

He was an attorney.

And was that occupation--

He was city attorney, too.

Mostly Gentiles in that occupation, or--

He was at one time-- for a certain time, you become a city attorney-- not for always, for a certain year. No, everything. He had a mixed practice, criminal and non-criminal.

And my uncle was my guardian. I told you, they both always had heated discussions about law-- every weekend. No, he was very respected. He wrote articles. And I have some of them at home. My mother wrote the poems. I have some of her.

And they were very stimulating people, very intelligent. And they taught us wonderful things. My father was very serious. My mother was very-- more like me, very outgoing.

So it didn't last very long, but it was nice while it lasted. I mean, their lives were-- they died young.

Was Wiesbaden a-- what was--

Spa. It's a spa town. People come there from all over-- from all over, from America--

Was it a--

For rheumatism, heart-- hot springs. I have a picture here of-- they're called [NON-ENGLISH].

Hot tub?

No, not hot tub.

[INAUDIBLE]

It comes out of the water. The springs comes out of the water. This beautiful [GERMAN], which is where the people drink the water, and they massage-- very elegant.

It's an elegant-- there are two elegant towns in Germany. One is Baden-Baden. And this is Wiesbaden. And they're both well-known.

When we had guests from out of town, the children always had to go to this hot spring and get the water which smelled like rotten eggs. But it's supposed to be wonderful for your health.

What was the Jewish population in the city?

I don't really know. I don't know, because I wasn't one of them. But I can find out from-- now? No, now nobody's there.

No, back then.

Back then? There were quite a few Jews, yeah, because the funny thing also was that my parents-- most of their close friends-- I don't say when they had the big party-- were Jewish, because I met one girl. Her father was a heart-- throat and nose specialist. I met the girl in Brazil. Was married in Brazil.

And most of them were Jewish, the friends that they associated with. But they were probably all like my parents. Didn't make use of the-- some Jews think that is terrible. I've told this story, and they think I'm worthless because I wasn't brought up Jewish and my parents were like that. But it's not my doing. I can't help it, the way I was brought up.

And I only know that we always celebrated Christmas. And my father always looked to the side. I don't think he felt very good about it. And when Yom Kippur came, I went once by the synagogue. And they had high hats on there. How do they call high hats?

And my mother said, this is the highest holiday of the Jews. They wear high hats today. So that was as far as I got-- as close as I got to Yom Kippur at the time.

For Passover you'd never seen them?

Never. Nothing. Nothing at all. I know all the songs of the Protestant because I went-- I didn't belong. So I looked to belong some place. So I went with my girlfriends to the Protestant or to the Catholic. And no, we never knew.

But now I know. Now I tell. And, well, it's, I think, what you make of it. Like my granddaughter-- they were brought up without religion. So she went on her own. The one who got married went on her own and went to church, joined a church.

It's my fault my son, my daughter-- my daughter-in-law is not Jewish. So when my son-- neither one is religious. So she was searching for her own religion. That's the way it is.

In the long run, you hold onto your roots, but nobody's any better or any worse because they have different religion. Any other questions?

Do you have any questions?

No.

You want me to show you some pictures?

I have a couple of questions, if I can ask them. Many people we interview comment on the idea of mixed marriages between Jewish people and non-Jewish people. And most of them say they think it's a very bad idea because it dilutes Jewish culture, and it dilutes Jewish identity, and it creates children who aren't really Jewish and don't feel Jewish. So they consider it to be a very bad cultural phenomenon and have strong feelings about it. You've talked about the mixed marriages in your own family-- your kids and so forth. I was wondering what your thoughts around this--

Well, I want my children to see this tape. So I don't really want my daughter-in-law to feel that I'm against her, because I love her dearly, and they have a wonderful marriage. And I feel that some Jewish marriages are not as happy as this one.

Of course, the fact that I wasn't brought up Jewish has a big role in this. If you are very Orthodox or you observe everything very closely, then you suffer more when your children would be intermarried. Well, at first I didn't like it either. And my daughter-in-law knows that. But because of her, the way she has made-- made my son so happy and made us happy, I feel it's a good thing.

I have one Jewish married-- one is married Jewish, and one is not married Jewish. So it's equal. It's divided in half.

How do you think your life would have been different if there were no Holocaust?

Oh, I don't know. I probably would be brought up in Germany and married-- I don't know what I would have married. Probably a Jewish man, because we had only Jewish friends there. And I probably-- I would have been much better off financially. And I don't know. You can't imagine how that would be because you haven't lived through it. I don't know.

Why do you think you would have married a Jewish man?

I don't know if I would have married a Jewish man. I don't know, because I wasn't brought up Jewish. But since we only associated with Jewish men, I might have met one. Those are all questions you really cannot answer because you haven't lived through this.

It's so long ago. I'm so much-- I'm away much longer from Germany than I ever was there. And I'm pretty happy the way it's now. I don't think-- I don't want to think what could have happened, because enough happened to me. I had to get over all the things that happened to me.

I wish my parents had lived longer and Hitler hadn't come, of course, and nobody had died. But how can you think like that? It all did happen. And many people say it never happened. And you show them the numbers that many people have on.

I was darn lucky that I-- we went out so late, just before. And we could have been in concentration camp. We were just lucky. So I was always thankful. And I'm still thankful for what I have. Even though I don't have much money, I'm still thankful for what I have. I have a nice family, wonderful children, grandchildren.

And it's hard, sometimes, to-- you want this. You want a nice car. You want this and that. And I've lived pretty well. And I have hard times. But I'm still thankful when I see what other people went through and what they had.

And sometimes, when I-- like yesterday. I said I'm hunting for a car. I think, maybe, it's terrible there's so many homeless, and I think only of my own comfort and how I want a new car. I want this and that. And here's people on the street who-- it's their own doing, maybe, in some cases. And I still like nice things. But you feel guilty, sometimes, if you are so materialistic.

What do you-- do you feel there-- do you see antisemitism now?

Yeah. I play bridge in a senior center in Albany. And they don't come out with antisemitic remarks or so, but you know when Jews are not wanted. Yeah.

But not-- I don't have an experience where I really experienced extreme antisemitism. I hear it, and I see the skinheads. And I read in the paper, and television, and the newspaper. But, no.

Do you have any strong responses to-- internal responses to examples that you read of antisemitism?

What do you mean by responses?

If you read, in the newspaper, for instance, how something happened to [CROSS TALK]

Well, I feel terrible about it. Terrible. I feel terrible.

And that I must say for my son and my grandson-- they're very democratic. Wonderfully liberal in that respect, too, without me teaching them. He has always liked everybody. Never turn to one side.

No, I-- of course you feel terrible. You think it starts all over again when you read about the skinheads or what they do to synagogues and things like that. But it's life. And it will go on forever and ever. And the Jews will survive forever and ever, I hope. I think they're smart enough. And they are-- they have a strong will to survive.

You spoke before, explicitly, of the reunification of Germany.

Yeah. Well, we are all afraid if Germany becomes too strong, and too rich, too, that they will-- not in our generation, not in my daughter's, but maybe my grandchildren's future-- that a thing like Hitler will come again. Maybe not quite as

soon and not as violent, but it probably could come again, because when they don't have anybody to blame they blame the Jews.

And if something goes wrong in the country, they blame the Jews, usually. I think that's what it usually is. Why are we so hated? Can you answer to me why we are so hated? And why are the Jews so hated? Why?

Nobody knows why. Because we are always on top and we survive? Or why is it? There's no answer. So you're afraid of--

It's part of the Catholic catechism. It's part of the Catholic teaching, among others, in my view.

Is there something--

I don't know. You mean if the Pope who says-- I mean, the Catholic Church who says we killed the Jew? But that has since been re--

Hitler used it.

In Italy.

Hitler used many of the things that the Catholics started.

Is there something you think we can do, as Jews, to prevent another Holocaust?

Well, just talk. Talk about it, and instruct our children to be liberal, and-- each person can do their own thing to-- I don't know what we could do. We can stick to our belief and our faith. We can teach our children of our roots and backgrounds, and-- you mean to teach other-- Gentiles to-- not to become antisemitic again? What do you mean by what we can do?

Well, I think you're answering it. Is there anything that we can do to--

Prevent antisemitism?

It has been said that Jews were led like sheep into the gas chambers. What could they have done--

Nothing. Nothing.

What can we do now--

They would have been shot at that point. There were many National Jews. They were called National Jews in Berlin. They were people who spoke up for-- who were on the side of the Nazis-- pretended to be, in order to save their lives.

And they did everything-- even in concentration camps, my friend, Mr. Kaufman, told me always that they had Jews who were in charge in the concentration camps to tell other Jews what to do, and were very cruel at times. They took over. They thought, if I'm on the side of the Nazis, they save my life.

Many times, they didn't. They shot them too. They were like traitors, like Judah.

But in order to survive, people do anything. Only the great martyrs don't. But most people did.

I know of many Jews who went to-- in Germany who did horrible, horrible things against the Jews, and also stood on the side of the Nazis to stay alive-- which a person with a character-- but if you're afraid-- I don't know what I would do. I probably-- I feel I would never do it. But if you are threatened, you don't know what you would do to save your own life.

I know I have a sister-in-law in-- my second husband's sister. Her husband-- and this family was in a concentration camp-- father, mother, son, and daughter. They were-- I don't know, I think also in Theresienstadt. They never talk about it, but I know the story.

The husband was shot dead and put in the arms of his wife. The son was shot dead and also put in the son. And this woman was so Orthodox and so religious, she had this one daughter left who now-- the mother doesn't live anymore. But-- and she washed her child and herself every day from top to foot so she would be clean. She would not eat anything that wasn't supposed to be kosher. They drank water.

And one Nazi felt very, very sorry for them. He respected them for what they did. And she was already on the death march to go into the showers there. And he saved them. He saved the mother and the daughter.

And they become very good friends since. They're very well off in New York now. I'm glad. Very religious. Orthodox to the last drop.

They've never lost their faith. If that's what we can do to teach other people, maybe that's a way to do it. I'm not like that.

And their children, the daughter too, marry Orthodox. To me that's strange. And I cannot understand how-- I think it's old fashioned in many ways-- the meat, separate dishes. I think it came, in olden times, from hygiene. And it has been-- but on the other hand, it's nice to have a faith and be so strong that you have a faith and can believe in something.

I don't believe in something so strongly. I believe that there's some-- there's a God. I believe. I believe there's some higher might. I hope there's a life after. I hope it's nice. But I don't know.

I'm curious to know what it was like being-- having escaped from--

It was wonderful when we went over the border. I told you, we all opened the window and spit on the German ground. And it was-- see, when you're young, everything is different. We were not so afraid.